

Upstate Update

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Upstate Forever's Monthly Bulletin on
Important Issues and Events in the Upstate

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Upstate Forever and Home Builders Association of Greenville Launch EarthCraft House Program

One of **Upstate Forever's** principal goals is better development practices in our region. Thus, we are excited to join forces with the Home Builders Association of Greenville, the South Carolina Energy Office, and Southface Energy Institute to bring EarthCraft House, a green building program for residential development, to the Upstate.

EarthCraft originated in Atlanta when the Southface Energy Institute partnered with the Atlanta Homebuilders Association to start a voluntary program that serves as a blueprint for healthy, comfortable homes. These houses are a "win-win" - they create a healthier home, reduce the owner's utility bills and help protect the environment by lessening the demand on our natural resources.

The pilot phase for the EarthCraft House program is being funded by a grant from the State Energy Office and is the first EarthCraft designation to be established outside the state of Georgia. The pilot project includes funding for builder training, inspections and certification for twelve EarthCraft houses that will be built in the Greenville area. The first EarthCraft builder training was held in October and attended by more than 25 local builders.

EarthCraft House offers numerous guidelines for reducing pollution and the waste of natural resources when building, giving residential builders a great deal of flexibility when choosing the environmental measures best suited for each project. Any size and type of house - new home construction or remodeling of an existing home - can qualify as an EarthCraft House.

While the home itself is certified rather than the homebuilder, the builder must be a member of the HBA of Greenville and complete a short training course. When starting a new house, the builder completes a Scoring Worksheet which awards points in areas such as site planning, air-sealing measures, energy efficient lighting, the use of recycled and natural content materials and waste management practices. A score of at least 150 points and a final inspection are required for certification.

In addition to these criteria, Greenville's EarthCraft homes will also meet strict "Energy Star" standards set by the EPA and the Department of Energy. Energy Star homes are 15-30 per cent more energy efficient than homes built to traditional standards.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

EarthCraft House is a sign of quality and a commitment to homebuyers, with the biggest advantages being long-term savings on operating and maintaining the home and the ability to access special mortgage products. For example, the Energy Efficient Mortgage (EEM) is a Fannie Mae product that allows homebuyers to qualify for a larger mortgage if the home is energy efficient. The EEM allows estimated monthly energy savings to be added to income for qualification purposes and to adjust the value of the home to reflect energy efficiency measures.

An EarthCraft house also offers advantages compared with a traditional home, among them: lower overall energy consumption and thus costs to operate; more environmentally-friendly materials with fewer pollutants; reduced impact on the environment through site design and landscaping; and fewer environmental or health-related issues such as allergies and the presence of mold and mildew.

The Upstate region of South Carolina is one of the nation's fastest growing areas; therefore, it is important to meet the needs of new residents in ways that are increasingly more sustainable (economically viable, socially equitable and environmentally sound). The EarthCraft House is one such way.

This is *Upstate Forever's* second collaboration with HBA of Greenville. Last year the two organizations co-sponsored a successful regional conference on affordable housing. Like HBA of Greenville, *Upstate Forever* recognizes that effectively addressing the complex problems of our society requires working together with other groups. We will keep you informed about EarthCraft's progress and successes.

For more information about EarthCraft House and Energy Star programs, visit http://southface.org/web/earthcraft_house/ech_main/ech_context.htm and <http://www.energystar.gov/>.

Transportation and Aging

The combined effects of urban sprawl, transportation system investment priorities, and the aging of our population are creating a disturbing transportation phenomenon across the nation and here in the Upstate. The demographic trend since the 1940s and 50s has been to build suburbs and subdivision communities further and further away from urban centers, making the automobile an indispensable tool for personal mobility. Concurrently, we have spent many billions of dollars in building our impressive network of interstate highways, connecting surface streets, and traffic management systems, but comparatively little money on public transit or alternative transportation modes such as walking or biking. Now as our populace ages, older people who are unable to drive are becoming increasingly isolated from critical services and more dependent on others to get from place to place.

Over the next twenty years, as more "baby boomers" reach their 60s, 70s and beyond, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the number of Americans age 65 or older will swell from 35 million to more than 62 million - nearly an 80 percent increase. Studies indicate that as a person ages, they become much more reluctant to drive themselves, particularly when they are confronted with heavy traffic areas or interstate expressway travel. What was an easy, pleasant drive along rural roads or lightly-traveled highways in the 1960s when they built their homes in "the country" is now a long, complicated, nerve-racking ordeal that many fear due to congestion, unending road construction, confusing signals and intersections, and the faster pace of traffic. Woodruff Road in Greenville County is a prime example of a former "country road" that in a relatively few years evolved into a busy artery that taxes the driving skill and patience of any driver. Other area highways, such as Clemson Boulevard in Anderson, US123 in Pickens County, Poinsett Highway and Cedar Lane Road in northern Greenville County, and Highways 9 and 221 in Spartanburg County - have been transformed as well. Imagine the stress an elderly couple, who built their home in one of these areas many years ago, must feel when they try to navigate totally-altered streetscapes during a simple trip to buy groceries or visit their doctors. We sometimes joke about the diminished driving abilities of older folks, but it becomes gravely serious when accidents occur and the victim is a grandparent, a parent, or even ourselves.

It is ironic that such growth and urban sprawl actually *increase* isolation for the elderly. Studies indicate that drivers over 65 venture out much less often, principally due to the stress of driving. When age makes driving difficult or risky, many become virtually homebound, making 15% fewer trips to the doctor, 59% fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants, and 65% fewer trips for social, family and religious activities than their counterparts who do drive. Losing the capability to drive means our elderly become entirely dependent on someone else for transportation, and since many in our region live in widely dispersed suburbs or rural neighborhoods, routine public transportation is not available to them. They may have a spanking new highway just outside their door, but without transportation, they cannot make that crucial trip to the grocery store, the drug store or the doctor, or just to get that much-needed socialization with family, friends and community. The transportation responsibility often falls on other family members, but with families so widely dispersed due to jobs or relocation, too often the elderly person just “does without” rather than making the needed trip.

Solutions to this “suburban sprawl / elderly isolation” dilemma are not simple. In the short-term, public transit planners must consider how to extend transportation resources, that have traditionally been centralized around urban centers, to a much wider and more dispersed community. Health and community service outreach providers must similarly extend their reach, either by taking services to constituents or by providing shuttle transportation. In the long-term, public officials, their planning staffs, and community leaders must consider how to reverse the suburban sprawl mindset and once again develop communities where needed services and social interaction can be reached more easily - with shorter drives, public transit, or even by actually walking through the neighborhood!

Thanks to Upstate Forever volunteer Dan Roberts for this article.

Lots o' Links

New Report Finds Retail Costs Ohio Taxpayers. This new report prepared for the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission concludes that retail development costs cities more in public services than it generates in revenue. http://www.newrules.org/retail/news_slug.php?slugid=265

African Woman Wins Nobel Peace Prize. Wangari Mataai became Africa's first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize and was recognized as “a source of inspiration for everyone in Africa fighting for sustainable development, democracy and peace.” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3726084.stm> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3726024.stm>

Divided We Sprawl. In this presentation, Bruce Katz presents the major trends affecting cities and metropolitan areas, their origins, and what policy solutions are available to effect positive change—to slow decentralization, promote urban reinvestment, and enhance access to opportunity. http://www.brookings.edu/metro/speeches/20040929_nthp.htm

Building 21st Century Communities. This presentation by David Dixon was made at the Designing Healthy Communities Conference in Charleston, SC in August 2004. <http://www.nga.org/cda/files/0408HealthCommDixon.PDF>

Health and Community Design - The Connection. Presentation by Marla Hollander, Director of Active Living Leadership. <http://www.nga.org/cda/files/0408HealthCommHollander.PDF>

Flowers That Play Music? A new Japanese gadget turns plants into audio speakers. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5991032/>

World's Least Eco-Friendly Production Vehicle? At \$93,000 and averaging only seven miles per gallon, the new CXT is "aimed at people who are far too rich to care about oil prices." <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3666160.stm>

Planetizen.com's Top 10 Planning Books of 2004. <http://www.planetizen.com/books/plnz10.php>

Comparing Sprawl in Canadian and U.S. Cities. A comparison of American and Canadian cities demonstrates that sprawl has less to do with the American Dream than with the influence the highway, oil and auto lobby has on US transportation policy. http://www.fundersnetwork.org/usr_doc/Patrick_Concon_Primer.pdf

Zipcar Rentals Gaining Momentum. Zipcars -- the cars you can rent for a few hours at a time -- are gaining traction at Harvard. <http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=503821>

Four-Wheeled Segway Centaur Concept. Guaranteed to challenge the way you think about four-wheeled transportation. <http://origin.www.segway.com/centaur/>

Long-Range Vision for Nashville: Get Rid of Downtown Interstates. Nashville should tear down the interstate loop that circles downtown and replace it with boulevards, parks and residential and commercial developments that reconnect the city's urban core with its surrounding neighborhoods, according to the Nashville Civic Design Center. http://www.tennessean.com/growth/archives/04/09/59257570.shtml?Element_ID=59257570

And Now, For Something Completely Different.....

Dilbert's Ultimate House (DUH). DUH is a virtual web-based home that the famous icon of the workplace Dilbert, his fans, tech geeks, the environmentally conscious, and those who just plain love the comfort of a good sofa, will covet. Features include a hoseable bathroom for kids that includes a drain in the floor and a Christmas tree storage closet. Fake tree stays decorated, on wheels, all year, ready to come out in December. Be sure to take the virtual tour. <http://www.unitedmedia.com/comics/dilbert/duh/>

Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

November 17, Rails-to-Trails Program, Greenville, S.C. 8:00 p.m. Watkins Room, Furman University. Please join us for a presentation by Keith Laughlin, Executive Director of the Rails to Trails Conservancy, who will address the issue of open space and trail planning. Mr. Laughlin's discussion will focus on three areas: 1) making connections between trails and other transportation corridors, 2) understanding how trails can simultaneously contribute to environmental conservation, economic development, transportation, and public health objectives, and 3) building partnerships among citizen groups, public agencies and the private sector to develop trail and greenway systems. Sponsored by the Palmetto Conservation Foundation, and co-sponsored by the Richard W. Riley Institute at Furman and **Upstate Forever**. For more information, contact Audrey Dodson at the Riley Institute, (864) 294-3280.

Ongoing, Garner's Natural Foods, Greenville, S.C. Recycle your grocery bags and help raise funds for **Upstate Forever**. If you are shopping at Garner's on Antrim Drive, you can help **Upstate Forever** by taking your own shopping bag for your groceries. For every bag you save Garner's, they will give you a bean to drop into your choice of three jars - one jar is for **Upstate Forever**. At the end of the campaign, we will receive 5 cents for every bean.

Other Events

November 5-6, Porous Pavements Conference, Athens, Georgia. This course will give responsible design and construction professionals the information they need to successfully evaluate, select, specify, and install porous paving materials for the purposes of surface drainage, watershed protection, tree-rooting habitat, pedestrian accessibility, appearance, and cost control. Presented by the University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education. http://www.gactr.uga.edu/conferences/2004/Nov/05/porous_pavements.phtml

November 10-12, Greenbuild International Conference and Expo, Portland, OR. This conference brings the industry together under one roof. Three days of extensive educational programming, workshops, and a vast exhibition floor offer opportunities to learn about the latest innovations, exchange ideas and develop new business relationships. <http://www.greenbuildexpo.com/>

November 10-12, Green Planning 2004: Integrating Urban and Community Forestry in Planning. Crowne Plaza Hilton Head Island Resort. This conference is co-sponsored by the SC Urban and Community Forestry Council and the SC Chapter of the American Planning Association. *Upstate Forever's* Diane Eldridge will make a presentation entitled "Advocating for Conservation: A Team Effort." <http://www.scurbanforestry.org/pages/760088/index.htm>

November 12-14, "The Real Food Revival," Asheville, NC. The Carolina Farm Stewardship Association is presenting its 19th annual sustainable agriculture conference. *Upstate Forever's* Brad Wyche will discuss the conservation easement and other tools for protecting the important conservation values of farmland. <http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/SAC2004/index.html>

November 13, "Citizen's Summit for Environmental Living and Sustainable Communities." Decatur, GA. Presented by Southface Institute and the Georgia Chapter of the Sierra Club. http://www.southface.org/web/programs&events/member_events/citizens_summit2004.htm

Vote November 2!

We hope the following information will be helpful to you in deciding how to vote on November 2:

South Carolina Election Commission. Listing of all candidates for state and federal offices in this year's general election. http://www.state.sc.us/scsec/candidates/general_election.htm

SCIWAY. Links to candidates' websites and other information for voters. <http://www.sciway.net/gov/sc-elections.html>

Democratic Party National Platform. <http://www.democrats.org/platform/>

Republican Party National Platform. <http://www.gop.com/RNC404.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/About/PartyPlatform/Default.aspx>

Conservation Voters of South Carolina. Non-partisan listing of candidates for state offices supported by CVSC. <http://www.conservationvotersofsc.org/news.html#cands>

Did You Know . . .

... that the most fuel-efficient vehicle among the 2005 cars, trucks and sport utility vehicles is the Honda Insight, with 61 city and 66 highway miles per gallon?¹

¹ Forbes, "Most and Least Fuel Efficient Cars," October 19, 2004. <http://www.forbes.com/business/business-tech/feeds/ap/2004/10/19/ap1597438.html>

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... and that the least fuel-efficient vehicle from that list is the Dodge Ram pickup, with 9 city and 12 highway mpg?

... that consumers purchasing a new clean-fuel vehicle by the end of 2005 may be eligible for a "Clean-Fuel" vehicle tax deduction of up to \$2,000, including gasoline/electric hybrids?²

... about the Air Car, the "zero pollution" prototype vehicle that runs on air, and even cleans the air it uses called the Air Car?³

See footnotes for links to more information.

Quote of the Month

"The challenge is not protecting ourselves from the wilderness but protecting the remaining wild places from us."

Stephanie Hunt, "Rough Hewn," *Skirt!* Magazine, July 2004.

² http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/tax_afv.shtml

³ http://www.theaircar.com/models_iwantone.html

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