



FOCUS GROUP MEETING SERIES

Utility Providers

Brief Meeting Summary

Attendees:

- ❖ Mike Ellis – Laurens Electric
- ❖ Keith Gabriel – Duke Energy
- ❖ John Gardner – City of Mauldin
- ❖ Mark Harvey – Greer Commission of Public Works
- ❖ Sandy Martin – Duke Energy
- ❖ Hank McCullough – Piedmont Natural Gas
- ❖ Glenn Pace – City of Greer
- ❖ Sue Schneider – Spartanburg Water and Sewer
- ❖ Dyke Spencer – Powdersville Water/Anderson Regional Joint Water System
- ❖ Jason Vaughn – Synterra

Overview:

On September 19, 2016, the project team for Shaping Our Future met with Utility Providers to gather feedback on the influence and impact of available infrastructure for making one area – or one type and style of development – more attractive compared to others in the Upstate Region. The group was asked to identify general service areas in the region and challenges associated with serving specific new development types, locations, patterns or intensities in the future.

A presentation by the project team was followed by a group discussion. The presentation can be found at www.ShapingOurFutureUpstateSC.org (in the Community Engagement section).

Influence of Utility Providers on Development

Generally, it was agreed that sewer providers are the most influential among all utilities for steering new growth. Limited capacity is not so much an issue for wastewater treatment plants as with collection lines. On the other hand, it was noted that generally water, gas and electricity providers do not have the same level of influence related to where new growth locates.



Challenges & Opportunities

- ❖ **Fragmentation of Providers** – The fragmentation of special service districts is a big challenge for streamlined coordination amongst providers. It was noted that it may not have a huge impact on where growth locates but does cause a lot of frustration and headaches.
- ❖ **Lack of Strong Land Planning and Zoning** - An agreed upon challenge was the lack of strong land use planning and zoning in the region which results in higher risk for utilities when extending service. There would be less risk if certain areas were designated as high growth areas, resulting in a higher degree of predictability related to future growth (and future revenues) for providers.
- ❖ **Insufficient Revenue Collection via Taxes and Impact Fees** – It was noted that developers do not “pay their fair share” nor does the county collect enough tax revenue to allow for necessary infrastructure upgrades. Certain development types are more expensive to serve as well. For instance, providing water to residential areas that require fire service is much more expensive than providing it to a warehouse. Especially when residential areas are located in remote locations away from other development, the relative expense is a challenge.
- ❖ **Redevelopment Challenges and Opportunities** – Redevelopment can lead to challenges for providers – such as conversion of old mill properties to residential. A potentially untapped opportunity noted was the re-use of abandoned industrial facilities.
- ❖ **Basins Crossing State Lines** – It was noted that only one basin falls wholly within the state – the ACE Basin. All others cross state lines, and that alone is a threat and potential challenge.
- ❖ **Challenges with Natural Gas and Electricity** – A specific challenge with natural gas is that revenues dip in the summer. A challenge noted regarding electricity was timing – getting power to a site by the time the client needs it, particularly with increasingly tightening timelines.
- ❖ **Usage Rates** – As far as sewer and water, usage rates are overstated by regulating authorities in some cases.
- ❖ **Annexation Laws** – State annexation laws and the limits they impose on municipal expansion is a challenging dynamic in the Upstate.

For More Information:

Meeting participants are encouraged to stay involved in the project! If you are interested in receiving more detailed data collected at this focus group meeting or have other questions about the Shaping Our Future project, please contact Lisa Hallo, Sustainable Communities Program Director, at lhhallo@upstateforever.org or (864)250-0500 ext. 33. Thank you for your participation!