

Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust

Talking Points

Purpose

To consider supporting Greenville County's Historic and Natural Resources Trust.

What the Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust does

It establishes the structure and framework for a conservation funding program in Greenville County.

Why the Trust is important

- Greenspace is **good for business**. It attracts businesses and jobs and the talent necessary for a thriving economy. High quality of life means high quality of workforce and better job opportunities.
- **Quality of life** is tied to conservation. People are attracted to areas where there is an emphasis on green space protection and easy access to trails and nature. Greenville's outstanding quality of life is largely dependent on its special natural character.
- Keeps **money in Greenville**. The SC State Conservation Bank is a great tool, but limited funds are distributed throughout the state and often require a match. The Greenville County Historic and Natural Resources Trust would ensure that funds are spent right here in Greenville County, providing local results from local dollars and leveraging more state dollars to benefit Greenville County.
- It is **financially responsible to plan for land protection** to reduce the tax burden to residents. Permanent land protection incentivizes growth in suitable areas in the County and lowers the cost-to-serve for local governments. This principle of planning for both development and land protection is a key part of the County's recently adopted Comprehensive Plan.
- Protecting Greenville's watershed lands **keeps our water clean and will boost the health of our rivers and lower cost to treat drinking water**. Cleaner water is also beneficial to industries including tourism and recreation.
- There are **significant economic benefits** that result from protecting land. Protecting iconic places and expanding existing protections could capture substantial tourism and recreation dollars by expanding outdoor recreation access. There is demand in the area for outdoor recreation — a demand that currently overwhelms supply. Popular parks like Jones Gap and Table Rock often have long lines to enter on weekends. We also need to add acreage, trail, and parking capacity to Jones Gap and Paris Mountain State Parks before it's too late.

Examples in other parts of the state

- Beaufort County's Rural and Critical Lands Preservation Program has acquired approximately 23,000 acres of land for conservation since 1999.
- The Charleston County Greenbelt program, launched in 2006, has preserved over 21,000 acres of high priority lands.
- Oconee County passed the Oconee County Conservation Bank in 2012.

Conclusion

Of the more than 300,000 new residents forecast for the Upstate by 2040, more than half will likely make Greenville County their new home. That growth can be accommodated in a way that enhances Greenville without consuming a tremendous amount of land that was once primarily farms, forests and other open space. To do that, we need your support. If we do not take immediate action to protect green space and water quality, we could lose the special character of the Upstate resulting in a diminished quality of life for residents and decrease in the region's ability to attract and retain workforce talent.