

## Bill pushes planning awareness

*Governments would have to share info  
[FINAL Edition]*

The Post and Courier - Charleston, S.C.  
Author: ROBERT BEHRE  
Date: Feb 17, 2006  
Start Page: B.1  
Section: LOCAL & STATE  
Text Word Count: 508

### Document Text

*Copyright The Post and Courier Feb 17, 2006*

Neighboring governments would have to talk with each other more often about their plans for zoning, sewer lines and roads under a bill that passed the state House on Thursday.

The favorable vote on the Priority Investment Act marked a victory for Rep. Ben Hagood, R-Sullivan's Island, and his allies who have pushed for some sort of regional planning legislation since 2003.

"The goal of the bill is to save taxpayer money by improving our planning process for public infrastructure to make sure that we use our limited infrastructure dollars in the best way possible," Hagood said.

The bill would require cities and counties to expand their master plans to include a transportation section and a priority investment section that analyzes money available for new water and sewer lines, roads and schools and recommends 10 years' worth of those projects.

It also would require cities and counties to provide other local governments with formal notice -- and an opportunity to comment -- on their plans.

"There are public hearings now, and anyone, including the local government, has the right to provide input, but I think this will enhance communication and the planning," Hagood said.

The bill also would require cities and counties to look for any unnecessary regulations on the books that drive up housing costs and to consider offering market-based incentives, such as design flexibility and a streamlined permitting process, to encourage the development of affordable housing.

That provision helped win over the S.C. Association of Realtors, said Nick Kremydas of the association.

"They (local governments) will have to do a housing needs analysis to see how their land-use decisions affect housing affordability," Kremydas said. "We're not just talking about low- end housing or inexpensive, we're talking about working-class families' housing. Where are the police, teachers and other community service people going to live?"

If the Senate approves the bill, it's expected to become law. The idea stemmed from Gov. Mark Sanford's quality of life task force that met more than three years ago.

"This is something we've been pushing for from day one as a step toward preserving the way we look and feel as a state," Sanford said Thursday. "I'd applaud the House for its job in passing this bill, and I'd urge the Senate to do the same."

The bill stops short of requiring regional planning. If a city or county fails to give notice to its neighbors, that won't invalidate its comprehensive plan or be grounds for a lawsuit.

Still, Hagood called the bill "an important step forward in encouraging coordination."

Hagood said if the bill was to become law, it would improve dialogue that might avoid future conflicts over development near the Francis Marion National Forest or conflicts similar to Carolina Park, a development outside Mount Pleasant in which the developer was able to play the town and county government off one another.

"Those are things I think we could get ahead of by improving the planning process," he said.

Reach Robert Behre at rbehre@postandcourier.com or 937-5771.

Credit: The Post and Courier

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.

**Abstract** (Document Summary)

The favorable vote on the Priority Investment Act marked a victory for Rep. Ben Hagood, R-Sullivan's Island, and his allies who have pushed for some sort of regional planning legislation since 2003.

"The goal of the bill is to save taxpayer money by improving our planning process for public infrastructure to make sure that we use our limited infrastructure dollars in the best way possible," Hagood said.

Hagood said if the bill was to become law, it would improve dialogue that might avoid future conflicts over development near the Francis Marion National Forest or conflicts similar to Carolina Park, a development outside Mount Pleasant in which the developer was able to play the town and county government off one another.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction or distribution is prohibited without permission.