

## **I'On Media Kit History**

I'On was founded in 1997 by developers Tom, Vince and Jeff Graham. The trio retained Dover Kohl and Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company (DPZ) as land planners for the neighborhood, and they, along with the founders, toured a number of neighborhoods across the Southeast to study urbanism and create what would become I'On. Over seven days, the group worked to develop a design code and plan of 800 single-family lots, 440 multi-family units, 90,000 square feet of commercial space and several civic sites.

In order for I'On to come to fruition, however, the 243-acre infill site of the proposed development has to be rezoned by the Mt. Pleasant Town Council to a "planned development." Andres Duany of DPZ presented the group's plan to a standing room only crowd at the Town Council in May of 1995. After fine-tuning the plan and reducing single-family lots to 730 and multi-family units to 120, they presented their rezoning request in August of that year. After several public meetings, it received a 7-2 recommendation for approval by the Mt. Pleasant Planning Board, but was eventually rejected at the Mt. Pleasant Town Council meeting held in December of 1995 by a 5-4 vote.

The founders continued to revise their proposed plan to meet the requests of the council members, regrettably removing the multi-family component, reducing the number of proposed thoroughfare types from 11 to four, reducing commercial space from 90,000 square feet to 30,000 square feet, eliminating a vehicular connection to the adjacent neighborhood and reducing the total unit count to 759. This new plan and rezoning application was submitted in December 1996 and received a 7-1 recommendation for approval by the Mt. Pleasant Planning Board in January 1997, followed by a 7-2 first reading approval by Town Council in February of 1997. The plan and rezoning application received 6-3 final approval by Town Council in March of 1997.

Infrastructure construction on the neighborhood began in the summer of 1997 and ground was broken for the first house in March of 1998. After construction began, opponents of the project gathered a petition of voters, which they presented to Town Council, requesting they overturn the approved ordinance or hold a referendum enabling a vote on the zoning. The founders challenged this action, and a Circuit Court Judge placed a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) on the Town prohibiting them from acting on this petition. This TRO was subsequently lifted, and while the Town Council voted 6-3 against overturning the rezoning, they did schedule a town-wide referendum to be held in October of 1997.

One week prior to the scheduled referendum, Circuit Court Judge Markley Dennis ruled that a municipality could not hold a referendum on zoning issues. The Town was satisfied, but the opponents appealed the decision, which was heard by the South Carolina State Supreme Court in December of 1999. In January of 2000 the Supreme Court ruled unanimously to affirm the lower court decision.

The Town also fought locating a Montessori School on one of the sites designated for civic use in I'On. A circuit court judge later ruled, however, that the Town cannot exclude a school from its definition of civic use, but the decision was appealed in the South Carolina Court of Appeals. A Court of Appeals eventually handed down a unanimous decision affirming the lower court's decision, which opened the door for a school to be built in the neighborhood. Today, the East Cooper Montessori Charter School is thriving and soon to build a brand new facility on-site.

Since its approval, I'On has received numerous local, state and national awards for environmental sensitivity, sustainability and design, including a Stewardship Award from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, and the National Association of Home Builders "Best Smart Growth Community" in the country in 2002. It has also received national and international recognition from media outlets ranging from CNN to *National Geographic* magazine. The neighborhood has played host to college groups, city councils and planning staffs from other municipalities in the Carolinas and developers from as far away as Europe, Japan, and Australia.