

Upstate Update

NUMBER 80

DECEMBER
2 0 0 6

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

In this Upstate Update:

1. Gov. Sanford Seeks Additional \$20 Million for Conservation Bank
2. TRAC Plan Approved!
3. Regulatory Takings a Renewed Threat in 2007
4. Economic Benefits of Greenways
5. Viney Named Director of Spartanburg Office
6. Editorial: People Want Local Governments to Protect Their Homes and Property Values
7. Partnership with Upper Savannah Land Trust
8. Upcoming Events
9. Lots o' Links
10. Quote of the Month

1. Gov. Sanford Seeks Additional \$20 Million for Conservation Bank

Gov. Mark Sanford has included an additional \$20 million for the SC Conservation Bank in his Executive Budget, for a total of \$35 million, aimed at bolstering the state's ability to protect important lands and natural resources. This request could not come at a better time, as South Carolina's population is expected to increase by more than one million people over the next two decades. Meanwhile, we are developing land at a dizzying rate of nearly 200 acres per day statewide.

We commend Gov. Sanford on his continuing commitment to conservation. Since 2004, the SC Conservation Bank has protected more than 72,000 acres of significant lands and resources, at a cost to the state of only \$420 per acre. But to achieve a better balance between conservation and development in South Carolina, the Conservation Bank urgently needs additional funding. Compared to many other states and even counties, South Carolina spends a very small amount on conservation, indicating just how reasonable the Governor's request is.

The General Assembly convenes next month, so now is the time to contact your representatives (www.upstateforever.org/region_officials.html) and ask them to support additional funding for the Conservation Bank.

2. TRAC Plan Approved!

Over a year of hard work and advocacy for more parks in Greenville County came to a successful conclusion on December 12 when County Council, by a vote of 10 to 2, gave final approval to the "TRAC" (Tourism, Recreation and Athletics Coalition) plan.

The plan, which will be funded by a 2% hospitality tax on restaurants in the unincorporated areas of the county, includes upgrading and expanding existing parks and building new parks throughout the county. The plan includes the Swamp Rabbit Rail-Trail, Lake Conestee Nature Park, and Camp Spearhead, all of which have been priority projects for *Upstate Forever*. (For more information about the TRAC plan, visit www.greenvilleforward.com/Main%20Pages/TRAC.htm.)

The hospitality tax is expected to generate almost \$7 million per year -- enough to support \$50 million worth of bonds to implement the TRAC plan. A portion of the tax will be devoted to public safety.

Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

The “C” in TRAC is the reason for its success - “coalition.” The plan was supported by one of the broadest groups of partners that has ever come together in the history of Greenville County to advocate for a particular initiative. The coalition included business leaders, homebuilders, realtors, swim teams, soccer clubs, Little League baseball, museum supporters, tourism officials, Furman University, municipalities, and conservation groups. Major kudos go to Gene Smith, Executive Director of the Greenville County Recreation District, and his amazing staff, who created the plan and met individually with each Council member to explain it.

No organization more actively supported and is more excited about the TRAC plan than *Upstate Forever*. But this plan, as wonderful as it is, still falls far short in meeting the County’s long-term recreational needs. The comprehensive study that was done in 2002 showed that the County actually needs over \$100 million in new and expanded parks by 2015. The TRAC plan will fund only half of that. Moreover, the plan is woefully deficient in its funding for conservation. Greenville County still needs a local “conservation bank” to protect important lands and resources (natural and historic).

So while the well-deserved celebration continues, let’s remember that we still have much work to do.

3. Regulatory Takings a Renewed Threat in 2007

In 2006, the SC House of Representatives considered a bill, H.4503, stating that “a private owner of real property is entitled to just compensation if a land use law reduces the fair market value of the land.” In practice, this “regulatory takings” bill would have ground to a halt all local planning and zoning efforts in our state. This legislation was still being debated and studied when the Legislature closed for the year in June, and a takings study committee will begin meeting in January. The regulatory takings bill is certain to be reintroduced in 2007.

The results of a similarly-worded measure passed in Oregon in 2004 have been catastrophic for planning efforts. State and municipal governments there are already faced with thousands of claims and have only two options: (1) pay landowners billions of dollars in compensation for perceived “reduced land value” (which they cannot afford to do) or (2) grant waivers to the complaining landowners and allow them to ignore reasonable land use protections, despite negative impacts on their neighbors’ properties. As a result, a mining company is now permitted to mine in a national monument, and a gravel pit has been allowed to operate in a residential neighborhood, among other examples.

On November 15, a group of citizens, representatives of community groups (including *Upstate Forever*), and local officials met in Greenville to organize opposition to regulatory takings legislation, led by the newly-formed statewide organization Citizens for Community Protection (C4CP). C4CP is forming a coalition of local governments, chambers of commerce, homeowners’ associations, historic preservation societies and conservation groups to fight for the right of South Carolinians to determine the fates of their communities.

For more information on the coalition and the effort to defeat takings legislation in the 2007 legislative session, contact their grassroots coordinator, Alison Floyd, at (803) 771-6468 or alison@citizens4cp.org.

4. Economic Benefits of Greenways

A greenway is simply a linear corridor, often along a riverbank. Not so simply, greenways can serve as low-cost economic and social engines for communities. On November 28, *Upstate Forever* and Furman University’s Riley Institute hosted a presentation by Chuck Flink, president of Greenways, Inc., who spoke to a large crowd about the economic benefits of greenways and their potential in Greenville County. Mr. Flink, whose firm has been selected to design a greenways master plan for the City of Greenville, related

examples from around the nation of how greenways are a win-win-win proposition:

- Greenways *add value* by raising the value of nearby properties. In one example, at a new development in Apex, NC, lots adjacent to a community greenway sold faster—and at a \$5000 premium—than similar lots located elsewhere in the same subdivision.
- Greenways *avoid costs* by keeping flood-prone areas undeveloped and improving public health. Flooding causes \$2 billion in property damage annually in the United States. Successful flood buyout programs in Louisville, KY and Charlotte, NC have turned flood-prone neighborhoods into parks, preventing future damage. And health care costs are reduced when citizens get more exercise; citizens exercise more when it is convenient and pleasant to do so. Trails are consistently among the most popular recreational facilities in Greenville and elsewhere.
- Greenways *create new revenues* by attracting private sector investment and tourism. Chattanooga, TN has seen \$1 billion in private investment in the ten years since the establishment of their greenway system. In the Outer Banks of NC, bicycle tourists have an annual economic impact of \$60 million and support 1400 local jobs. And in isolated Grand Forks, ND, a new greenways system generates over \$9 million in revenue each year.

The following morning, Mr. Flink gave another talk about the master planning process for a potential greenway system in Greenville County. Key elements of such an effort would include extensive public input, GIS mapping, identification of funding sources, and land and water conservation strategies. Let's hope that we will soon see greenway plans in Greenville and other Upstate counties!

5. Viney Named Director of Spartanburg Office

Upstate Forever is very pleased to announce that Angela Viney is the new Director of our office in Spartanburg as well as the Director of our Sustainable Communities Program. Angela had served as the Executive Director of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation since 1997 and is one of the most respected and effective leaders in the conservation field in South Carolina. We are very fortunate to have her on the *Upstate Forever* team. Welcome, Angela!

6. Editorial: People Want Local Governments to Protect Their Homes and Property Values

And speaking of Spartanburg, the following editorial was published on October 10, 2006 in the Spartanburg Herald-Journal. Reprinted with permission.

Upstate residents want their local governments to protect the investments they have made in their homes. They want growth managed, and they want zoning in the county.

Eighty-six percent of the respondents to the Voice of the Voter survey conducted by the *Herald-Journal* and NewsChannel 7 indicated that they want stronger laws that channel development and protect neighborhoods. Only 8 percent of those who responded to the unscientific survey oppose stronger laws.

An overwhelming majority, 71 percent, also stated that they want county governments to enact zoning. Only 14 percent oppose zoning.

That's quite a shift in popular opinion in the Upstate. Only a few years ago, county officials were afraid to even consider zoning. One county official referred to it as "the Z word."

In 1998, when the *Herald-Journal* and NewsChannel 7 conducted a similar survey, only 49.7 percent favored zoning in the county, while 50.4 percent were opposed.

What has happened to change people's minds?

They have seen land developed in the Upstate without a strategy for their communities.

They have seen commercial developments located near existing neighborhoods with little consideration for the adjacent homeowners and their property values.

They have seen incompatible industrial and commercial developments locate near residential or agricultural areas. They have seen more and more residential developments sprout along rural roads that can't handle the traffic.

Many homeowners in the Upstate have seen large parcels of land sold or cleared near their homes and have known the fearful thought: "I wonder what's going in there?"

They have wished that there were meaningful ordinances in the county to protect their property values and the quality of life in their neighborhood.

But Spartanburg County leaders have not responded. Not only have they refused to adopt any of the zoning models that have worked well in other areas of the state, they have refused to significantly improve the county's existing land-use ordinances.

People in the Upstate want more. They want growth, but they want it managed. They want development channeled where it is needed. They want some agricultural and scenic areas preserved. And they want their neighborhoods protected.

They no longer see zoning as a government infringement on individual property rights. They have come to realize that zoning is a tool that communities can use to define their future. They have come to desire zoning as the protection they need for their own homes.

It's time for Spartanburg County Council to respond.

7. Partnership with Upper Savannah Land Trust

We are pleased to announce that The Upper Savannah Land Trust board has approved a partnership with **Upstate Forever**. The Greenwood-based conservation group will work with **Upstate Forever's** Land Trust staff to encourage land protection agreements with landowners along the Saluda River in Greenwood, Laurens and Abbeville Counties.

8. Upcoming Events

Upstate Forever Events

January 27, Art and Conservation Celebration, Saffron's Sidewalk Café, Greenville, SC, 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Our first Art and Conservation Celebration will feature more than two dozen local and nationally-known artists showcasing their nature-based works. The artwork will be available for sale, with at least 50% of the purchase price benefiting **Upstate Forever**. Delicious edibles will be provided by Whole Foods. The evening is sure to become an annual event—don't miss it! For more information, contact John Tynan at (864) 250-0500x31 or jtynan@upstateforever.org.

February 24, Outing: Winter Waterfall Hike, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. We'll walk along a pristine stream to one of the Upstate's spectacular waterfalls and discuss a variety of issues facing our pristine water resources. For more information, or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

Upstate update

NUMBER 80
DECEMBER
2 0 0 6

March 10, Outing: Trout Stream Hike, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. We'll hike along a trout stream for the day. We'll fish and learn what keeps the fish happy and alive in our wild and beautiful rivers here in the Upstate. For more information, or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

April 14, Outing: Scenic Saluda Paddle, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Join us for a leisurely paddle down an untouched stretch of the Saluda River. We'll learn what a "blueway" is all about and how it might work in our region. For more information, or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at gwilson@upstateforever.org or (864) 250-0500.

Other Events

January 3, The Future of Renewable Energy in South Carolina, Myrtle Beach, SC, 11:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. The Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) of South Carolina is sponsoring this symposium, which will include speakers from the SC Department of Agriculture, USDA, and Santee Cooper, as well as farmers and landowners who are currently using alternative energy sources on their operations. Registration is \$50 and includes lunch. To register, visit <http://www.scswcs.org/flyer3.pdf>. For more information, contact Amy Maxwell at allimaxwell@earthlink.net.

March 6-7, The State of South Carolina's Trails, Piedmont Forestry Center, Tamassee, SC. Learn about future trail systems, emerging trends in outdoor recreation, and successes in trail funding and design at this conference, sponsored by the SC Forestry Commission, SCPRT, SCDNR, and USDA Forest Service. For more information, contact Jennie Morris at (803) 896-8852.

9. Lots o' Links

[You Can Build a Rain Garden.](#) Volunteers recently constructed a rain garden at the *Upstate Forever* office. Click the link to find out more and view the design.

[Clemson, Furman and USC Recognized for Green Building Activities.](#) The South Carolina chapter of the US Green Building Council recently presented awards to Clemson, Furman and the University of South Carolina for their leadership and achievements in green buildings.

[Recycled Christmas.](#) An account of how one extended family spent less money while creating more joy.

[National Parks for Sale?](#) The National Park Service took a giant step in September toward further commercialization of the natural resources in our National Parks, specifically, the ability of corporations to mine, exploit, patent, and profit from the lands and wildlife that we are all supposed to be stewarding. Visit this site to learn more and comment on the Park Service's actions before the January 29th deadline for public input.

[Cycling in the Suburbs.](#) A first-person account of a harrowing attempt at commuting by bike in the suburbs.

[From Dumps to Destinations: Converting Landfills to Parks.](#) Across the country, cities are turning their once unpleasant and putrid landfills into new parks for people.

[Where Do We Put the Next 100 Million?](#) Syndicated columnist Neal Peirce describes how high-speed rail is the only solution to our growing population, sprawling across "megaregions."

[Green Wave Sweeping Business World.](#) Leading companies are discovering that thinking green can generate great value for their brands and do wonders for the bottom line, asserts a new book by two Yale University researchers.

Upstate Update

NUMBER 80
DECEMBER
2006

[Voters Approve Record Amount for Land Conservation.](#) On November 7, voters in 23 states approved 99 ballot measures to provide \$5.73 billion for state and local government funding for land conservation.

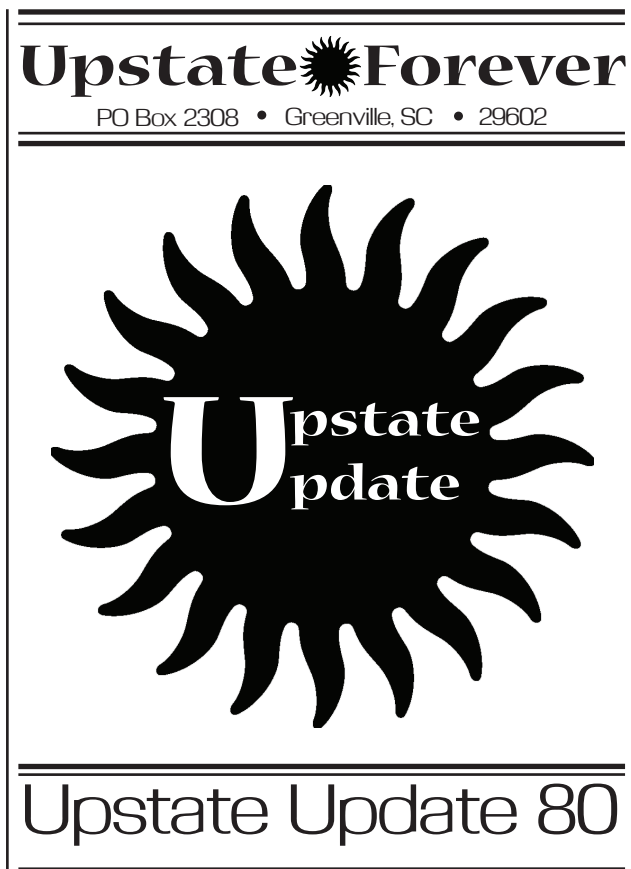
[A Transit-Powered Revival.](#) Since Portland, OR announced the development of nation's first modern streetcar system in 1997, developers have invested \$2.8 billion in projects within two blocks of the trolley line.

[Poverty Follows Families to the Suburbs.](#) The suburban poor outnumbered their inner-city counterparts for the first time last year, as increasingly diverse suburbs are home to more low-wage jobs.

10. Quote of the Month

"If Spartanburg wants to be blatant rapists of the land, what can we do? I mean, a little town of 1,800 can do zoning, but Spartanburg can't?"

- Tryon, NC Town Manager Jim Fatland, in reaction to a high-density development proposed for a rural area near the North Carolina state line, quoted in the *Spartanburg Herald-Journal*, 12/12/06



EDUCATION • ADVOCACY • LAND TRUST