
From: Haley, Nikki
Sent: Saturday, August 9, 2014 12:46 PM
To: Patel, Swati
Subject: Re: The sun is shining in SC; NC State says we need to change our growth patterns, and Michelle tells us how.

Thanks

Sent from my iPad

On Aug 8, 2014, at 1:21 PM, "Patel, Swati" <SwatiPatel@gov.sc.gov> wrote:

FYI – This is an e-alert from Dana Beach to his email network. He thanks you for your recognition of CCL.

From: Dana Beach [<mailto:DanaBeach@sccl.org>]
Sent: Friday, August 08, 2014 10:23 AM
To: Dana Beach
Subject: The sun is shining in SC; NC State says we need to change our growth patterns, and Michelle tells us how.

Folks,

Here are three articles from yesterday and today's news. The first is by Sammy Fretwell with the *State* on the signing ceremony for the solar energy bill. This is a great achievement, led in the conservation community by **CCL's Hamilton Davis and Blan Holman with the Southern Environmental Law Center**. We appreciate Gov. Haley's kind comments about the Conservation League at the event.

The second article by Robert Behre with the *Post and Courier* reports on a new study from North Carolina State University and the U.S. Geological Survey indicating that current growth patterns in the South could lead to extensive environmental damage and the degradation of coastal communities. The article notes that Charleston County has adopted an urban growth boundary, an essential instrument in promoting better development. It is also worth noting that Beaufort County has an urban services boundary that limits the extension of urban infrastructure into rural areas. And both counties have spend more than \$100 million on land conservation, another important tool in the growth management tool box. The second aspect of growth, however, is the quality and functionality of development within urban area. In this arena there is much work to be done,

With that in mind, the third item is an editorial in the *Post and Courier* by the **Conservation League's Michelle Sinkler** supporting Mount Pleasant's efforts to build higher quality development within the town boundaries – specifically, the Coleman Boulevard Plan. It is exactly this type of plan that will change the trajectory of growth for the better. But, as Michelle points out, these are challenging initiatives because they are politically charged, and because urban planning is simply a complicated and long term exercise. That said, the good news is that the Lowcountry is on a path toward more functional and inspiring development and landscape level conservation, the foundations of which were laid 25 years ago.

Have a great weekend,

Dana

Haley signs bill to ease restriction on solar energy

BY SAMMY FRETWELL

sfretwell@thestate.com August 6, 2014

Read more here: <http://www.thestate.com/2014/08/06/3604253/haley-signs-bill-to-ease-restriction.html?sp=/99/132/#storylink=cpy>

COLUMBIA, SC — Standing under an array of solar panels outside a Columbia outfitters store Wednesday, Gov. Nikki Haley praised South Carolina's recent efforts to make power from the sun easier for businesses, utilities and homeowners to use.

Then, she signed a bill loosening restrictions on solar energy that for years have made South Carolina one of the least friendly states in the country for sun power.

"What we had were a lot of barriers -- barriers that stood in our way when it came to solar energy," Haley told more than 50 environmentalists, utility representatives and solar energy company executives.

But Haley said interest groups figured a way to work out their differences and make the bill possible. The bill passed the Legislature overwhelmingly last spring after a major compromise was brokered earlier in the year.

Before that, green groups and solar companies had been at odds with the state's power companies, which feared sun power could eventually draw profits away from them. She praised Sen. Greg Gregory, R-Lancaster, for helping move the bill ahead.

Haley said expanding solar power in South Carolina will help diversify the mix of energy sources, while helping the Palmetto State catch up with North Carolina and Georgia in efforts to encourage sun-fired power.

"When you look at North Carolina and you look at Georgia, they've been doing pretty well when it comes to solar energy -- and they don't have any more sun than we do," the governor said during the event at Half Moon Outfitters, which installed a "solar tree" several years ago to help power the business.

Wednesday's signing was ceremonial only. She signed the bill earlier this summer. But Haley's support for solar power is notable.

Only in the past two years, as The State newspaper and other news outlets began reporting on South Carolina's restrictive rules for alternative energy, have attitudes toward solar changed among policy makers in the Palmetto State.

Haley's support for sun power also is significant because the governor has been criticized by conservation groups for failing to pay attention to environmental issues, and at times, blasting federal environmental regulations. Two months ago, Haley criticized federal carbon rules proposed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address climate change.

On Wednesday, some of the same environmentalists who support her opponent in the fall race for governor -- Democratic Sen. Vincent Sheheen -- were on hand to applaud Haley's stance on solar energy. Sheheen, a Camden lawyer, has been an outspoken proponent of alternate forms of energy. Solar power is viewed as a green alternative form of energy that does not create toxic waste like that produced by nuclear power plants or air pollution like that generated at coal plants.

Representatives of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, the Sierra Club and the S.C. Coastal Conservation League joined representatives of Duke Energy, SCE&G and the state's electric cooperatives to show support for the Legislation.

The solar legislation Haley signed is complicated, imperfect and won't solve all of the state's solar energy challenges. But boosters say it sets in motion plans to expand solar dramatically in the state.

Among other things, the new law will allow solar leasing, a way of financing solar panels that could help people more affordably install sun systems on their rooftops. That historically has been an obstacle for homeowners. State laws have in the past discouraged solar companies that provide affordable roof top panels from coming to South Carolina. Utilities in the past argued that such companies were, in effect, utilities and needed to go through the complicated process of becoming regulated by the S.C. Public Service Commission. One New England company that wanted to help churches, nonprofit groups and schools more easily afford solar panels left the state after SCE&G complained formally to the PSC.

The bill also is expected to encourage utilities to put more solar energy into their mix of resources to complement coal, nuclear and natural gas plants.

Before solar leasing can occur, however, the S.C. Public Service Commission must address how much power companies will credit homeowners and businesses for producing energy with sun panels. People who have installed solar panels sometimes make so much energy, they sell it back to utilities. The PSC's decisions in the next year could lower or raise current prices due homeowners. This issue is a key reason that utilities agreed to the solar bill.

Haley noted that the collaboration on the bill should extend to other issues that various interest groups disagree on. She specifically praised the Coastal Conservation League, a sometimes critic of Haley policies, for its work on the legislation.

"This is a group that continues to impress me because they never just say no, they push hard to figure out how," she said. "We want to work with you more, so let us know how to do that."

Read more here: <http://www.thestate.com/2014/08/06/3604253/haley-signs-bill-to-ease-restriction.html?sp=/99/132/#storylink=cpy>

A new warning for the South: Grow smarter



Robert Behre Email @robertbehre

Aug 6 2014 5:17 pm



ONLINE

To view an interactive map based on the study, go here: <http://j.mp/V2pLku>

Don't worry about signing into the site. You'll be viewing it in read-only mode.

If the Southeast's cities and suburbs grow much like they have in the past, the region will be in trouble in 50 years.

That's the conclusion of a new study by North Carolina State University and U.S. Geological Survey that forecasts the extent of urban growth here based on historical patterns.

What do you think?

Is the Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester region doing enough to protect its farms, forest and open space from urban growth?

Yes.

No.

I have no strong opinion.

[Submit]

Asked to summarize the study's findings, researcher Jennifer Costanza said, "The current pace of urban sprawl in the South, if it continues, will lead to massive, unsustainable cities that are unpleasant to live in."

While large older Northern cities, such as Boston, New York and Philadelphia, have dense, tall buildings in their centers, the Southeast has grown the fringes of its suburbs.

"The South is also unique because almost all of the growth has occurred in the past few decades during a time when most people have had cars," Costanza said, "while the large cities in the North saw most of their development occur before World War II, when cars were not such a necessary part of how we get around."

The study was launched to find which places in the Southeast could be most impacted by urban growth so that conservation managers could factor that into their plans to adapt to climate change.

"We knew that urbanization could make it a lot more difficult to implement conservation plans that allow wildlife to have the space they need to deal with a warmer climate in the future," she said. "It was also important to us to produce data and maps of future urbanization that could be used by people in a variety of fields."

The forecast was based on changes reflected on a series of earlier maps, sort of like an old cartoon flip book. The patterns in more than 300 individual regions then were mimicked for future growth and stitched together to get a complete picture of the South.

The study defines an urban area not by population density but by the density of roads, so downtowns, suburbs and exurbs are all included, she said.

Currently, about 3,000 square miles - or 3 percent - of the Southeast is urbanized, but that could double or almost triple by 2060 if growth continues as usual.

Much of that is expected to be centered along the Interstate 85 corridor, which has fewer geographic constraints, such as coastlines, wetlands, steep slopes, or large protected areas like the Smoky Mountains National Park.

"In and around Charleston, our model suggests that the changes may happen fairly fast, too, and would follow the coast and move a little bit inland," Costanza said.

There's more at stake than humans' quality of life. Because urban growth will claim forests and fields near cities, species that need large blocks of natural land will be threatened, Costanza said. For instance, projections show that coastal pine forests that are home to the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker will be harmed by urban growth.

"Also, the Southeast has some of the most biologically diverse habitats in the world," she added. "If urban land encroaches on this habitat, any of the rare and unique species that live there will be negatively impacted."

Metro areas, such as Charleston, have created an urban growth boundary, and other cities have discussed so-called smart growth strategies.

The Charleston metro area even created its first regional plan two years ago - a plan that urges compact, mixed-use development in existing neighborhoods and conserving agricultural land and open space.

Harun Rashid, a senior planner with the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, said the plan considers how to make communities where people can live, work and play without affecting the surrounding roads as much.

He noted that projections show the tri-county area grew by 21 percent between 2000 and 2010 and could add more than 200,000 more residents by 2040 - almost as many as currently reside in Charleston and Mount Pleasant. "The crux of this land-use exercise was to see how we could better allocate this growth," Rashid said.

But the plan is simply a vision for the future, not a regulatory document, and Costanza has her doubts about whether the South's future urbanization will differ much from its past.

"I think the change has to be fairly dramatic," she said. "For cities to be sustainable, I think that the way urban planning is done in the South needs to see substantial changes that encourage higher density development."

Reach **Robert Behre** at 937-5771.

Develop a productive dialogue on Coleman's future

BY MICHELLE SINKLER

Aug 7 2014 12:01 am Aug 7 5:12 pm



The debate now churning in Mount Pleasant over the Coleman Boulevard Revitalization Plan does not necessarily signal disunity. In fact, it is a critical public dialogue that can ultimately produce a better future for the town and its residents.

To arrive at positive solutions, it is important to identify the points of agreement. To begin with, Mount Pleasant residents understand that our region is facing tremendous growth pressure. Over the next 15 years, the Charleston metropolitan region's population is expected to increase by approximately 430,000 people—more people than today live in Charleston and Georgetown counties combined.

The most recent census revealed that the Charleston metro area ranked 12th out of 381 metro areas in the U.S. in population growth between 2010 and 2012. Given the town's excellent public education and proximity to jobs, many newcomers will choose to live in Mount Pleasant. Most importantly, in accommodating this inevitable growth, Mount Pleasant residents rightly expect the town to require and facilitate high quality development that preserves and enhances the town's quality of life. On these points there is no dispute.

Fortunately, for many years Mount Pleasant has acknowledged the benefits of quality development. The town's vision is to build and redevelop competitive and vibrant places.

This has not been the case throughout the region. The Glenn McConnell Parkway, west of the Ashley, is a prime example. The parkway is characterized by segregated uses-big box retail separated from business parks, separated from apartment complexes, separated farther still from single family homes. Seas of asphalt and franchise architecture flank the main artery. Cars, not people, dominate the landscape. The end result is an area bereft of sense of place or community.

Not only is this model of development visually uninspiring, it is expensive and inefficient. Far-flung development increases the cost of public services like fire, police, and sanitation. At the same time, because every trip must be made in a car, families are burdened with higher transportation costs.

In contrast to the sprawl model of development, Mount Pleasant offers an alternative in the Coleman Boulevard area known as the traditional town model. Its principles include increased residential and commercial densities, connected streets, sidewalks and bicycle paths. Businesses, residences, parks, and schools are blended together instead of separated, and are accessible by cars, buses, bicycles, and feet, thus reducing daily car trips. The Coleman Boulevard Revitalization Plan is not a silver bullet to the woes of sprawl, but it is a laudable attempt at implementing these worthy traditional neighborhood principles.

So if the Mount Pleasant community rejects the sprawl model for its future, offering the more efficient traditional town model instead, why the opposition to the Coleman Boulevard Plan?

The disagreement has come from people of good will who are, understandably, dissatisfied with the execution of the plan and have turned back to low density, segregated uses as the alternative. We respectfully assert that 50 years of increasing traffic congestion, of rising costs of public services, of environmental damage, and displacement of farms and forests tell us unequivocally that this approach is not the answer. There is another option - the improved implementation of the Coleman Boulevard Plan.

The execution of the plan to date does not meet the standards of the community. For example, The Boulevard, the most prominent project completed pursuant to the plan, has met with significant public criticism. Objections include: inconsistency and poor quality of the building material, the height and massing of the project, the poor quality public spaces within and around the project, and the lack of attractive landscaping.

From The Boulevard we have learned that buildings of such prominence and density demand a higher, more rigorous level of review. In great communities, details matter. Faux brick facades and metal siding won't cut it. Moreover, in some instances, we have learned that building heights may need to be reduced to better relate to existing structures. We know the plan is not perfect. In fact, we should never have expected it to be.

That said, the worst reaction to The Boulevard or any other individual project would be to conclude that because the details of a building are sub par that the entire Coleman Boulevard Plan and all of its benefits should be scuttled. The suggestion that the community revert to the failed development model reminiscent of Savannah Highway is not a tenable solution.

Coleman Boulevard should redevelop in a manner where children can safely bike and walk to school and locally owned businesses can be easily and safely patronized by pedestrians and motorists alike. The clear solution is to uphold these fundamental, agreed-upon principles and upgrade the plan to meet the residents' expectations for high-quality development.

Michelle Sinkler is special projects director of the Coastal Conservation League.

Executive Director

Coastal Conservation League

328 East Bay St., Charleston, SC 29401

Direct: 843.723.7016 | Fax: 843.723.8308

CCL's Conference video footage is now online!

View footage online from our 25th anniversary conference

Prosperous Lowcountry, Flourishing Planet, at cclfuture.org/presentations.