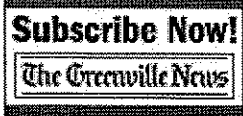




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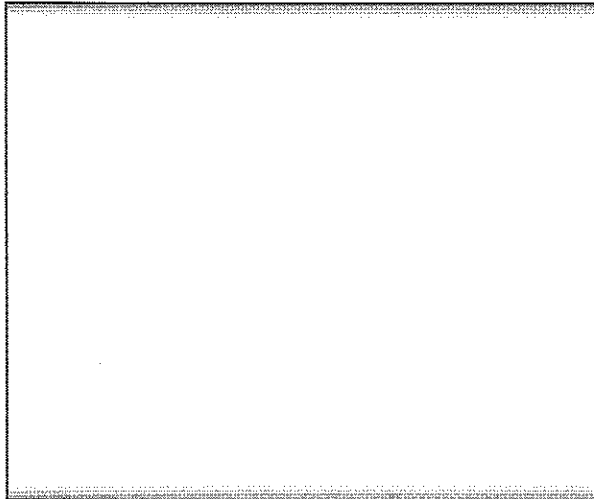
Time to plan and coordinate

Posted Sunday, May 1, 2005 - 6:59 pm

The Upstate's phenomenal growth over the past two decades has transformed Greenville and its surrounding counties for the better. However, there have been times that unrestrained or poorly planned new development has outstripped local government's ability to provide adequate roads and schools. Other parts of the state have similar problems while also straining to provide essential services like water and sewer service. Greenville, which has seen greenspace in once-rural areas disappear, is familiar with the price unplanned growth can levy on a community.

The General Assembly wants to require local governments to plan more effectively. A bill introduced last year by Sullivan's Island Rep. Bill Hagood would mandate some measure of regional planning that would make growth more orderly and less strenuous for local government. The bill accomplishes that by requiring school districts and utilities to each target where they plan to invest and then reach a consensus on where to direct growth. Local governments and these agencies would look at growth in 10-year snapshots. The bill requires those with a hand in directing growth to spell out how to resolve disputes before they arise.

Hagood's bill would amend the Comprehensive Planning Act that already mandates land-use plans for each South Carolina county. This amendment would strengthen the act by addressing regional cooperation since growth doesn't respect county boundaries.



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According to *The (Charleston) Post and Courier*, this bill died last year in the state Senate,

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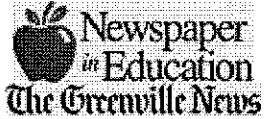
blocked by Horry County Sen. Dick Elliott, a real estate developer. This year, the bill is languishing in committee. As this session sprints to its finish — the first leg of a two-year session — it's time for lawmakers to give this bill the floor vote it deserves.

High-growth areas in the Upstate, Midlands and along the coast know the value of regional planning and that value should be obvious to most lawmakers.

In 1999, Greenville County adopted this collaborative approach. County leaders today say there's still room for improvement. Ultimately, all counties would benefit from the clear instruction this bill provides on making collaboration a regular part of the planning process.

It's possible that planning could have helped Greenville avoid the backward development of Woodruff Road or the sea of portables that once dominated the campuses of dozens of public schools in this county.

Those examples make clear how it is in everyone's interest that schools, utilities and state and local transportation officials build as much infrastructure ahead of time as possible. But first, they must talk to one another as this bill mandates.



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