

Upstate Forever



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STUDY PREDICTS EXTENT OF DEVELOPED LAND IN UPSTATE WILL TRIPLE BY 2030

***Result Can Be Avoided By
Planning for More Efficient Growth***

The amount of developed land in the Upstate will triple by the year 2030 if current practices and policies continue, according to a study released today by the Strom Thurmond Institute (STI) at Clemson University.

The study first determined actual changes in developed land and population in eight Upstate Counties (Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson, Pickens, Laurens, Newberry, Abbeville and Greenwood) from 1990 to 2000. Then, using a growth model and after consulting with local planners in each county, it predicted the extent of development in the region if these development patterns remain unchanged.

A key factor in the model is the ratio of the expansion of developed land to the increase in population. Based on actual changes from 1990 to 2000, the model used a ratio of 5 to 1; that is, for every 10 per cent increase in population growth, developed land will increase by 50 percent.

The study found that, in 2000, the extent of developed land in the Upstate was 576,000 acres. The study predicts that, if current trends continue, the developed portion of the Upstate will increase to over 1.5 million acres by 2030—a staggering rate of 86 acres per day. To put that in perspective, Haywood Mall, a large shopping mall in Greenville, is about 82 acres in size.

“This study clearly shows the direction the Upstate is heading,” said Dr. Jeff Allen, the project leader at STI. “But this result is not inevitable. The region can avoid this fate by reducing the ratio and developing less land relative to population growth.”

The study also assessed the amount of land that would be developed if the overall amount of growth were to remain the same, but occurred in a more efficient manner. These scenarios are expressed in terms of lower growth ratios, as follows:

Ratio of Rate of Development to Rate of Population Growth	Total Developed Area by 2030 (Acres)	Land Saved by 2030 as compared to 5:1 Ratio (Acres)
4 to 1	1,330,000	190,000
3 to 1	1,140,000	380,000
2 to 1	955,000	566,000
1 to 1	766,000	755,000

A related study conducted by Clemson’s Department of Planning and Architecture in 2005 found that the ratio for the Upstate from 1940 to 1990 was actually 0.5; that is, for every 10 percent increase in population growth, developed land increased by only 5 percent. Using a ratio of 0.5, the amount of developed land in 2030 would be only 676,000—824,000 acres less than the prediction based on a 5 to 1 ratio.

Dr. Barry Nocks, who directed the 2005 study, said, “It is stunning that in the 1990s the ratio increased tenfold—from 0.5 to 5. There are a lot of reasons for this—the building and widening of roads, more sprawling layouts for new schools and big box stores,

the abandonment of older shopping areas, and the development of more distant subdivisions with ever-larger lots. The cumulative impact of all these activities on a region is quite dramatic, as the two studies show.”

It is important to understand that the ratios pertain only to the *rate* of development. With every different ratio, the amount of population growth and economic development is identical. All that changes between one scenario and the next is how efficiently we use land as our region grows. The different ratios allow us to see how the region can accommodate the same number of people and businesses without consuming so much land — thus generating all the economic benefits of growth at a fraction of the cost.

Dr. Allen said, “The way the Upstate has been growing is classic sprawl—mainly spread out, low-density development connected only by roads. It’s important to understand that this pattern of development has serious consequences both on the environment and on taxpayers. We didn’t quantify these impacts in this study but other studies have consistently shown that they are enormous. In sprawling regions, there is more polluted runoff, more air pollution from more driving, and more loss of valuable lands and resources. What’s more it is a lot more expensive to provide services, such as schools, roads, water and sewer and police and fire protection, to a widely dispersed population.”

“The study is a huge wake-up call for the Upstate to finally get serious about managing growth,” said Brad Wyche, Executive Director of Upstate Forever, a nonprofit organization working on development and conservation issues in the region. “It shows that our region will be the next Atlanta unless we adopt sensible policies that guide how and where growth happens over the next few decades.”

Wyche pointed out that there are many effective policies and programs for managing growth that should be considered, such as concentrating infrastructure and services in areas where growth is desired, transfer of development rights programs, land use controls, affordable housing programs, revitalization of existing developments, infill developments, and increased funding for conservation. “Cities and counties in the Upstate need to start

implementing these policies now. We don't have much time," Wyche said

The study was one of many projects done by the Saluda-Reedy Watershed Consortium, a broad-based organization of public agencies, business leaders, universities and nonprofit organizations addressing water quality and land use challenges in the watershed. Funding for the Consortium's work was provided mainly by the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation and Fuji Photo Film, Inc. For more information, see www.saludareedy.org.

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Enclosures: Summary of the Study
Selected Maps
CD (with entire study and all maps)