



Friday
June 25,
2021

OPINION



From the Sidelines

Steve Robertson
Columnist

Do-it-yourself beautification projects are admirable

Horry County, nicknamed the Independent Republic, is composed of a population of people who don't wait on government to get things done.

For example, when federal and state government wouldn't build much needed roads, Horry County residents voted for a penny sales tax on two separate occasions and built the roads themselves.

They have also built schools, hospitals and other vital infrastructure when the need arose.

So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that a group of motivated Horry County residents has voluntarily taken on the responsibility of beautifying roadways in their communities.

Beautify Carolina Forest, an organization that holds monthly litter cleanups, also tends to about a dozen medians in the area. Volunteers pull weeds, trim trees and replace plants that are damaged by weather or vehicles. Yet there are limits to how much the

group can do. The widening of Carolina Forest Boulevard to River Oaks Drive presented many challenges.

“There’s 18 medians on the Carolina Forest widening,” said Betsy Fay, a volunteer with Beautify Carolina Forest. “We couldn’t take those on. We just don’t have the manpower to do that.”

Rather than throw in the towel, Carolina Forest resident Howard Forman went to extraordinary lengths to beautify some of the new highway medians formed by the widening of Carolina Forest Boulevard.

A former audit manager, Forman used his financial knowledge and formed a nonprofit to raise money for landscaping the medians.

That organization, Carolina Forest Middle of the Road, now accepts donations for maintaining medians outside Plantation Lakes and nearby Waterbridge. The effort was Forman’s brainchild.

Thanks to his efforts, crape myrtles and palm trees now occupy the medians outside his Carolina Forest neighborhood.

“The county plants grass on these brand-new medians but refuses to put some kind of shrubbery on them unless someone steps up to do that,” Forman explained. “If you do that, you are then required to maintain them into perpetuity. ... So, you can only do the plantings if you have an approved encroachment permit, which then makes it your responsibility.”

David Jordan, the county’s new director of planning and zoning was so impressed by the efforts of private citizens to beautify roadways that he has helped develop a formal process for folks who want to the same thing in their communities.

The county will provide funding for the initial trees and plants, but only nonprofit groups can apply for those limited dollars.

Beyond that, maintenance and additional plantings are the responsibility of the organization.

Maintaining the medians is a big responsibility but Beautify Carolina Forest has proven the job can be done. These beautification efforts are admirable and I hope other communities will follow suit.