

Upstate Update

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

In this Upstate Update:

1. Greenville County Parks Initiative
2. Lake Conestee Nature Park Opens to Public October 28
3. Visioning Process underway in Anderson and Pickens
4. Spartanburg hosts Speaker Series Events
5. Your Town Workshop a Huge Success
6. Owen Appointed to National Board
7. Volunteers Needed
8. Reading List: Staff Pick
9. Upcoming Events
10. Lots o' Links
11. Quote of the Month

Brad Wyche's address, "Natural Capitalism: The Path to a Sustainable World," delivered at Furman University's opening convocation last month is now available on our web site: www.upstateforever.org.

1. Greenville County Parks Initiative

Four years ago, a consultant undertook a comprehensive study of Greenville County's parks and recreational facilities, concluding that the County required \$102 million worth of additional and expanded parks to meet the needs of its residents. This was not a surprise to any County resident who has ever had to drive half an hour to bring a child to a 9:00 p.m. baseball practice, or who has faced the unpleasant prospect of a dirty or locked park restroom, or who has had to contend with poorly maintained parking lots, fences, and equipment.

A "Penny for Parks" one-cent sales tax that would have funded these needed improvements was defeated by the voters in 2002. But Greenville County's recreational needs remain. Earlier this year, Greenville County Recreation District (GCRD) Executive Director Gene Smith, with strong support from *Upstate Forever*, sports groups and many other organizations and individuals, proposed instituting a 2 percent county hospitality tax. Such a tax, levied only on restaurant-prepared food in unincorporated areas of the county, would generate an estimated \$7.5 million a year, with much of this revenue coming from non-residents.

The GCRD already levies its own property tax separately from Greenville County, but these funds have proved inadequate for maintaining existing parks, much less for acquiring and developing new parks. In fact, due to municipal annexation, property tax revenue for the GCRD is decreasing (only residents of unincorporated areas pay taxes to support GCRD). Additionally, there is no recurring source of capital funds for GCRD, while population growth increases the burden on existing facilities.

On October 10, GCRD's proposal, called "TRAC" (Tourism, Recreation and Athletic Coalition), was presented at a County Council workshop, while a standing-room-only crowd of supporters looked on. A long list of projects could potentially benefit from the hospitality tax, including three *Upstate Forever*-supported endeavors: the Swamp Rabbit Tram Trail (see [UU 76](#)), Lake Conestee Nature Park (see article below) and Camp Spearhead. The list also includes projects small and large in every part of the county, from athletic complexes in Berea and the Golden Strip, to a new water park, to the conversion

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

of two landfills (Enoree and Piedmont) to passive parks. Importantly, the plan covers facilities as well as operating and public safety costs.

Now it is up to County Council to discuss and eventually vote on implementing the hospitality tax. Please contact your Council member and encourage him or her to support this needed expansion of parks, recreation, and tourism facilities in Greenville County. Contact information for Council members is available at www.greenvillecounty.org/County%5FCouncil/. The TRAC plan that was presented to County Council can be viewed in its entirety at www.gcrd.org/powerpoint.html.

2. Lake Conestee Nature Park Opens to Public October 28

Following a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 27, the Phase 1 trail system of Lake Conestee Nature Park will be open to the public on Saturday, October 28. The trail system was constructed with a generous grant from the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, helping to transform what was once a polluted eyesore into an educational and ecological asset.

Although it will be several years before the full vision of the park's planners is realized, for now visitors can enjoy a rustic nature experience in this 250-acre park that will one day be the crown jewel in a countywide, interconnected system of parks and greenways. To learn more about Lake Conestee, visit www.upstateforever.org/programs_conestee.html.

3. Visioning Process Underway in Anderson and Pickens

Two Upstate counties are undertaking to create comprehensive visions for the future. Anderson and Pickens Counties aim to collect broad public input about a host of factors, including where and how growth should occur, and just as importantly, where growth should not occur. Meanwhile, Greenville County has begun implementing the plan from its visioning process, completed in 2004 (for the full report and more information, visit Greenville Forward at www.greenvilleforward.com).

The Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce is facilitating the "Imagine Anderson" effort, which will culminate in an action plan to be used by businesses and industries, schools, local governments, and other organizations to improve the County's quality of life and foster economic growth. At a town hall meeting in Pendleton on October 9, participants identified two key issues: the protection of green space, including farmland preservation, and equitable funding among the county's five school districts. All residents and other stakeholders in the Anderson area are urged to share their opinions and experiences at other town hall meetings this month or by completing an input form. For the meeting schedule, input forms, and more about Imagine Anderson, visit www.aimnewmedia.net/imagineanderson/index.htm.

In Pickens County, the process is just beginning, with a consulting firm hired this month to lead the effort, which will be launched in January. Pickens County Vision 2025 has a web page, which can be accessed at www.pickensvision2025.org/Page_1.html.

4. Spartanburg Hosts Speaker Series Events

On August 18, *Upstate Forever* welcomed Rich Killingsworth, a national expert on the relationship between the built environment and physical activity, who presented "Designing Communities for Active Living" at the Spartanburg Marriott. The event was part of the "Building Our Future" speaker series, sponsored by *Upstate Forever* and the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce. Killingsworth is currently Program Director for the Ruth Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan. He is the former director of Active Living by Design, a national initiative supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to promote physical activity through community design, transportation and architecture strategies. Killingsworth cited the effects of the built environment on health as the primary challenge facing public health professionals in the current decade, and discussed strategies to implement programs and policies that encourage placemaking as a solution to these health problems.

On October 20, *Upstate Forever* will present the final Speaker Series event, featuring Rick Sumerel, chief operating officer of Verdae Development, Inc., and Tom Low, Director of the Charlotte regional office of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ), a town planning and design firm. Verdae is currently developing a 1,100-acre tract of land near the new International Center for Automotive Research along I-85 into a traditional neighborhood development that could someday host 10,000 residents and 15,000 workers. Future plans include a town center, trolley, and public school.

DPZ is widely recognized as being at the vanguard of the “New Urbanism” movement as a tool for more sustainable growth. DPZ has recently worked with Jelks/Little Management, LLC to plan the new town of Griffin Park along with a regional plan for the West Georgia Road Corridor at Fork Shoals Road in Greenville County.

Sumerel and Low will speak at the Spartanburg Marriott at 7:30 am on October 20. To register for this free event, call *Upstate Forever’s* Spartanburg office at (864) 327-0090 or e-mail spartanburg@upstateforever.org. For more information, please visit www.upstateforever.org/ufs_event.html.

5. Your Town Workshop a Huge Success

From September 13-15, *Upstate Forever* hosted a *Your Town: The Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design* workshop, at the Mary Black Foundation in downtown Spartanburg. This workshop focused on an important issue in our communities: the design of current and future commercial corridors and big box stores in Spartanburg County.

Spartanburg County was one of only four communities nationwide to receive a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant to sponsor this workshop. In addition, it was the first Your Town workshop to take place in South Carolina. The *Your Town* program (www.yourtowndesign.org) was created in the 1990s as a rural equivalent to the NEA’s highly successful Mayor’s Institute on City Design.

Workshop participants represented a cross-section of the county’s stakeholders. Speakers and facilitators included national and regional experts in fields such as economic development, planning, architecture, and landscape architecture.

The workshop utilized extensive team problem-solving exercises to explore goals and options for commercial design in Spartanburg. The event culminated with team presentations that enabled participants to walk away with both inspiration and information to be applied to their specific communities.

6. Owen Appointed to National Board

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Kirk Kempthorne has reappointed *Upstate Forever* Board member Carlton Owen to a six-year term to the Board of Directors of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Carlton has served as a member of the Foundation’s Board since having first been appointed to an unexpired term by then-Secretary Bruce Babbitt in 1998. Babbitt reappointed him to a full six-year term in 2000. Should he complete his new term, Carlton would have served in various capacities with the Foundation, including Vice Chairman, for more than 14 years -- one of the longest service records in the organization’s history.

Carlton is a forester and wildlife biologist by education and training, operates The Environmental Edge, LLC, a consulting firm designed to bring business and the environment together. Locally, he has served on the Board of Directors of *Upstate Forever* since the organization’s inception in 1998 and served as Chairman in 2004 and 2005. He has also been leading volunteer efforts to see conversion of the Greenville & Northern Railroad to a tram/trail that will link downtown Greenville, Furman and Travelers Rest. Congratulations, Carlton!

7. Volunteers Needed

Upstate Forever needs help keeping up with current events. If you have a few hours every week to spare and like to read, we could use your help reviewing the several newspapers we subscribe to. This can even be done from home; we'll supply the newspapers. If interested, please call Gretchen Wilson, 250-0500 or email gwlson@upstateforever.org.

8. Reading List: Staff Pick

Saints at the River by Ron Rash

Reviewed by [John Tynan](#), Watershed Conservation Associate

A compelling, complex, emotional journey, *Saints at the River* is anchored by a core question each of us must grapple with in our daily lives: whose set of values takes precedence when working either with or against nature? In this provocative novel, set in South Carolina, a young girl's life is lost in the currents that provide the federally protected Tamassee River its life. The protection of the river becomes the focal point in a national debate on altering the course of the Tamassee in order to retrieve the girl's body from the rapids, pitting environmental values against those of a grieving family. The story is told through the eyes of Maggie Glenn, the photographer assigned to document the debate, and her interactions with Allen Hemphill, a world-renowned reporter with a similar tragedy in his family. Through their past experiences and opinions, Maggie and Allen are able to illuminate both the human, emotional side of the debate and the passionate environmentalist side of the story. In the thoughts and actions of its characters, *Saints at the River* examines the ethical undertones of both the public outcry to alter the river and retrieve the girl as well as the outcry to let nature run its course. Readers are left to search within themselves to decide which side of the debate they would support.

9. Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

October 20, Creating Suburban Neighborhoods of Lasting Value, Spartanburg Marriott, Azalea Ballroom, Spartanburg, SC, 7:30 a.m. The final "Building Our Future" Speaker Series event of 2006 features Tom Low, Director of Town Planning for Duany Plater-Zyberk & Co. of Charlotte, and Rick Sumerel, Chief Operating Officer of Verdae Development, Inc. of Greenville. The series, sponsored by *Upstate Forever* and the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce, provides a forum to address the economic benefits of planning for sensible growth and development as they relate to Spartanburg County. There is no charge for this event, but reservations are requested. To register, call *Upstate Forever's* Spartanburg office at (864) 327-0090 or e-mail spartanburg@upstateforever.org. For general information, visit www.upstateforever.org/ufs_event.html.

October 21, Rain Gardens 101, Upstate Forever office, Greenville, SC, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. For those with or without a green thumb, come see what it means to have a rain garden in the Upstate. We may even build a small rain garden at the *Upstate Forever* office! For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org.

November 4, Upstate Forever Annual Meeting, Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center, Sunset, SC, 10:00 a.m. Get to know our new staff, mingle with other members, learn more about *Upstate Forever's* work, and experience some of the special places in the Upstate at our 2006 Annual Meeting. For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at (864) 250-0500 or gwilson@upstateforever.org.

Other Events

October 24, The Trials, Tribulations, Joys, and Successes of an Itinerant Gardener on the Roads Less Taken, Cultural Center Auditorium, Lander University, Greenwood, SC, 7:00 p.m. Horticultural researcher and author Dr. Michael Dirr presents the Second Annual Lander Arboretum Lecture, an evening

of insights and adventures that will delight any gardener or plant professional. Tickets are \$5 in advance or at the door, and all proceeds will benefit the Lander University Arboretum. For tickets, call (864) 993-7866.

October 24-27, Cultivating Creative Communities, Marriott City Center, Charlotte, NC. This conference, coordinated by Partners for Livable Communities, will bring civic and community leaders together to build a new framework to understand how we can make cities and regions more livable, equitable, and sustainable places. www.creativeconf.org/home.shtml

October 26, Greenville County Tree Policy Advisory Committee, Greenville County Square, Conference Room A, 8:00 a.m. This committee will be discussing specific recommendations for inclusion in a future county-wide tree ordinance. Public comments are welcome during the first 15 minutes. Another meeting is scheduled for November 9. For more information about the committee, read our "Keeping the Green in Greenville" newsletter at www.upstateforever.org/prog_tree/ktgg_060907.pdf. You may also contact Diane Eldridge, a member of the Committee, at diane.eldridge@charter.net.

October 27-29, Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Spartanburg Marriott, Spartanburg, SC. The 21st annual conference of the Carolina Farm Steward Association has as its theme "Gathering the Ingredients for a Sustainable Food System," focusing on the development of a food system that is good for families, farmers, and the environment. For registration and information, visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org/calendar/SAC2006/SAC2006.html or call (919) 542-2402.

November 9-10, Tree Solutions 2006: For Those Who Want Answers, Spartanburg Marriott Conference Center, Spartanburg, SC. The South Carolina Urban & Community Forestry Council presents this special program for arborists, urban foresters, planners, horticulturalists, tree boards, and other citizens. For more information, visit www.scurbanforestry.org.

November 28, Greenways Conference, Furman University, Greenville, SC. Charles Fink of Greenways, Inc. will be featured at this Riley Institute event. Look for full details next month.

10. Lots o' Links

[The Biggest Environmental Enemy? Us.](#) An editorial from the Hilton Head *Island Packet* summarizing growth issues in South Carolina, as gleaned from a panel at Furman University's conference on the environment in September.

[U.S. Population Close to 300 Million and Rising: No Cause for Celebration.](#) Author Lester Brown writes of the environmental impacts of population growth, from fresh water supplies to landfills, and challenges us to consider instituting a federal population stabilization policy.

[How America Grows: A Tale of Two Cities.](#) Gilbert, Arizona, and Portland, Oregon, have approached population expansion in very different ways, as described in this article from the *Christian Science Monitor*.

[October 9: World Overshoot Day 2006.](#) According to the Global Footprint Network, as of October 9th, humanity will have already consumed the total amount of new resources nature will produce this year, and the world will be living beyond its ecological means.

[Energy-Saving Bulbs' Sales Brighten.](#) Recent advocacy in the Upstate has helped fuel demand for compact-fluorescent bulbs, which are dramatically more efficient than standard incandescent bulbs.

[Change a Light, Change the World.](#) At the EPA-sponsored Energy Star web site, you can pledge to reduce global warming by replacing a standard light bulb with an energy-saving bulb, plus get more information about the Energy Star program.

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[Will China's 'Eco-City' Live Up To Expectations?](#) The developers of Dongtan, on an island north of Shanghai, hope that it will be seen as a model of sustainable development for the rest of the world.

[Roof Gardens a Cure for Water Runoff?](#) In Florida, green roofs are being studied for their impact on stormwater management.

[Worms in Charge of Office Recycling.](#) A California program encourages vermiculture in special bins, in which go coffee grounds and food scraps, thereby reducing office waste.

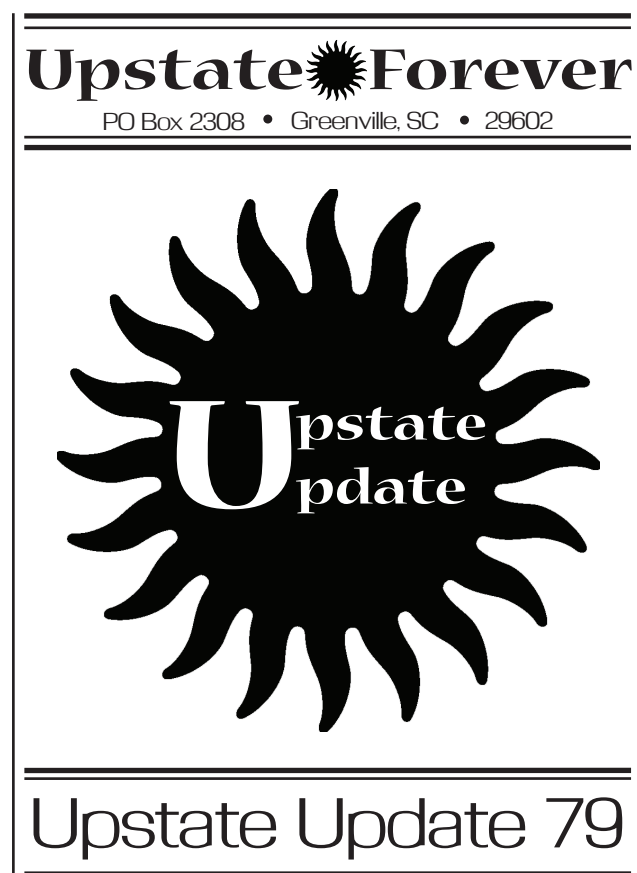
[Home of the YIMBYs.](#) Tiny Sauget, Illinois, courts business misfits, such as sewage treatment plants, toxic waste incinerators, strip clubs, and liquor stores. While the village's per capita income is \$19,000, it rakes in \$28,000 per capita in tax revenues.

[Nudist Community Proposed for Belton.](#) Would a 150-home Christian nudist subdivision help or hinder economic development in Anderson County?

11. Quote of the Month

"Great plans without resources are fantasies."

-Former U.S. Senator and astronaut John Glenn, giving the keynote address at Furman University's conference, "The Environment: Critical Issues of the 21st Century," 9/25/06



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