

# THE COMMUNITY LEADER'S LETTER

NEWS & VIEWS FOR SOUTH CAROLINA'S  
GRASSROOTS LEADERS

## Prime Lands Project Looks at Growth, Focuses on Rural Land, Open Space

The *South Carolina Infrastructure Study: Projections of Statewide Infrastructure Costs, Savings, and Financing Alternatives, 1995-2015*, May 1997, is found on the Web at [www.state.sc.us/board/drd/acir/lisc](http://www.state.sc.us/board/drd/acir/lisc). In determining the cost of South Carolina's infrastructure needs, authors of the study included the costs of roads, bridges, water and sewer lines, utilities, public service buildings, public safety buildings, public recreational buildings, and public works facilities from 1995 to 2015. More information about the Prime Lands Initiative and access to publications produced by the project are found on the internet at <http://www.strom.clemson.edu/primelands/index2.html>

According to the *South Carolina Infrastructure Needs Assessment Study*, South Carolina faces a projected \$57 billion infrastructure debt. The report looks at infrastructure costs from 1995 to 2015. New growth-related projects represent 58 percent of that debt. The remainder of the cost is for projects on the drawing board and maintenance and upgrade of existing infrastructure.

As the state's population grows by about one million by 2015, 525,000 new housing units—over half of which will be single family units—will need to be built. In support of this population growth, 40 million square feet of office buildings, 45 million square feet of retail or commercial space, 30 million square feet of warehouse space, and over 13,000 new hotel rooms. In addition, industrial complexes, government buildings, schools, hospitals and almost 50 percent

more paved road space will accompany this population growth. In the process, the new infrastructure is going to be covering a lot of South Carolina.

This growth rate promises major changes in South Carolina's economic base and in the physical demands upon its natural resource base. Prior to the mid-1980s, South Carolina was considered a rural state with the majority of its population in rural areas. So, in just over a decade South Carolina has moved from being a state with a strong rural ethos to one with burgeoning growth management issues.

This growth offers immense opportunities for developing niche agriculture. However, the future of agriculture and forestry depends foremost on an available resource base within an economic framework sufficient to sustain productive agriculture.

To understand these trends and the impacts of associated

growth patterns on farm lands, forested areas and small watersheds, Clemson University's public service activities program has begun an assessment of South Carolina prime lands. The project, the South Carolina Prime Lands Initiative, is examining how area growth and development patterns are changing existing patterns of agriculture, forestry and open space lands in South Carolina.

The initiative, directed by the Strom Thurmond Institute, will:

- Compare historic land use patterns with changes in land use and ownership patterns.
- Examine the relationship between land values and rents charged for agricultural and forest land.
- Assess the perceived public values of open space lands in our urbanizing

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ECONOMIC BRIEF NO. 37

# How to Keep Land In Open Space

This series of economic briefs explores fundamental concepts in economics and community and economic development.

**California's Williamson Act in 1965 was the first major market-incentive program in the United States. The act's purpose was to protect agricultural land, preserve open space as an asset to urban development, and discourage leap-frog patterns of development that made it more expensive to supply public services.**

*If citizens value open space as a part of quality of life, there are ways to protect land from development.*

*Regulation that limits the use of property through zoning and other restrictions is one approach. Condemnation or eminent domain offers another alternative. Regulation imposes most of the costs of maintaining open space on landowners, even though the benefits are enjoyed by members of the public.*

*In the interest of equity, therefore, legislators, farmers, and environmentalists are increasingly turning to market-based methods to preserve farms and open space. Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington serve as models of the use of market-based growth management techniques.*

*Purchase of development rights, conservation easements, and transfer of development rights, all closely related techniques, have become popular in the last two decades. They slow the conversion of prime land to development uses while respecting the rights of property owners.*

*The state of Maryland uses conservation easement programs, while counties make*

*irrevocable purchases of development rights. This system is incentive-based and voluntary, with prices reflecting both market appraisals and landowner bids.*

*In some cases, development rights are sold to developers who may transfer them to another parcel of land for higher density developments. Nongovernmental organizations can also accept transfers or make purchases of development rights and retire them.*

*Through purchase of easements and development rights, Maryland aims to preserve as many acres as possible with limited funds. The state gives preference to parcels bordering other preserved lands, productive operating farms, and land under immediate threat of conversion.*

*In all cases, the land can continue in its current use but cannot be developed. In Montgomery County in 1997, the cost of purchasing development rights was \$3,652 an acre.*

*Pennsylvania has chosen to use conservation easements within established agricultural security areas that meet certain soil class requirements and contain crop, pasture or*

*grazing land on 50 percent or more of the affected acreage. By 1997, 977 farms containing 123,423 acres were in the program with an average payment of \$1,946 an acre.*

*The state and counties both provide financing for this program. The program is so popular in some counties that farmers outside targeted areas who want to remain in farming are pressuring to be included.*

*In Washington state, the purchase of development rights program is based on bids by farmers to participate in the program. In the mid-1980s, prices per acre ranged from \$480 to \$18,975, with a mean of \$4,250.*

*In South Carolina, land trusts and conservation organizations first used innovative land conservation methods, often with the cooperation of state government. York and Beaufort counties are among the leaders in developing conservation and open space programs.*

*As South Carolina struggles with the impacts of growth and loss of rural landscapes, state and local governments have an opportunity to learn from other states as they seek to preserve the state's natural beauty and open spaces.*

# 1000 Friends of South Carolina Forms To Voice Citizens' Vision of SC's Future

The South Carolina Downtown Development Association (SCDDA) has been listening to communities—small places like Blythewood and Ellorree and larger towns like Hartsville and Anderson—for over 16 years. Regardless of size, regardless of location, communities express the same sentiments again and again:

- *We want to plot our own course.*
- *We are willing to accept the responsibility for our choices.*
- *We want to recover our sense of place and our sense of community.*
- *We want to participate in the global changes that are universally taking place but on our own terms.*
- *We think we know what is best for our community.*

There is a direct relationship between a community's capacity to come together to solve problems and its ability to attract economic development, support education, or make other crucial decisions of long-term importance. A sense of community, and the cooperative spirit it engenders is an indispensable foundation for effectively addressing the issues and opportunities

citizens and government face at the local and state levels.

There are immense challenges to building community today. How are the fabric of community and the quality of life that have been fragmented by a modern society rebuilt? Television, economically segregated suburbs, the Internet, and zoning that separates uses eventually separate people.

How do people regain a connection with their historic and symbolic centers as well as their natural environment to define a sense of place? How do communities establish policies encouraging interaction and engagement? How do they establish policies that enhance the opportunity for political and fiscal solutions to such problems as low educational attainment, urban sprawl, poverty, and apathy?

The answer is: from the bottom up, community by community.

Many are convinced communities have the inherent ability to successfully realize

their potential and can be equipped with the tools needed to increase awareness and foster community building. Part of the solution also lies in coming together with an enabling and empowering statewide consensus on such issues as land use, environmental concerns, reengaging people in the life of their communities, and growth and the changes that come with it.

**Never doubt that a small, committed group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.**  
— Margaret Mead

To accomplish this, SCDDA has created 1000 Friends of South Carolina, a vehicle for developing a grassroots voice for building strong communities. 1000 Friends of South Carolina will be a statewide network working to assure that this state's growth and development reflect the values of its citizens.

1000 Friends will bring South Carolinians together to talk about the future, identify shared values, articulate a common vision, identify ob-

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COMMUNITY  
AND  
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**THE COMMUNITY LEADER'S LETTER**

The Community Leader's Letter is the quarterly newsletter of the Community and Economic Development Program at Clemson University at the Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs. The Cooperative Extension Service finances the newsletter as a public service activity (PSA) of Clemson University.

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Articles in the newsletter may be reprinted; however, please cite the newsletter as the source. To be added to or deleted from the mailing list, or to report duplicate mailings, write or call. Previous issues of the Community Leader's Letter are on the Institute Web site at <http://www.strom.clemson.edu>

## Prime Lands Project . . . (From p. 1)

- landscapes.
- Assess fiscal impacts of farm, forest and open space in contrast with residential and commercial lands.
  - Project probable conversion of farm and forestlands to residential and commercial uses.
  - Assess the contribution of prime lands to the integrity of regional ecosystems.
  - Assess and identify policy options with the potential of sustaining farm, forest and open space lands.

In 1999, the study team has studied changes in land use and land ownership patterns by examining land cover and land use data since 1973 for a pilot area in Charleston,

Berkeley and Dorchester Counties. Areas exhibiting the greatest change from apparent prime lands into residential, commercial and other associated urban land covers were identified for detailed evaluation during the study's second year.

Other prime lands activities completed during the first year include:

- An assessment of plantations and plantation ownership patterns in South Carolina,
- An assessment of forest cover and forest type changes occurring in South Carolina and
- A summary of fiscal issues associated with land tenure changes in South Carolina.

## Friends . (From p. 1)

stables, and find solutions. The organization hopes to involve as many citizens as possible so members of 1,000 Friends can speak as one for those values that provide citizens a sense of place and a sense of community. These are the essential elements for the places where people can lead healthy, productive, peaceful lives.

The organizers of 1000 Friends of South Carolina sense that it is time for concerned South Carolinians to thoughtfully consider the future, to understand the options, and to begin making choices based on values, not politics.

To learn more about 1000 Friends of South Carolina, call SCDDA at 803.933.1224 or send an e-mail to [community@masc.state.sc.us](mailto:community@masc.state.sc.us).