

## **Upstate Forever Presents Field Trip to Belmont, NC**

On April 17, 2012, Doug Hurlbert and Bessie Fisher participated in a field trip to Belmont, NC to learn more about this textile town's revitalization and status as an active living community.

Local conservation group Upstate Forever, in partnership with Spartanburg County Parks, hosted *Belmont, NC: Active Living by Design*, a day-long learning experience. The field trip itinerary highlighted Belmont's successful transition from textile town to vibrant community with thriving growth and redevelopment. Local leaders shared how a proactive approach paved the way to secure the prosperity the city experiences today.

"Belmont embraced the walkable neighborhood footprint, renovating it, tweaking it and building it anew," says Sherry Barrett, Upstate Forever Program Associate. "Belmont celebrates community and active living with convenient and pleasing connections for people from all walks of life. We saw sidewalks connecting neighborhoods both old and new, walkable schools, abundant green spaces, and a charming pedestrian-friendly downtown center. These physical elements reflect the conscious decision of proactive leaders some 15 years ago to build their future upon the footprint of their past, their mill communities."

*Belmont, NC: Active Living by Design* was offered to participants free of charge and included lunch in Belmont. The field trip was the second event in Upstate Forever's 2012 Active Living Event Series. The series is designed to encourage community dialogue about policies and infrastructure that promote physical activity to improve public health.

During the tour of the area, Doug and Bessie noted:

- Belmont is a "college" town located within commuting distance to Charlotte, NC, giving financial "perks" and demographics not seen or available in Inman
- an active rail line through the downtown corridor
- green spaces throughout the area with eye-catching plantings and designs
- reused, repurposed existing buildings and structures throughout the area
- new housing development exhibits large structures on small lots with limited access for emergency vehicles
- evidence of sign ordinances and enforcement

The overall trip gave Doug and Bessie many ideas for Inman and excited them in all that could be accomplished in Inman.