

# Upstate Update

NUMBER 93

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

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### 1. Upstate Population Growth Continues

The Upstate grew by 37 residents each and every day over the last seven years, according to new population estimates released by the US Census Bureau. In 2007, the total population of the Upstate's nine counties (Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg, and Union) was estimated to be 1,290,140, an increase of 95,765 since 2000. Within the Upstate, Greenville County experienced the most growth, both in raw numbers (48,627) and as a percentage (12.8%). Spartanburg and Anderson Counties both grew by 8.6%, Oconee County by 6.9%, Pickens County by 4.7%, Greenwood County by 3.0%, and Cherokee County by 2.8% between 2000 and 2007. Laurens County's population remained steady, while Union County lost 7.1% of its population.

The new data underscore the need to act *now* in fast-growing areas to direct growth where infrastructure already exists, implement transportation alternatives, encourage mixed-use development, and protect critical lands. In slower-growing or declining areas, it is wise to invest in transit and education, focus on cultural/historic/recreational resources, clear blight, and scale back underutilized infrastructure and services. We *can* preserve what makes our area special while improving quality of life for all of us—newcomers and longtime residents alike.

### 2. Get Involved in Comprehensive Planning

You can help guide Greenville's rapid growth! Greenville County is seeking citizen involvement in its comprehensive planning process. A series of community meetings throughout the county was completed in April, but there is still time to join one of the seven citizen committees focusing on population, land use, housing, economic development, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, transportation, and priority investment areas. To apply for a committee or for more information, visit the project's website at [www.imaginegreenville.com](http://www.imaginegreenville.com).

Five other Upstate counties are currently updating or revising their comprehensive plans. For further information about how to get involved, contact your county's planning department.

- Abbeville: Last plan was adopted in 1999. The updated plan has gone through the planning commission and will be adopted by the end of the summer. <http://www.abbevillecountysc.com/>
- Oconee: Last plan was adopted in 2004. They are currently reviewing the plan, which should be completed mid-2009. <http://www.oconeesc.com/planning/default.htm>

## Promoting sensible growth and protecting special places in the Upstate

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- Pickens: Last plan was adopted in 1999. The County is scheduled to update the plan by mid-2009. <http://www.co.pickens.sc.us/planning/>
- Spartanburg: The County is scheduled to complete the update of their plan by the end of 2008. <http://www.spartanburgcounty.org/govt/depts/pln/index.htm>

In addition to the counties working on comprehensive planning, some local cities are getting into the act. For information on the City of Greenville's "Plan-it Greenville," already underway, visit <http://www.planitgreenville.com>. The City of Greer is publicly launching its comprehensive planning process with a kickoff event to be held on **May 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.** at the new Police and Municipal Court Complex (the first public event scheduled for the building), located at 100 South Main Street. More information, including a committee member application and an online survey, is available at the project's website: <http://onegreer.org>.

### 3. Green AND Affordable

Since 1995, the City of Greenville has been working on the redevelopment of the Green Avenue area. This older neighborhood in the booming West End is home to houses, shops, churches, and institutions such as Greenville High School and the YWCA, but has also seen its share of decline. The City's goal is to revitalize the area without pricing out longtime residents.

When the Stormwater and Engineering Department got involved to work on the neighborhood's stormwater treatment plan, they contacted *Upstate Forever* for help in incorporating low-impact development (LID) techniques. LID represents a new approach to stormwater management—reducing it at the source, taking advantage of natural filtration, and thereby reducing the need for piping and treating stormwater. LID is better for the environment while saving local developers money and has been a major focus of *Upstate Forever's* Clean Air and Water program for the past three years. Green Avenue represents an opportunity to demonstrate that LID is cost-effective in an affordable development project.

*Upstate Forever's* Urban Rivers Project Manager Heather Nix, along with other staff members, reviewed the City's plans for Green Avenue, went on a site tour, and then offered suggestions to incorporate LID techniques. One suggestion was to incorporate vegetated swales rather than concrete pipes to direct stormwater. The swales can be aesthetically pleasing while allowing some of the stormwater to soak into the earth, reducing the volume that ends up flooding our rivers and streams. The creation of small "pocket" parks is another example of functional landscaping that can add beauty to the neighborhood while performing necessary stormwater management tasks. Additionally, an alley slated for abandonment can be converted into a walking path, improving connectivity in the neighborhood.

Another suggestion involved the detention ponds that are required in many development projects to prevent flooding in heavy rains. Nix suggested that the project replace detention ponds with constructed wetlands that could be bordered by walking trails. So instead of a typical pit surrounded by chain-link fencing, the neighborhood will have an amenity, as well as improved water quality treatment.

*Upstate Forever* applauds the City of Greenville for taking a low-impact development approach to Green Avenue and hopes that our suggestions will be incorporated into the project. For more information about the project, visit [http://www.greatergreenville.com/pdf\\_forms/comm\\_dev/green.pdf](http://www.greatergreenville.com/pdf_forms/comm_dev/green.pdf). To learn more about low-impact development, visit <http://www.saludareedy.org/outreach/lid.html>.

#### 4. Oconee Zoning Debated

In [UU 92](#), we reported on efforts in Oconee County to pass a zoning enabling ordinance. The County, which boasts some of the most beautiful natural resources in our state, is attracting substantial development and urgently needs the tools to plan for and manage its growth.

The proposed ordinance has two major elements: first, it would establish “overlay districts” to manage growth around the major lakes, I-85, and Highways 11 and 107; and second, outside of the overlay districts, citizens could petition for zoning in their communities. The “Z word” is always controversial in our region, with some citizens viewing it as an infringement on their property rights. But many in Oconee County see land use regulations as an essential measure to protect property values as well as the health and welfare of citizens by separating (or mixing) uses as appropriate. In addition, it is critically important that the overlay districts - lands along the county’s major lakes and highways - be properly developed.

On April 10, *Upstate Forever* sent a letter to all Council members urging them to adopt the ordinance in order to give citizens the ability and authority to determine the future of their communities. We stated that the overlay districts should have clear standards that have been publicly vetted and that these standards should be developed through a separate public process and later adopted by amendment to the ordinance.

The ordinance was originally scheduled for second reading on April 15, but Council opted to delay the vote and instead hold a public hearing, which saw a large turnout from both proponents and opponents. A week later, the County dropped the Scenic Highway 11/107 overlay from the proposal. The next regular Council meeting is scheduled for May 6. We urge County Council to vote in favor of the ordinance on second reading at that time. As growth and development continue to accelerate in Oconee County, there is no more important or urgent need than empowering citizens to decide their future.

To view the proposed zoning enabling ordinance, visit [www.oconeesc.com/council/2007/Pending\\_Ordinances/07-18%20Zoning%20Enabling%20Ordinance%20Revised.pdf](http://www.oconeesc.com/council/2007/Pending_Ordinances/07-18%20Zoning%20Enabling%20Ordinance%20Revised.pdf). An article from the *Anderson Independent-Mail* published after the public hearing can be viewed at [www.independentmail.com/news/2008/apr/15/oconee-council-gets-ear-full-zoning-issue/](http://www.independentmail.com/news/2008/apr/15/oconee-council-gets-ear-full-zoning-issue/).

#### 5. Upstate Mills Undergo Revitalization

The textile industry, of course, was the backbone of the Upstate’s economy for nearly a century. But as the industry went into decline over the last few decades, many of the grand mill structures that dominated our communities were abandoned and left to deteriorate, attracting vagrants and vandals. Fires at several mills have threatened nearby homes. Many of the mill sites pose environmental hazards as well, making redevelopment even more challenging and expensive.

But many Upstate communities are trying to turn these negatives into something positive -- economically, environmentally, and socially. Anderson County, which launched its Textile Communities Revitalization Project in 2000, has recently received two grants from the US EPA for environmental assessment at three mill sites: Old Riverside Mill, Toxaway Mill and Appleton Mill. The grants, totaling \$400,000, will enable to County to identify areas of contamination at the mill sites and determine needed remediation. The ultimate goal is to turn the blighted sites into productive properties, increasing surrounding property values, generating additional tax revenues, creating new jobs, and enhancing community pride. For more information, visit [http://www.andersoncountysc.org/web/News\\_01.asp?News\\_ID=431](http://www.andersoncountysc.org/web/News_01.asp?News_ID=431).

In Spartanburg, a completed mill redevelopment project recently won an award from the SC Department of Archives and History for historic preservation. Arcadia Mill #2 (also known as Mayfair-Baily Mill) was built in 1922 and ceased textile operations in 2001. Mayfair Mill, LLC renovated the mill into

a 111-unit loft apartment complex, which opened late last year. Both the interior and exterior of the project reflect the site's industrial history—even the fire-sprinkler tower was preserved. According to the SCDAH website (<http://www.state.sc.us/scdah/hpawards2008.htm>), “The mill now provides much-needed housing and is stimulating new investment in the area.”

And in Greenville County, Simpsonville Mill (also known as Woodside Mill), which operated from 1908 until 1989, was designated this year as a historic site by the Greenville County Historic Preservation Commission. The mill, located in downtown Simpsonville, has been privately redeveloped into “Cotton Mill Place,” a condominium complex. According to Greenville County's Governmental Affairs Coordinator Bob Mihalic, the site has become “a hub of activity while preserving the past.” (To read an article about the development from *The Greenville News*, visit [www.cottonmillplace.com/index.cfm?sp=news](http://www.cottonmillplace.com/index.cfm?sp=news).) But not every abandoned mill site is a candidate for conversion to housing units. At the former Union Bleachery/U.S. Finishing site near the City of Greenville, Greenville County has determined that the buildings cannot be reused. The County is seeking federal grants to pay for environmental cleanup so the site can eventually be converted to public greenspace, spurring private investment in the area.

## 6. Conservation Credit Transfers

A new service is available to South Carolinians of modest incomes who wish to protect their properties. State tax credits are available for those willing to place conservation agreements on their properties, but some landowners have insufficient income to take full advantage of them. The South Carolina Conservation Credit Exchange enables these landowners to sell excess credits to other taxpayers. In a nutshell, sellers receive cash for their credits, buyers pay their taxes at a discount, and South Carolina conserves more of its critical farmland, timberland, and scenic landscapes: a win-win-win proposition!

For more information, contact the SC Conservation Credit Exchange at [www.conservesc.com](http://www.conservesc.com).

## 7. Upcoming Upstate Forever Events

**Friday, May 9**

**Spartanburg Speaker Series: The Economic Case for Smart Growth  
Spartanburg Marriott at Renaissance Park, Spartanburg, SC 7:30 a.m.**

The May installment of our free breakfast series features Paris Glendening, former Governor of Maryland and current President of the Smart Growth Leadership Institute. Cities across the United States are facing the reality of a new economic framework. Society has shifted from an economy based on natural resources and institutionalized structure to a knowledge-based economy that finds innovative solutions to the unique issues of the 21st century. In today's economy, a city's long-term success is largely based on its ability to attract and retain creative talent that will be inventive, entrepreneurial, and productive. To capture that resource, cities must find ways to persuade a very mobile population of modern, young professionals to “choose them.” This presentation will explain the many ways that a city's quality of life and sensible growth patterns can lead to increased economic growth. For more information or to register, contact [spartanburg@upstateforever.org](mailto:spartanburg@upstateforever.org) or call (864) 327-0090.

**Thursday, May 15**

**Environmental and Agricultural Film Series: “A River Reborn”  
Upcountry History Museum, Greenville, SC 7:30 p.m.**

The second screening in the film series presented by *Upstate Forever*, Greenville Organic Foods Organization, and the Upcountry History Museum is “A River Reborn.” This award-winning documentary, narrated by Ted Danson, examines the restoration of Fossil Creek in Arizona, a river once diverted to

generate electricity. In a historic turnaround, the hydroelectric facilities are now being decommissioned and the river is being returned to its natural state. Fossil Creek provides a rare example of the cooperative resolution of environmental disputes. Filmgoers can enjoy snacks and drinks generously provided by Whole Foods Market. Admission to the film is included in the museum entrance fee (adults: \$5, students and seniors: \$4, children 4-12: \$3, children under 4: free). Contact Kirbie Crowe at [kcrowe@upstateforever.org](mailto:kcrowe@upstateforever.org) or (864) 250-0500x21 for more information.

**Saturday, May 24**  
**Saluda River Paddle**  
**Sunrift Adventures, Travelers Rest, SC**  
**10th Anniversary Field Trip**

Our 10th Anniversary celebration continues as *Upstate Forever* takes to the Saluda. Come enjoy a great spring field trip in either a kayak or canoe. Both *Upstate Forever* and Sunrift Adventures staff will be on hand to guide you. The trip is limited to 16 *Upstate Forever* members and participants should bring their own water and snacks. The cost is \$40 per member and an additional \$10 for kayak rental. For more information or to register, contact Gretchen Wilson at [gwilson@upstateforever.org](mailto:gwilson@upstateforever.org) or call (864) 250-0500.

## 8. Lots o' Links

[Greenville in Top Ten Drought-Risky Cities](#). According to data compiled by Sperling's Best Places, the Greenville metro area is the ninth "drought-riskiest" city in the United States.

[So Maybe You Need a Rain Barrel](#). Here's a guide to harvesting rainwater.

[Helping Businesses Recycle](#). The SC Smart Business Recycling Program offers resources to help businesses reuse and recycle more, including site visits, technical assistance, and a free exchange service.

[Cypress Mulch: A Threat to Gulf Coast Ecosystems](#). Did you know that cypress mulch is non-renewable? Unlike pine bark mulch, cypress mulch is not a lumber by-product; rather entire trees are cut down and ground up, with significant long-term impacts on Louisiana's environment.

[A Good Walk, Unspoiled](#). Disc golf, a greener alternative to "ball" golf, is rising in popularity.

[Charlotte-Area Growth Study Released](#). UNC Charlotte has released a study forecasting the impacts of urban growth on natural and rural lands in the 24-county greater Charlotte area, finding a development rate in 2006 of more than 140 acres per day.

[Mapping Transportation Costs for Home Buyers](#). The Center for Neighborhood Technology has released a web tool that allows you to analyze and compare the true affordability of neighborhoods in metro areas across the nation, based on both housing and transportation costs.

[Walkable Communities Guide](#). New, from the Federal Highway Administration: "A Residents' Guide to Creating Safe and Walkable Communities."

[Green is the New Chic](#). Even Oprah is getting on the green bandwagon!

## 9. Quote of the Month

“In 1975, there were 30,000 to 35,000 people in Oconee County. In 1997, there were 70,000. It is not going to take 30 years to double again. We need to take care of Oconee County.”

- J. Harold Thomas, former Oconee County Council member, speaking in favor of the proposed Oconee County zoning enabling ordinance, quoted in the *Anderson Independent-Mail*, 4/16/08

See our new brochure! *Economic Prosperity and Environmental Protection: We Can Have It Both Ways* is posted on our website [www.upstateforever.org](http://www.upstateforever.org).

## Upstate Forever

---Promoting sensible growth and the protection of special places in the Upstate since 1998---


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**Upstate Forever**  
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