

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2024-2025
Annual Update
Year 2



Waccamaw Region



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INTRODUCTION



The 2023–2027 Waccamaw Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a strategy–driven economic development plan which provides a vision and framework for future economic development activities within Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg counties.

The 2023–2027 CEDS was approved by the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) and can be accessed here:

<https://wrcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2023-2027-Comprehensive-Economic-Development-Strategy-Waccamaw-Region.pdf>.

The CEDS Annual Update–Year 2 addresses any modifications to the CEDS strategy, and summarizes new economic development activities, progression of goals/activities, and outlines steps for the year ahead.

REGIONAL SUMMARY

The Waccamaw Economic Development District also known as the Waccamaw Region is located in the northeastern coastal area of South Carolina. The region consists of Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg counties.

The region comprises approximately 2,901 square miles and is bound to the north by the North Carolina state line; the Atlantic Ocean to the east; the Santee River which borders Berkeley and Charleston counties to the south; and Clarendon, Florence, Marion, and Dillon counties to the west.

Georgetown County has experienced mild growth over the past decade and includes a land mass spanning 814 square miles with a population density of 77.9 persons. Georgetown County has over 34 miles of coastline and seven inlets, and boasts natural scenery along with many historic sites.

Williamsburg County is very rural area encompassing 934 square miles with a population density of 33.2 persons. The Black River, state-designated Scenic River, runs through the county offering recreation and natural beauty to the region. Williamsburg County is designated as a persistent poverty county, and has experienced a declining population for decades.

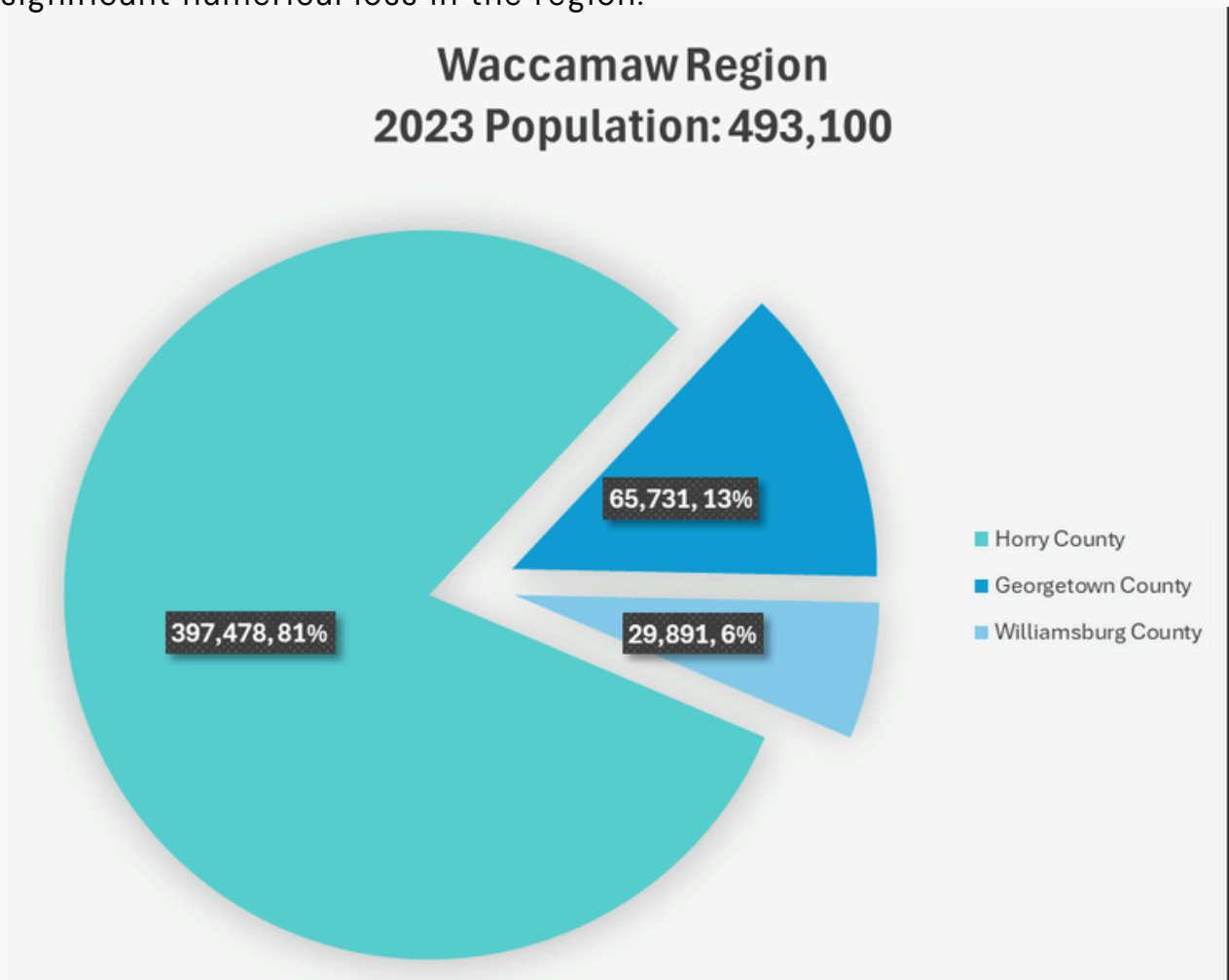
Myrtle Beach, located in Horry County, is the most populous city in the region and it is also designated as part of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which is the 4th largest MSA in the state. The US Census Bureau report on the fastest growing metros in the US ranked the Myrtle Beach MSA as third in the nation for annual growth (3.7%) from July 2020 to July 2021. The county has a land mass of 1,133 square miles and a population density of 309.7 persons. Horry County is both the largest, and fastest growing county in South Carolina. Horry County's 60 miles of beautiful beaches attracts millions of tourists each year.

Regional Population Updates

As per the 2023 population estimates from the US Census Bureau, the population of the Waccamaw EDD stands at 493,100, reflecting a total increase of 8.26% (37,641 people) since 2020 and a significant rise of 35.51% (129,228 people) since 2010.

Out of the region's sixteen municipalities, six have seen a decline in population, while ten have experienced growth between 2010 and 2022. The Town of Aynor recorded the highest percentage increase in the region, growing by 76.61% (429 residents). In contrast, the City of Myrtle Beach witnessed the largest numerical increase, welcoming 8,955 new residents (a growth rate of 33.03%).

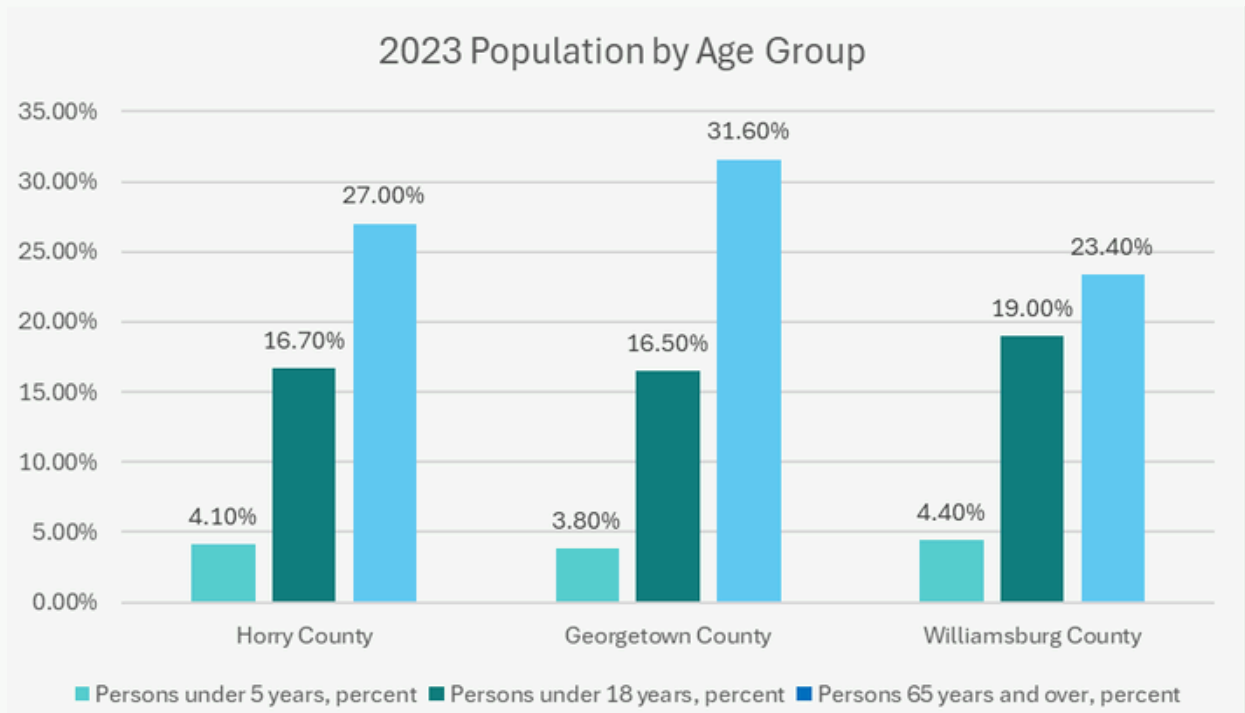
On the other hand, the Town of Hemingway's population decreased by 8.28% (-38 residents) over the twelve-year span. Additionally, the City of Georgetown saw a decline of 698 residents (-7.62%), marking the most significant numerical loss in the region.



<u>City/Town</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2010-2022 Change</u>
Andrews	2,861	3,041	3,617	26.42%
Atlantic Beach	334	237	332	-0.60%
Aynor	560	785	989	76.61%
Briarcliffe Acres	457	529	568	24.29%
Conway	17,103	24,747	25,121	46.88%
Georgetown	9,163	8,884	8,465	-7.62%
Greeleyville	438	344	418	-4.57%
Hemingway	459	522	421	-8.28%
Kingstree	3,328	3,058	3,202	-3.79%
Lane	508	569	539	6.10%
Loris	2,396	2,676	2,513	4.88%
Myrtle Beach	27,109	33,638	36,064	33.03%
North Myrtle Beach	13,752	16,684	18,850	37.07%
Pawleys Island	103	83	104	0.97%
Stuckey	245	349	243	-0.82%
Surfside Beach	3,837	4,470	4,179	8.91%

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU POPULATION ESTIMATES; AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY LAST 5 YEAR ESTIMATES (2018-2022); STATS AMERICA

Age and Racial Demographics



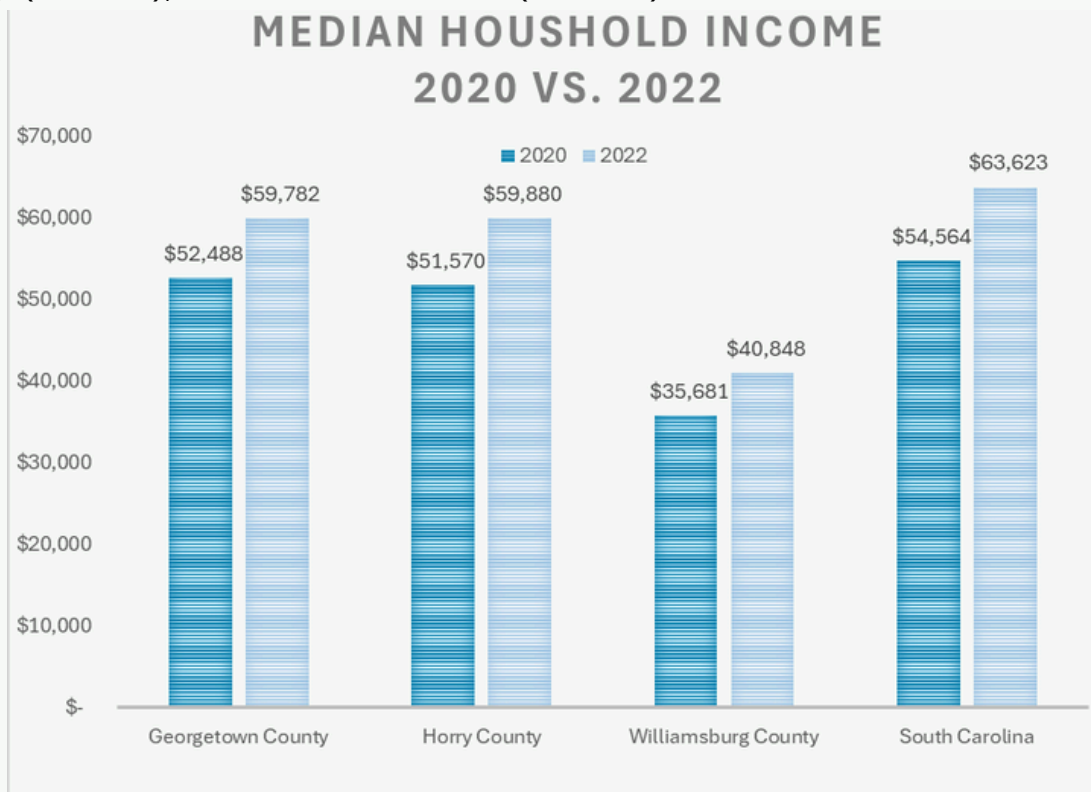
Race	Georgetown County	Horry County	Williamsburg County
White alone	69.70%	83.30%	34.50%
Black or African American alone	28.10%	12.10%	62.90%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.30%	0.60%	0.60%
Asian alone	0.70%	1.50%	0.90%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.10%	0.10%	0%
Two or More Races	1.10%	2.30%	1.20%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	3.60%	7.30%	2.60%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	66.90%	77.10%	32.70%

2023 US CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS; 2018-2022 ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES



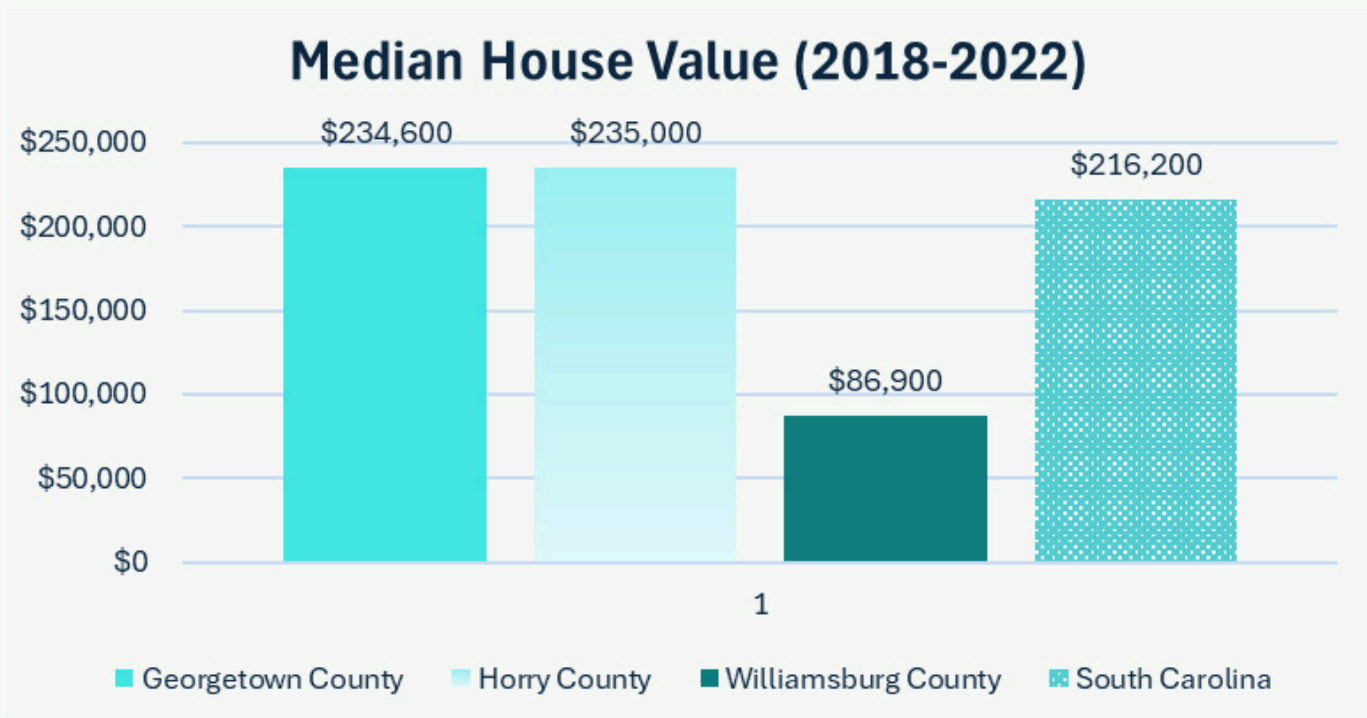
Median Household Income

The 2022 median household income rates in each county has increased significantly from the 2020 median household income values. In 2022, the median household income in Georgetown County was \$59,782 which was a 13.0% increase from the 2020 value. The 2022 median household income in Horry County grew to \$59,880 which is a 14.9% increase from the 2020 value of \$51,570. In 2022, Williamsburg County's median household income increased by \$5,167 or 13.5% to a value of \$40,848 since 2020's median household income of \$35,681. Although, this is substantial growth, Williamsburg County's median household income is markedly less than Georgetown County (-37.6%), Horry County (-37.8%), and South Carolina (-43.6%).



Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2016-2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates; 2023 US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2018-2022 ACS 5-year Estimates

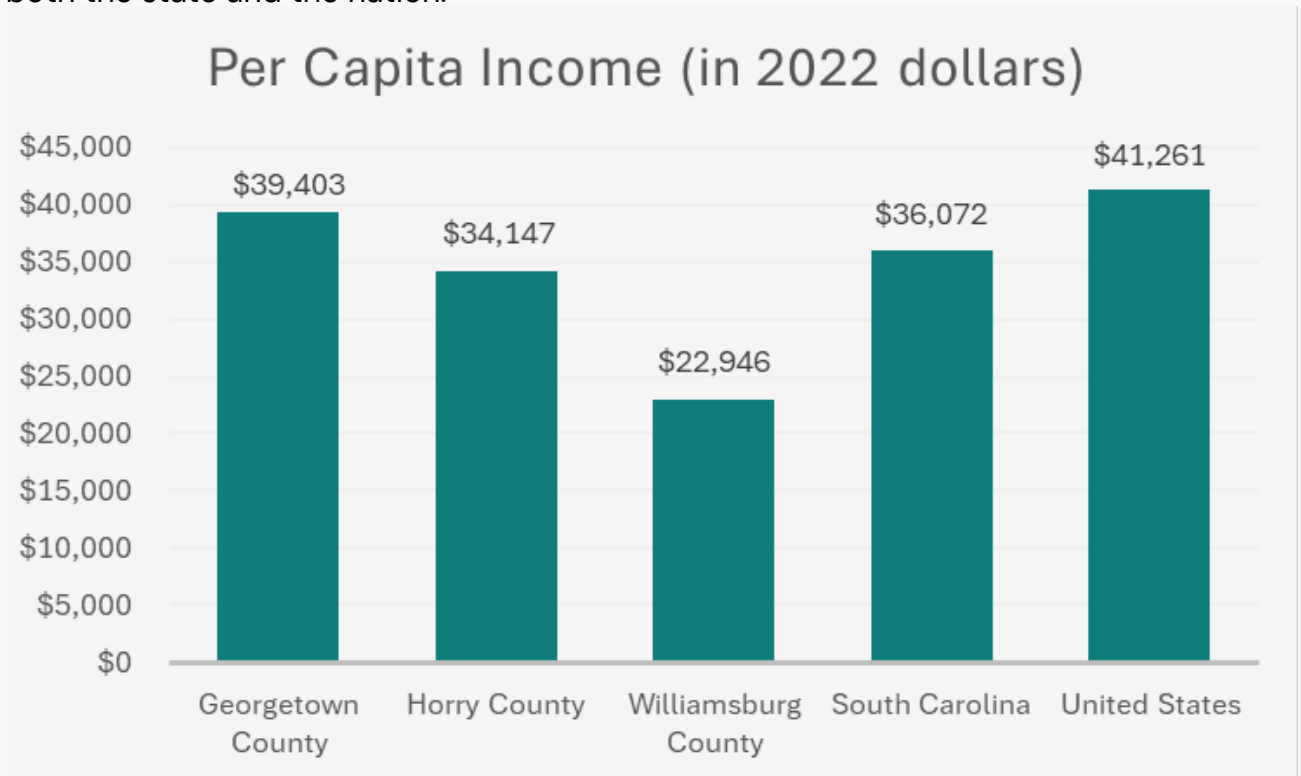
Median House Value (2018-2022)



SOURCE: 2018-2022 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, 5 YEAR ESTIMATE, 2023 US CENSUS SURVEY QUICK FACTS

Per Capita Income

In 2022 dollars, the per capita income for the Waccamaw region stands at \$34,121. This figure is lower than the per capita income in Georgetown County, which surpasses the South Carolina state average of \$36,072 by a slight margin, but falls short of the national per capita income of \$41,261 by \$1,858. In contrast, both Horry and Williamsburg Counties report a per capita income that is below the averages for both the state and the nation.



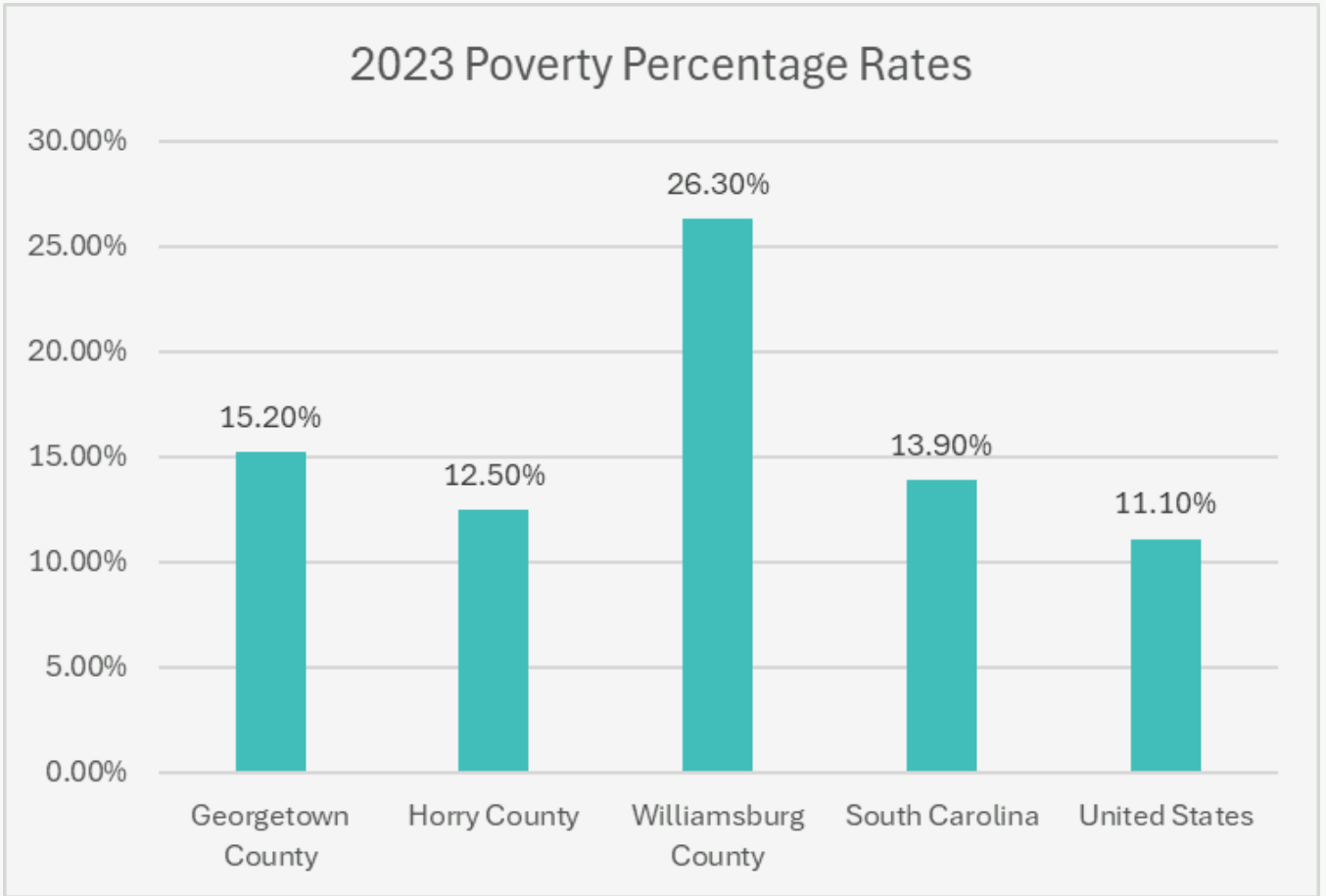
SOURCE: 2023 US CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS, 2018-2022 ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES; NATIONAL ECONOMIC RESILIENCE DATA EXPLORER

\$32,165

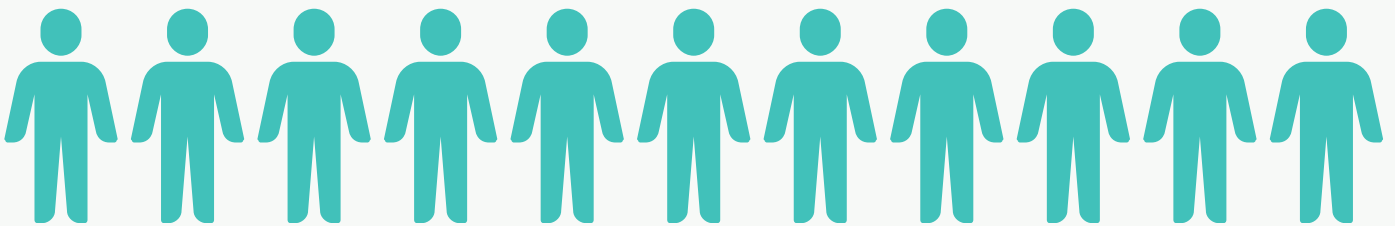
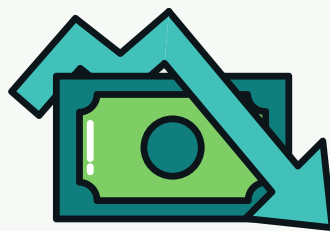
AVG PER CAPITA INCOME
(WACCAMAW REGION)



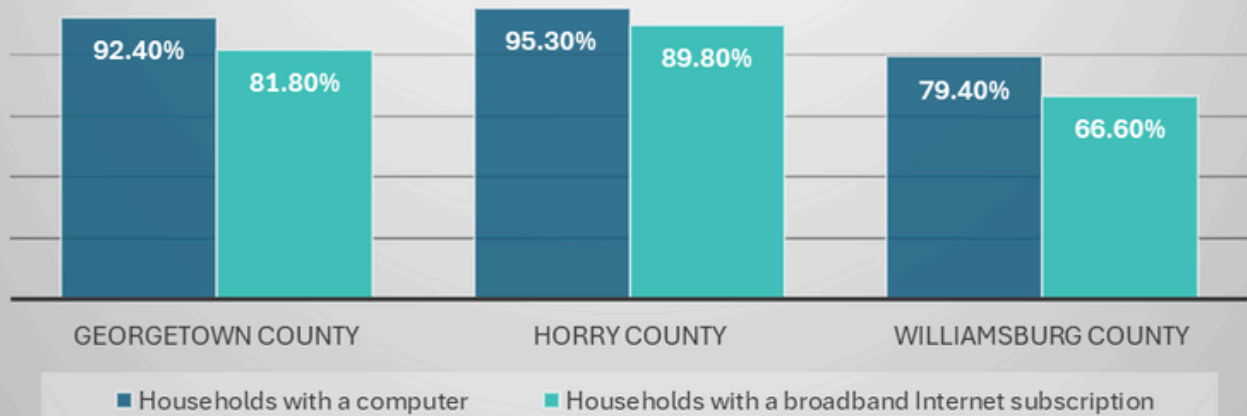
Poverty Percentage Rates



SOURCE: 2023 US CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS



Households with a Computer and Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription



Source: 2018-2022 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimate, 2023 US Census Survey Quick Facts

Access to computers and high-speed internet is crucial for education, work, commerce, healthcare, and information retrieval. In today's interconnected world, having these resources is more important than ever. The pandemic underscored the need for equitable access to high-speed internet and affordable computers as schools, businesses, and healthcare providers transitioned to online and remote services. Individuals lacking access to these technologies faced significant challenges in obtaining essential information, education, and even healthcare services, such as online vaccine registration.

Regional Healthcare Update



The demand for quality healthcare in the Waccamaw Region has risen significantly over the past few years, affecting both urban and rural communities. While hospital expansions continue along the coast to accommodate growing populations, rural areas are also experiencing improved healthcare options.

January 2024 marked the first anniversary of the MUSC Health Black River Medical Center, which took the place of the heavily storm-damaged Williamsburg Regional Hospital. In its inaugural year, the new medical center celebrated an impressive milestone of 50,000 patient visits.

In March 2024, CMC launched a state-of-the-art sleep disorders study lab within a boutique hotel in Myrtle Beach, making it the first hotel-based study lab in the region. By June 2024, CMC became the first hospital in the Carolinas to acquire the Intuitive da Vinci5 robotic surgical system. This advanced robotic technology will enhance CMC's ability to provide cutting-edge minimally invasive care, facilitating quicker patient recovery post-surgery.

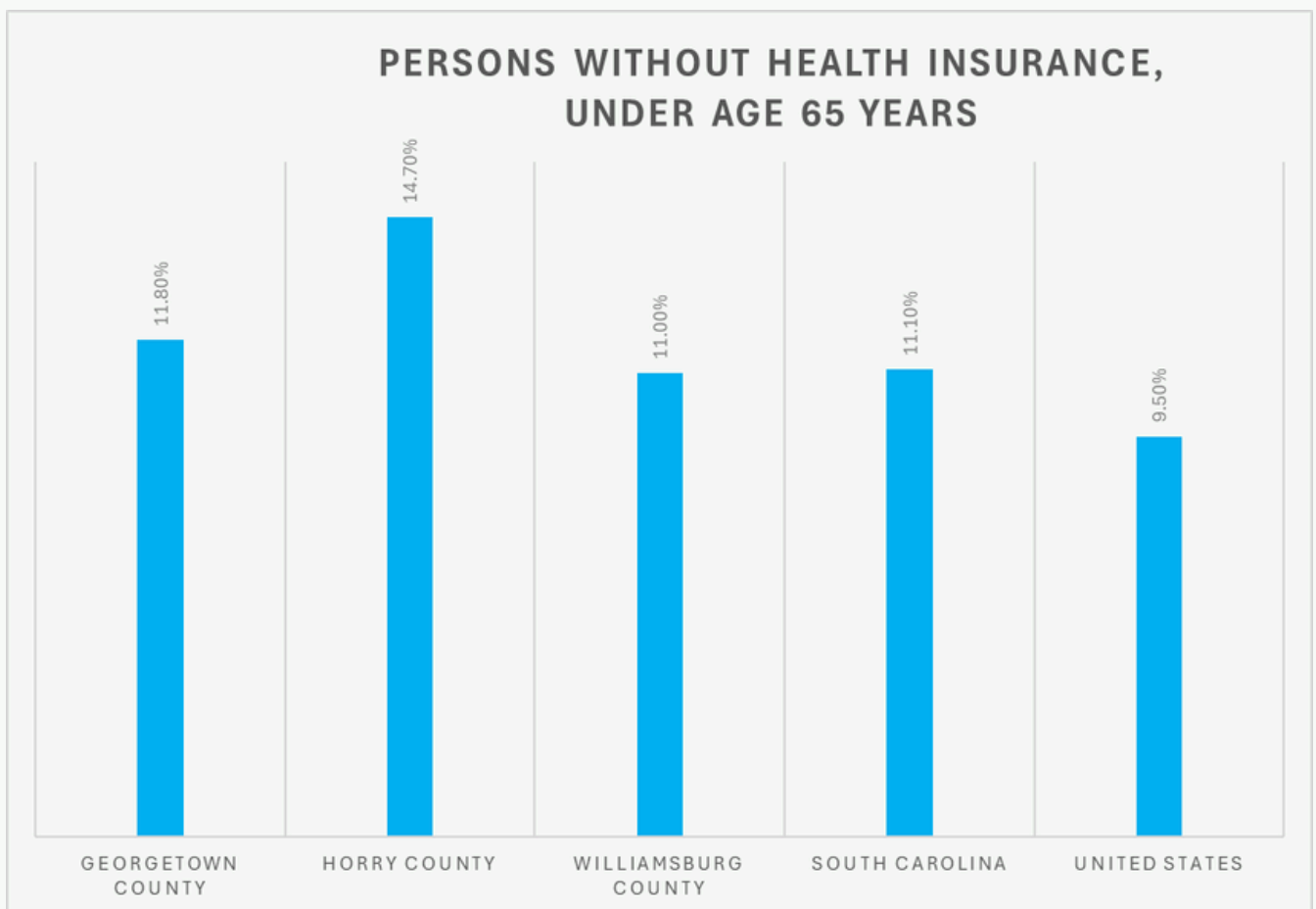
In July 2024, McLeod Health revealed plans to expand its Carolina Forest campus and establish a comprehensive cancer treatment center within the next two years.

Tidelands Health announced the construction of a new acute care facility, Tidelands Health Carolina Bays Hospital, which will feature an open-heart surgery program. This hospital will be situated in the Socastee area of Horry County, with an opening anticipated by 2028.

Regional Health Insurance Coverage

Healthcare plays a crucial role in the growth and sustainability of the region. To ensure that individuals have affordable access to quality healthcare, having health insurance is often essential.

According to the 2018–2022 ACS data, the percentage of individuals under 65 without health insurance is higher in Georgetown County and Horry County compared to the state and national averages. Meanwhile, Williamsburg County has a slightly lower rate than the state percentage. Nationally, 9.5% of people under 65 are uninsured, while in South Carolina, the rate stands at 11.10% for the same age group.



Source: 2023 U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts; 2018–2022 American Community Survey 5–Year Estimates

ECONOMIC UPDATES

Economic development is the creation of prosperity from which community benefits are realized. It is an investment in growing your economy and enhancing the prosperity and quality of life for all. On a broad scale, anything a community does to foster and create a healthy economy can fall under the umbrella of economic development.

Economic clusters are defined as groups of businesses or institutions that have some similarity in industry type, method of operations, technology, or supply chain. Economic clusters promote collaboration in production fields leading to greater innovation and efficiency.

The Waccamaw Region continues to focus on the following prominent and longstanding economic clusters:

- Hospitality and Retail
- Healthcare and Health Science
- Manufacturing
- Transportation
- Warehousing and Logistics
- Agriculture and Forestry

Both the top industries per county and largest employers in Horry County have remained unchanged from the reporting within the 2023-2027 CEDS publication. However, Georgetown and Williamsburg counties have announced the closures of two major manufacturing employers which will impact the region in a significant way.

The Waccamaw Region saw limited project announcements over the past year, including an expansion by AGRU America in Georgetown County, which added six new jobs, the establishment of a new Amazon distribution center in Horry County, creating 100 full-time positions, and the establishment of 357 Brewers creating 35 new jobs in Horry County.

Company	Announcement Date	Investments	Jobs	Selected County	Objective	Products/Services	Activity/Category	Product Description
AGRU America	3/19/2024	\$7,800,00	6	Georgetown	Expansion	Engineering Plastic Solutions	Manufacturing	Geosynthetics and pipe liners
Amazon	3/26/2024	\$14,500,000	100	Horry	New	E-Commerce	Distribution	Consumer product distribution
357 Brewers	11/21/2024	\$6,400,000	35	Horry	New	Craft Brewery	Beverage Manufacturing	Craft Beer Brewery and Distribution



Although the region has seen some investments over the past year, it has also experienced a couple of large manufacturing closures which will impact the region significantly.

In June, 2024, Tupperware located in Williamsburg County announced it would be closing their manufacturing facility between September 2024 and March 2025. Approximately 150 employees will be dislocated during this closure.

In October, 2024, International Paper located in Georgetown County announced it would be closing their pulp and paper mill by the end of 2024. This closure will result in the loss of nearly 700 employees and an additional 250 contractors. This closure will have significant impacts on the City of Georgetown and the County of Georgetown.

Georgetown County:

- Manufacturing, timber, paper, chemical operations, metal fabrication, and machinery continue to be the focus of economic development for Georgetown County.
- Zilmet, a global expansion tank and heat exchanger manufacturer, announced plans to establish its first U.S. manufacturing operations in Georgetown County. The company's \$32.7 million investment will create approximately 50 new jobs. Construction is still underway for a 150,000-square-foot facility in Andrews, with an estimated completion date in early to mid-2025. Production is expected to begin in early 2025.
- Diatom, a Brazilian based chemical firm specializing in raw materials for tire manufacturers is completing the construction of their facility and is expected to begin production by the end of first quarter 2025.
- The construction of Speculative Building # 5 in Andrews began in 2023 and is expected to open in 2025, and will provide 100,000 square feet of marketable space for prospects.
- International Paper announced the closure of its plant eliminating nearly 700 employees and an additional 250 independent contractors. Impacts of the closure are just beginning to be reviewed and studied.

Horry County:

- Aerospace, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and marine continue to be the focus of economic development for Horry County.
- Amazon announced it will locate a distribution center in North Myrtle Beach, and will employ 100 full time employees beginning in November 2024. An investment of \$14.5 million, Amazon will offer its first same day delivery service for the region.

Williamsburg County:

- Aerospace & aviation, automotive suppliers, agribusiness, chemical operations, Manufacturing, metal fabrication continue to be the focus of economic development for Williamsburg County.
- The county completed construction on a 52,000 square foot speculative shell building in 2024 and is now marketing to prospects.
- Williamsburg County received a \$2 million dollar grant from the County Delegation in November 2024 to retrofit the former Sykes call center located on Commerce Drive. After completion, the building will house offices from Mental Health and Veterans Affairs.



Source: Williamsburg County Economic Development/Spec Building in Williamsburg County

There were no Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants awarded in the Waccamaw Region this past year. EDA investments will improve economic development and resilience in the region through infrastructure improvements. Below shows the current status of 2023 EDA grants:

County	FY	Applicant	Project Short Description	EDA \$	Private Investment \$	Total Project \$	Current Status
Georgetown	2023	Georgetown County Airport	Construction & Infrastructure improvements (Coal-Impacted Community)	\$3,526,192	\$881,548	\$4,407,740	90% completed
Georgetown	2023	City of Georgetown/County of Georgetown	Stormwater improvement projects (EDA grant increase)	\$5,488,526	\$2,123,117	\$7,611,643	In progress
Horry	2023	Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority	Feasibility Study for Marine Industrial Park (Disaster Supplemental)	\$128,000	\$32,000	\$160,000	In progress
Horry	2023	Horry-Georgetown Technical College	Construction of new building for Outboard Marine Technology Program (Disaster Supplemental)	\$8,000,000	\$4,650,000	\$1,650,000	In progress

Georgetown County:

- Georgetown County Airport Improvements Project- EDA Grant Award \$3,526,192, Local Match: \$881,548. Total Project Cost: \$4,407,740. This project will provide site upgrades at Georgetown County Airport necessary for the development of two commercial hangers, including updated water and sewer lines and and a new taxiway. This project is nearing completion.
- Georgetown (Historic District) Stormwater Improvements Project, Grant Award: \$5,488,526, City of Georgetown (Lead Applicant) and Georgetown County (Co-applicant). This project received an EDA grant increase in 2023 in the amount of \$2,123,117 for a grand total of \$5,488,526 in EDA funding and \$2,123,117 in local match. Total Project Cost: \$7,611,643. The project consists of constructing improvements to three existing drainage systems in the Historic District of downtown Georgetown. This project is still in the construction phase.

Horry County:

- Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority, Bucksport Marine Industrial Park Feasibility Study (EDA Grant No. 04-69-07886), EDA Grant Award: \$128,000. Local Match: \$32,000. Total Estimated Cost: \$160,000. The feasibility study will determine the highest and best uses of the 47 acre Bucksport Marine Industrial Park. The results will help the owners and stakeholders determine future use and recruit appropriate marine trade and companies to the site. The study will result in new investments, jobs, economic growth, and increase economic diversity and resiliency. This study is nearly completed.



Source: NESAs, Bucksport Marine Park

The Waccamaw Region did not receive Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for the categories of infrastructure or community development in 2024. However great progress has been made thus far on the implementation of the following 2023 CDBG award in the Waccamaw Region:

County	FY	Applicant	Project Short Description	CDBG \$	Private Investment \$	Total Project \$
Georgetown	2023	Town of Andrews	Sewer upgrade project	\$284,160	\$52,950	\$337,110

Georgetown County:

- Town of Andrews S. Magnolia Sewer Upgrade Project- (CDBG Grant No. 4-CI-23-001), CDBG Grant Award: \$284,160, Local Match: \$52,950, Total Project Cost: \$337,110. The project will replace 600LF of 8” vitrified clay pipe (VCP) with new 8” PVC for gravity sewer and approximately 6 manholes along South Magnolia Avenue (extending south from Main St. to Elmwood St. intersection). This project will help the Town address a consent order for its sewer system. This project is currently in progress with construction slated to begin at the beginning of 2025.



Source: Town of Andrews, Facebook

The South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) awarded millions of dollars for transformative projects throughout the Waccamaw Region. The following municipalities received this one-time only, SC Infrastructure Investment Program (SCIIP) grant funding in 2023 and are receiving grant management services from WRCOG. The projects are still in progress and have an estimated construction completion date of June 2026.

Georgetown County:

- City of Georgetown Sewer Improvements Project , Grant Award: \$9,733,738. The project includes the design and construction of two sewer improvement. The first improvement includes the complete replacement and updates of the existing pump station facility. The second consists of the replacement of the City's aging sewer force main.
- Town of Andrews Water and Sewer Improvements Project , Grant Award: RIA SCIIP: \$6,112,150; RIA State Award: \$5000,000; Total Grant Award: \$6,612,150. The project will provide sewer system improvements as required in a DHEC consent order and will upgrade and improve deficiencies in the water system. Improvements will take place on S. Morgan Avenue from Main Street, Andrews, down to the intersection at Alder Street, Andrews.
- Georgetown County's Highway 17 Drainage Improvements Project received a \$2,947,905 RIA SCIIP grant. The project aims to prevent flooding along US Hwy 17 in the Litchfield area, enhancing safety on this critical hurricane evacuation route and key travel corridor. It will also protect homes, businesses, and daily operations in the affected area.

Horry County:

- City of Loris Water and Sewer Upgrades Project, RIA SCIIP Grant Award: \$4,538,667, RIA State Grant Award: \$500,000, Total Grant Award: \$5,038,667. The project will completely upgrade the City's three main gravity sewer trunk lines. These old lines are comprised of brick manholes and clay sewer lines that have outlived their normal useful life. They collect all of the City's sewer and convey it to the City's influent pump station. The second portion of the project will replace and upgrade the City's water meters.

- Town of Briarcliffe Acres Viability Planning and Stormwater System Assessment: RIA SCIIP Grant Award: \$350,000. The Town of Briarcliffe Acres has experienced several stormwater flooding issues in various areas throughout the town for several years. This project will consist of an assessment by a qualified professional of the current stormwater drainage system. The assessment will include opportunities for improvements to address inadequacies.

Williamsburg County:

- RIA SCIIP Grant for the Town of Hemingway: RIA SCIIP Grant Award: \$8,494,811, RIA State Grant Award: \$500,000, Total Grant Award: \$8,994,811. The project will replace many old cast iron, galvanized metal, and asbestos cement waterlines throughout the Town of Hemingway's water system. The project will also upgrade the water meters in the system and the meter reading system.
- Williamsburg County Water Improvements Project; RIA SCIIP Grant Award \$2,818,893, RIA State Grant: \$500,000 (Total Grant Award: \$3,318,893). The project will install approximately 5.14 miles of water lines, 18 services, 1 well, and install SCADA on the new well. These improvements will eliminate issues with water quality, resolve existing capacity/pressure/flow issues, and improve system resiliency for all Williamsburg County water customers.



In addition, the South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA) awarded the following SC Infrastructure Investment Program (SCIIP) grant funding in 2023 for municipalities within the Waccamaw Region (not administered through WRCOG). The projects are in progress and have an anticipated construction completion date of June 2026:

Georgetown County:

- Georgetown County Water & Sewer District: \$10,000,000

Horry County:

- City of Conway: Kingston Lake Stormwater Outfall Upgrades, \$10,000,000
- City of Myrtle Beach: Parallel Water Transmission Line-Phase 1, \$10,000,000
- City of North Myrtle Beach: Water Transmission Improvements, \$10,000,000
- Horry County: Drainage Improvements in Unincorporated Areas, \$6,516,963
- Grand Strand Water & Sewer Authority: Bull Creek Surface Water Treatment Plant Expansion, \$10,000,000

Williamsburg County:

- Town of Kingstree: Water Improvements, \$2,064,784 and RIA State Grant: \$202,346
- Town of Kingstree: Water Treatment Plant Disinfection System, \$492,375



EDUCATION UPDATES

While the coastal areas of the Waccamaw Region continue to grow in population, the more rural parts of the area have seen some negative growth, resulting in multiple infrastructure changes.

Horry County's growing population continues to increase the demand for schools, with 20 of its 58 schools at or over capacity. The district, the third largest in South Carolina, is building two new elementary schools in Carolina Forest which should open by 2025, costing \$50 million and serving 1,200 students each. Upgrades to several existing schools throughout the county continue to progress, while the new middle school in Conway was completed and opened in August 2024.

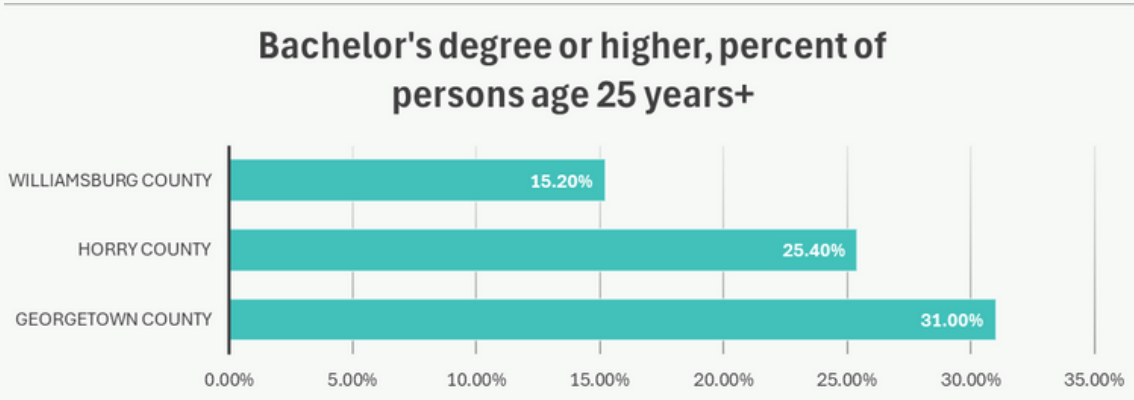
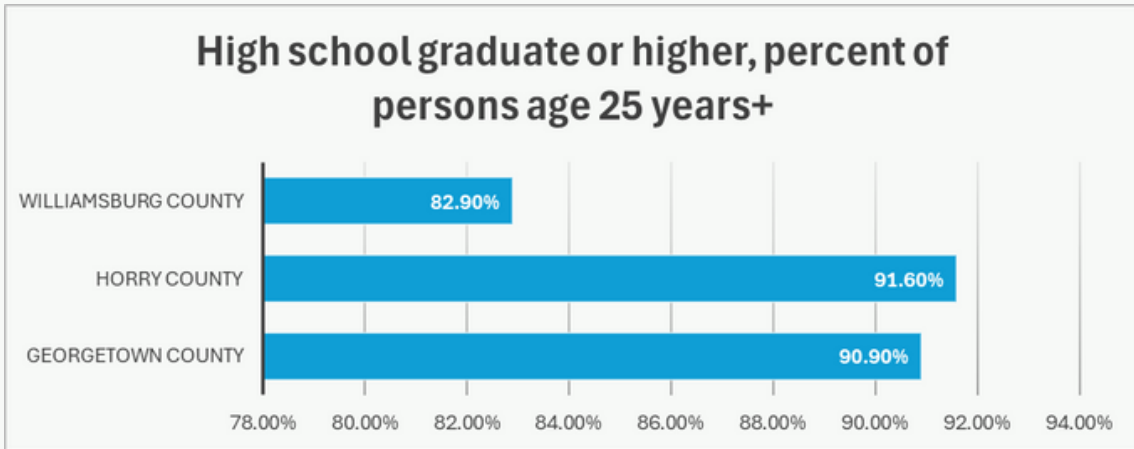
Williamsburg County School District has elected to merge 2 high schools together as the population has seen some decline over the past decade, however the district announced a \$10 million investment for the expansion of Greeleyville STEAM Academy which will add a new wing to the existing building.

Georgetown County area schools have not seen significant changes in school infrastructure, although coastal regions of the county are slowly seeing population growth.



Source: WBTW

Regional Educational Attainment Updates



Source: 2023 US Census Bureau Quick Facts, ACS 2018-2022 5 Year Estimates



EDUCATION

The Waccamaw Region boasts a strong commitment to educating, training, and developing its workforce. The development and training begins at the secondary level and evolves through postsecondary education at the region's eight institutions of higher learning.

- Coastal Carolina University (CCU)
- Galen College of Nursing
- Horry-Georgetown Technical College (HGTC)
- Leadership In Flight Training (LIFT) Academy
- Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics (PIA)
- Webster University
- Williamsburg Technical College (WTC)

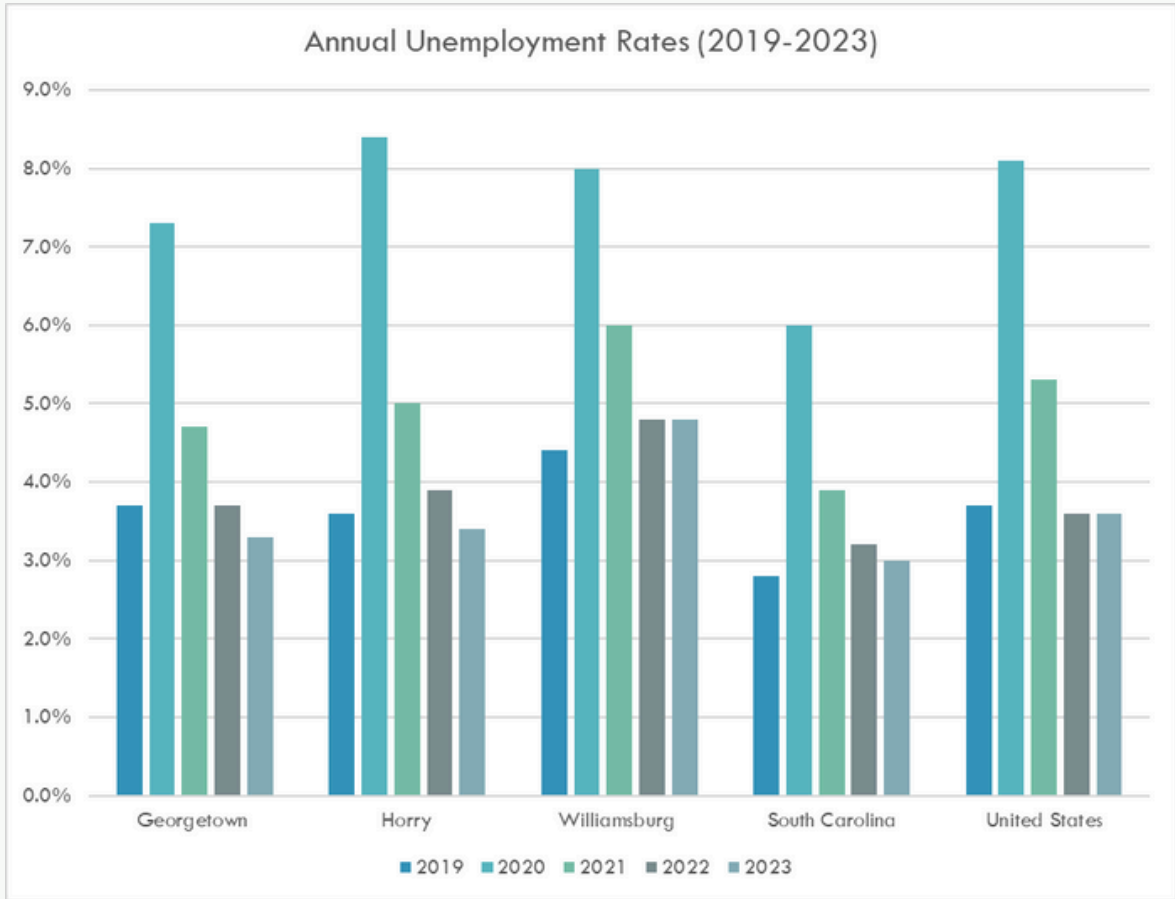


WORKFORCE UPDATES

The unemployment rate in the Waccamaw Region, and throughout the United States, experienced a significant increase in 2020 due to the Coronavirus/ COVID-19 Pandemic. The Pandemic resulted in massive business shut-downs, stay-at-home orders, and work-or-home orders throughout the country. However, the region is making a steady economic recovery as illustrated in workforce and unemployment rates.

The South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW) has reported that the unadjusted unemployment rate for the Waccamaw Region in October 2024 stood at 5.2%. While this figure is considerably lower than the peak unemployment rate experienced during the Covid-19 Pandemic, it remains higher than both the state rate of 4.7% and the national rate of 3.9% as of October 2024.

The chart below displays the annual unemployment rates for each county within the Waccamaw Region, as well as for the state and the nation.



Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce, *Community Profile: Waccamaw Workforce Development Area; Georgetown County; Horry County; Williamsburg County*; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.bls.gov: *Labor Force Data by County, 2023, Annual Averages*; BLS News Release: *Regional and State Unemployment- 2023 Annual Averages (March 1, 2024)*



Economic Distress Criteria

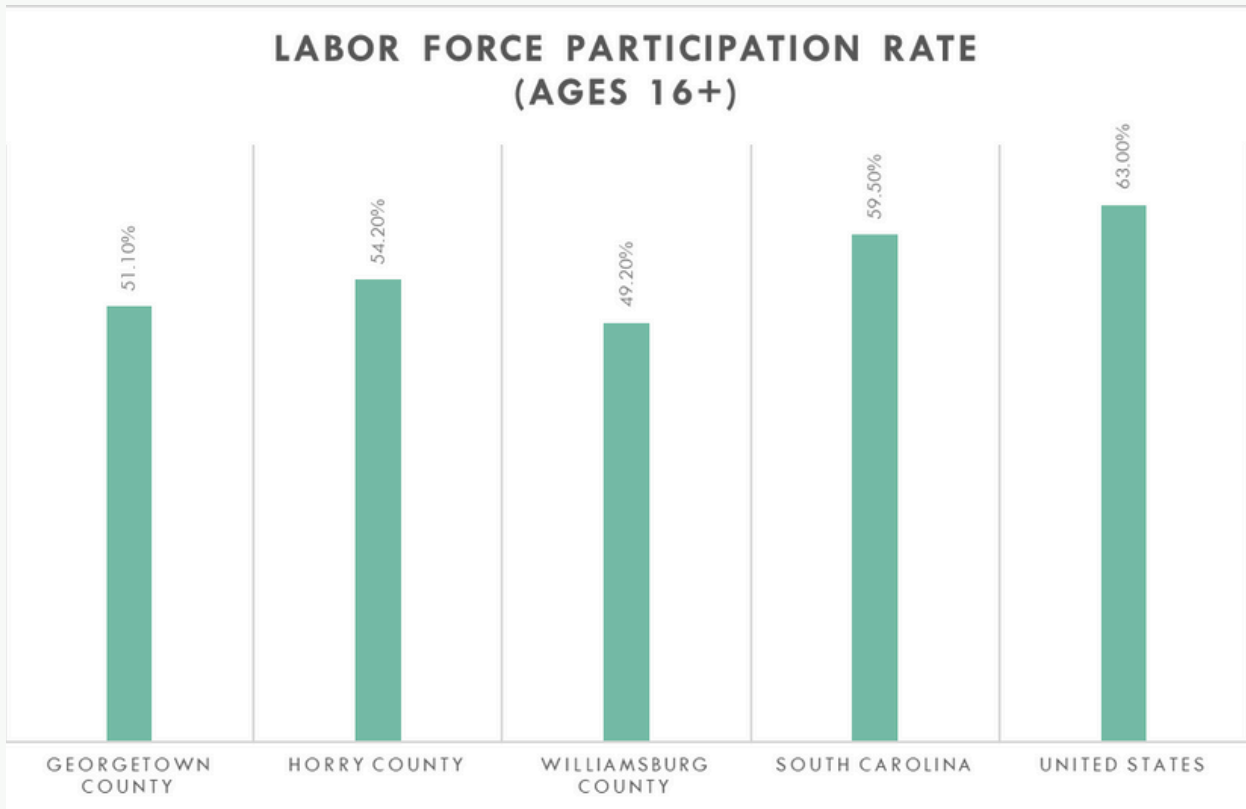
24-MONTH AVG. BLS UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ENDING AUGUST 2024 2022 PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME (BEA PCPI)

	24 Month Unemployment	Threshold Calculation	BEA PCPI	Threshold Calculation	ACS 5-Year PCMI	Threshold Calculation
Waccamaw Region	3.86	0.12	\$47,837	73.1	\$34,121	82.7
U.S.	3.74	0.00	\$65,470	100.0	\$41,261	100.0
Georgetown County, SC	3.65	-0.09	\$57,180	87.3	\$39,403	95.5
Horry County, SC	3.80	0.06	\$46,995	71.8	\$34,147	82.8
Williamsburg County, SC	5.26	1.52	\$38,446	58.7	\$22,946	55.6

Note: The threshold calculation for unemployment reflects the percentage point difference between the unemployment rate for the selected area and the U.S. figure. For example, if a region has a 24-month rate of 6.9 and the U.S. rate is 7.9, the difference shown in the threshold column is -1.0—meaning it is 1 percentage point lower than the national rate. The threshold calculation for income is the selected area’s per capita value divided by U.S. per capita income and shown as a percentage share of the U.S. figure. For example, if the selected area has a threshold calculation of 145.2, this means its per capita income is 45.2 percent higher than the nation at large.

Source: StatsAmerica, using U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (unemployment), U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (PCPI) and U.S. Census Bureau (ACS 5-year PCMI) data

Waccamaw Labor Force Participation



Source: 2023 US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, ACS 5 Year Estimates 2018-2022, (Civilian Labor Force, total, percent of population age 16+)



Workforce Commute Times



Source: 2023 US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, ACS 5 Year Estimates 2018-2022, (Mean Travel time to work (minutes), workers ages 16+ years)



TRANSPORTATION UPDATES

Transit and transportation continue to be important for both the general public and to commerce for the Waccamaw Region. The area is seeing population growth and industrial growth which is impacting the region.

The Waccamaw Region offers a variety of transit and transportation for residents, tourists, and for commerce-related industries. Roads and highways, air service, rail service, bus transit service, waterway and ports have all seen changes over the past year.

Roads & Highways Updates:

- The region is currently monitoring numerous road projects including intersection projects, road widening projects, and bridge replacement projects. A comprehensive list of some major roadway projects is listed in the following chart:



Waccamaw Region Road Projects

City/County	Project Name	Road/Highway	Project Description	Funding Source
Georgetown County	SC 41 & Big Dam Swamp	SC Highway 41	Intersection Improvement- Realignment	Guideshare
City of Conway	US 701 & Janette	US Highway 701	Intersection Improvement- DOT Scoping	Guideshare
Williamsburg County	US 521 Andrews Bypass (Phase II)/US 52	US 521/US 52 to Clarendon County Line	New road segment	Guideshare
Town of Greeleyville	Easler & Holliman OGR	S-45-593	Intersection Improvement- Road safety improvements	Guideshare
Williamsburg County	US 52 & S-186	Eastland Avenue	Intersection Improvement- Intersection and road safety improvements	Guideshare
Horry County	US 501 & S-132	William Nobles Road	Intersection Improvement	SCDOT
Horry County	S-31 & Highway 66	Red Bluff Road	Intersection improvement	SCDOT
Horry County	SC Highway 9	SC Highway 9	Road Widening in Loris	Horry County Sales Tax
Horry County	US Highway 701	US Highway 701	Road Widening North of Loris	Horry County Sales Tax
Horry County	US Highway 701	US Highway 701	Road Widening North of Conway	Horry County RIDE III
Horry County	Interstate 73	Interstate 73	Road Widening	HIP Funds
Horry County	Horsepen Creek (Kingston Lake Branch)	Highway 472	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
Horry County	Huggins Swamp	US 701	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
Horry County	Todd Swamp	S- 31 (Red Bluff Road)	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT

Source: WRCOG Transportation Department, RTIP 2024

Other Road & Highway Updates:

- GSATS was awarded the Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan grant in the amount of \$575,000. Additionally, they were awarded the SS4A Demonstration grant in the amount of \$800,000. These two grants are important for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which will help further assist in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- Two Corridor Studies have been completed for SC 90 and Holden Beach Causeway (NC).
- Intersection Improvements projects currently underway: Tournament /McDowell
- TAP Projects: I2I multimodal path in Murrells Inlet
- North Carolina DA Projects underway: Holden Beach Bike Lanes

Source: WRCOG Transportation Department,



Airport Activity Updates:

- Myrtle Beach International Airport is one of the busiest airports in South Carolina and serves more than 3 million passengers each year and is continuing to expand to keep up with the travel growth.
- On June 5, 2024, the Myrtle Beach International Airport marked a significant moment in history with their highly anticipated Concourse A expansion project. Construction will be completed over the next 18 months, increasing the airport's total number of gates from 12 to 18. Other features will include revamped restrooms, new flooring, improved signage, and new concessions throughout the existing terminal.
- Georgetown County Airport received funding from the U.S Department of Commerce to provide site upgrades for the development of two commercial hangars, including updated water and sewer lines and a new taxiway. The upgrades are near completion and will generate \$8 million in private investment
- Williamsburg County Regional Airport is making plans for additional hangers, runway repairs and the addition of wildlife fencing as part of the airport's Capital Improvement Plan. This 5-6 year long-range plan is required by the FAA, and is updated annually.



Rail Activity Updates:

- No major changes to rail activity.

Waterway & Ports Activity Updates:

- March 2024, Georgetown County began to demolish dilapidated buildings at the former port of Georgetown as part of a cleanup effort that began when Georgetown County took ownership of the property last year.
- The County is now seeking a federal grant to hire state and students from Clemson University to help determine the best uses for 45 acres at the former port.

Bus Transit Activity Updates:

- Coast RTA is currently developing an Organizational Plan to include Human Service Transportation Plan, Transit Development Plan and a fare structure analysis. This plan is very comprehensive and is anticipated to take approximately two years for completion.



Georgetown County Port
Source: Georgetown County Economic Development

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE UPDATES

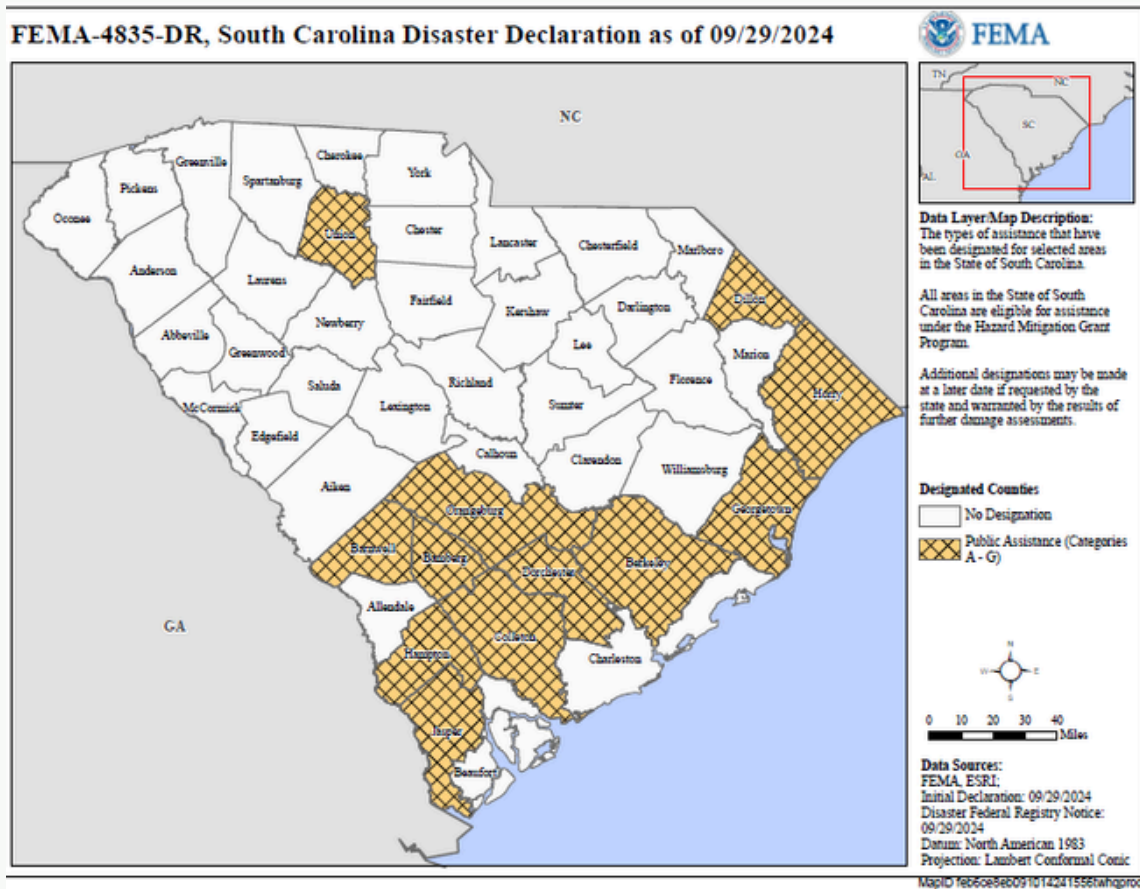
Building communities resilient to climate change remains a focus for the Waccamaw Region.

According to FEMA's National Risk Index, the cumulative estimated risk rating for the Waccamaw Region ranges from relatively low/relatively high, with an expected annual loss (EAL) of \$410.30 million due to natural hazards each year. Hurricanes pose the highest natural hazard risk in the area, with an EAL of \$358.61 million annually.

The National Climate Assessment forecasts an increase in average temperatures by 4 to 8 degrees by the year 2100. This climate change is expected to lead to rising sea levels and heightened vulnerability to flooding, particularly in our low-lying coastal regions. Challenges such as storm surges, beach erosion, and wetland loss will significantly affect not only the tourism sector but also our agricultural industry due to saltwater intrusion.

In 2024, the Waccamaw Region faced two tropical events: Debbie and Helene. On August 8, Tropical Storm Debby brought heavy rainfall that caused flooding, particularly in Horry and Georgetown Counties (near rivers and low-lying areas) area, resulting in prolonged flooding of the Waccamaw River, road closures, and damage to homes and businesses near the river. Coastal areas also suffered from severe beach erosion. On September 27, Hurricane Helene impacted the region, generating three tornadoes. The storm resulted in minor flooding, power outages, fallen trees, and property damage. The Waccamaw Region managed relatively well during the 2024 hurricane season, especially as western South and North Carolina experienced widespread flooding and damage of historic proportions in some areas. FEMA Federal Disaster Declarations were issued in response to both weather events, with Georgetown and Horry Counties included in FEMA-4835-DR SC Disaster Declaration for Tropical Storm Debby, and Williamsburg County included in FEMA-4829-DR SC Disaster Declaration for Hurricane Helene.

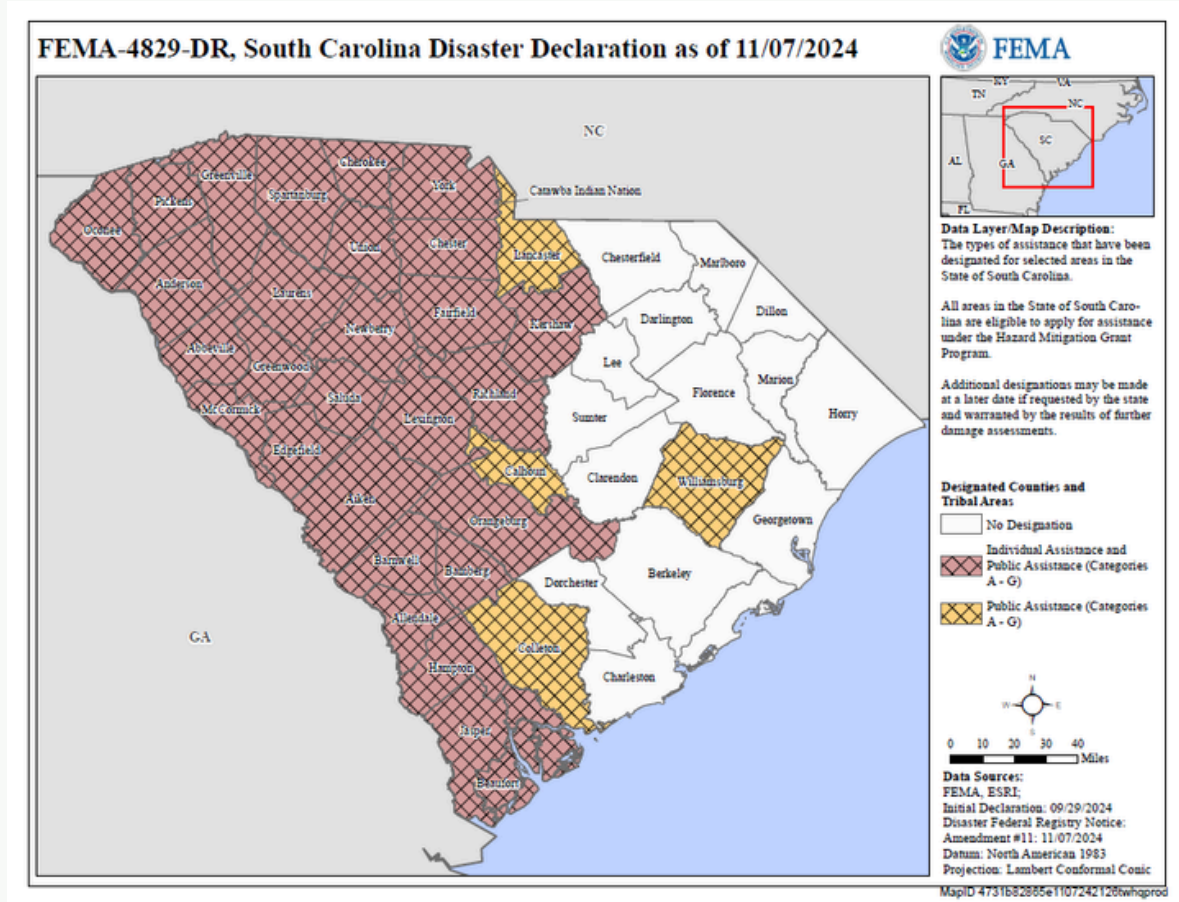
FEMA Disaster Declarations in Waccamaw Region



Tropical Storm Debby: Designated Counties

- Georgetown County
- Horry County

FEMA Disaster Declarations in Waccamaw Region



Hurricane Helene: Designated County

- Williamsburg County

STRATEGIES AND GOALS UPDATE

The Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments' economic development staff, working through the CEDS committee and WRCOG Board of Directors, review and update the 2023 vision statement, objectives, and goals each year. The following outlines any adjustments to these goals and strategies.

VISION:

The Waccamaw Region will cultivate a growing, sustainable and thriving community which will focus on providing the highest degree of health, safety, education, infrastructure, transparency, and equality for citizens while delivering a pathway to diversify the economy in a way that will preserve the unique natural environment and historic heritage of the area.

Goal

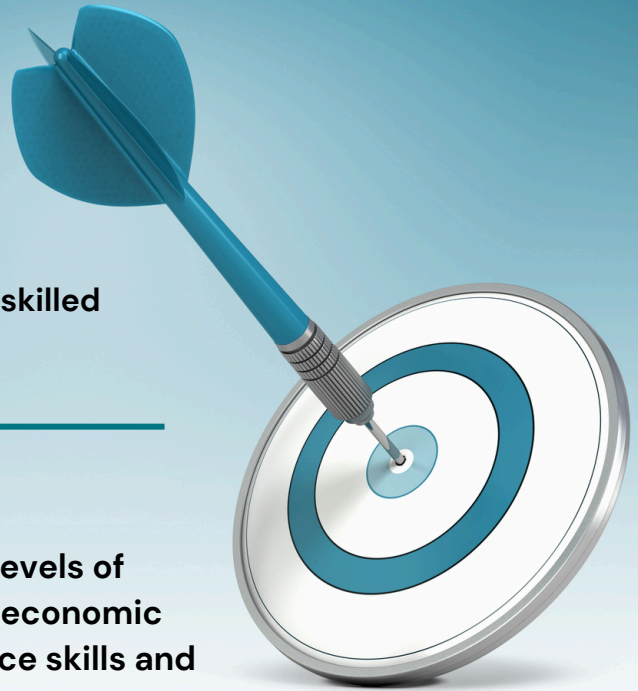
1

Talent & Education:

Develop, grow, and support a diverse population of skilled workers for current and future industry needs.

Objective:

Promote a thriving partnership between all levels of educational institutions, private industry, and economic development with a focus on increasing workforce skills and equitable participation which is aligned with the current and future workforce needs of the region.



STRATEGIES AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED TOWARDS GOAL:

- Provided planning and/or support for workforce and industry-related activities to Partnership Grand Strand, Myrtle Beach MLK Events Committee, Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Williamsburg Technical College, Pathways 2 Possibilities Event, Apprenticeship Carolina, and the Greater Pee Dee Manufacturing Sector Partnership.
- WRCOG staff continued to provide career and technology virtual reality headset demonstrations for secondary school students. Demonstrations allowed students to learn about skilled occupations ranging from hospitality and robotics to manufacturing and auto-mechanics.
- Administered Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grant for Healthcare employer in Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg counties. IWT grant application technical assistance was provided to one local hospital. In addition, Rapid Response IWT grant was awarded to small manufacturer in Williamsburg County.
- Planned and executed two separate job fairs for workers impacted by the closure of Tupperware and International Paper facilities.

Goal

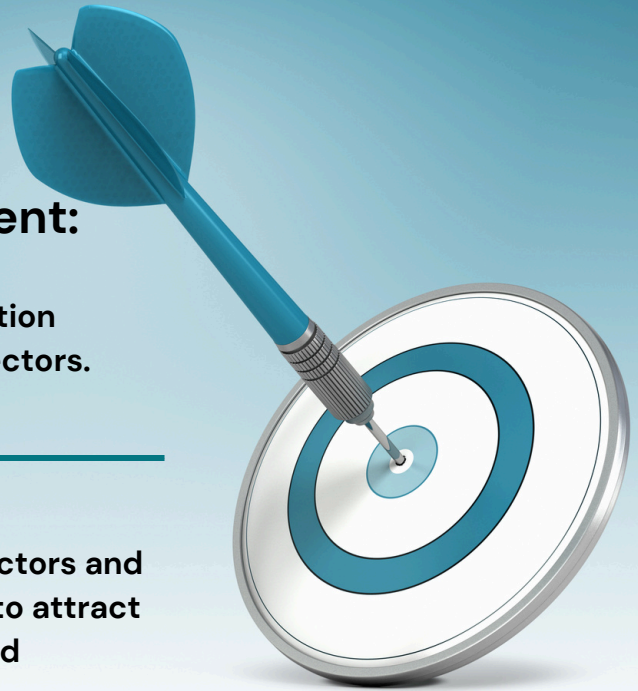
2

Innovation & Economic Development:

Improve coordination of community/economic stakeholders, while creating recruitment and retention strategies for new, existing, and diverse industry sectors.

Objective:

Strengthen partnerships between public/private sectors and continue to grow innovative pathways and sectors to attract businesses while serving both traditional and underrepresented entrepreneurs.



STRATEGIES AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED TOWARDS GOAL:

- The Regional Sector Partnership for Manufacturing, involving 10-15 manufacturers, made significant progress. Efforts included linking Adult Education with employers to enhance manufacturing math skills and developing a strategy to improve county transit for better employee recruitment and retention.
- Built a relationship with Partnership Grand Strand, a nonprofit advancing economic prosperity in Horry and Georgetown counties, through hiring events and podcast collaborations.
- A WRCOG staff member completed the Industry Awareness course with Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development, gaining contacts in tech and manufacturing.

Goal

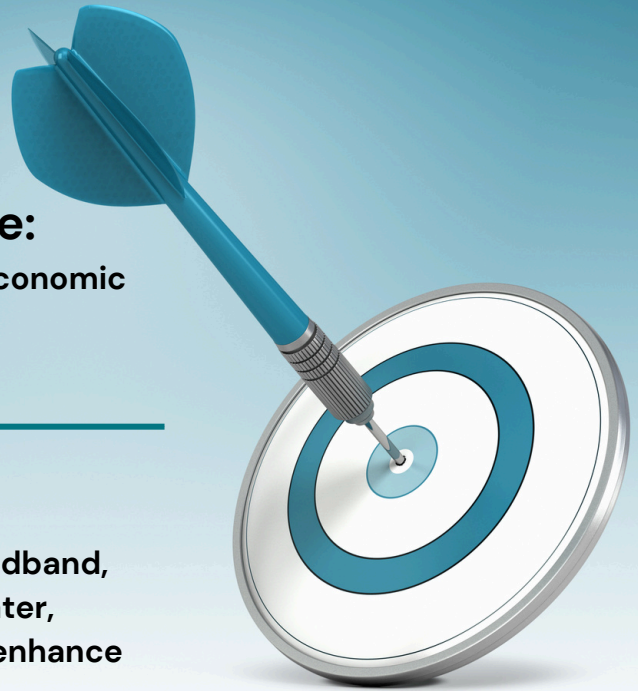
3

Infrastructure, Growth & Resilience:

Establish infrastructure plans which will enhance economic development while planning for future growth and development throughout the region.

Objective:

Develop infrastructure for electric vehicles, broadband, housing, transportation, renewable energy, water, wastewater, and upgrading/ hardening utilities to enhance economic development and resiliency.



STRATEGIES AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED TOWARDS GOAL:

- The Georgetown County Wastewater System Improvements Project in Murrells Inlet has been successfully completed, receiving partial funding from a federal EDA grant of \$1,458,960.
- The Town of Andrews has wrapped up construction on the North Beach Avenue Water Upgrade project, which was partially financed by CDBG grant funds amounting to \$469,876.
- The Town of Hemingway has finished the Main Influent Gravity Sewer Line project, benefiting from partial funding through a CDBG grant of \$1,128,239.
- The construction of the City of Georgetown's West End District Water Upgrade Project is now complete, supported by CDBG grant funds totaling \$750,000.
- Georgetown County and the Georgetown County Water Sewer District have successfully completed the Isaac Drive Water Project, with partial funding from a CDBG grant of \$514,921.
- The Town of Greeleyville has completed the Crosswalk Improvements Project, which received partial funding from a CDBG grant totaling \$198,000.

Goal

4

Business Climate & Competitive:

Provide a diverse and competitive business climate with equitable financial and educational resources for new and expanding business owners/entrepreneurs.

Objective:

Create a diversified business environment which promotes competition for new/existing businesses while also promoting a supportive system for entrepreneurs including equitable programs for minorities and first time business owners.



STRATEGIES AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED TOWARDS GOAL:

- **Georgetown County SC Chamber of Commerce continues its aim to reduce economic disparities, strengthen the minority entrepreneurial community, and make minority businesses more competitive through the Minority Business Accelerator (MBA).**
- **Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce hosted its 2024 Member-to-Member Business Expo which provided an opportunity for chamber members to network and showcase their projects and services. Hundreds of members benefited from the event.**
- **Marketed Revolving Loan Services to area businesses and start-ups through networking events with area Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development organizations.**

Goal

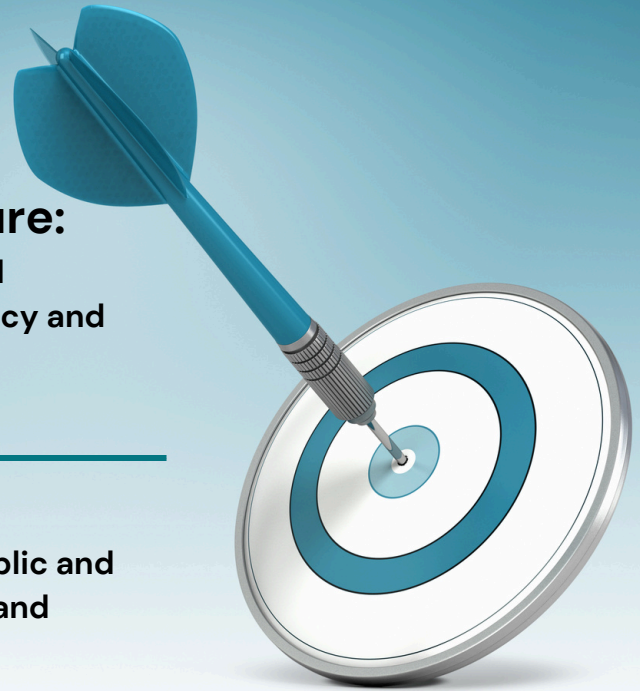
5

Civic & Governmental Infrastructure:

Encourage civic participation and inclusion on local decision-making and planning, creating transparency and trust between government and citizens.

Objective:

Promote trust and transparency between the public and local government by increasing engagement and participation of diverse stakeholders.



STRATEGIES AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED TOWARDS GOAL:

- Needs assessment public hearings were held throughout the region to solicit input from local officials, businesses, and citizens on the housing, economic and community development needs of the community, particularly those of low-to moderate income and minority persons.
- Public information meetings and workshops were held regularly in several locations throughout the region to gather input from the public for plans and studies that contribute to the future and well-being of the citizens in the region.
- Waccamaw continues to value and emphasize public participation and input through engagement at the local level.

Goal

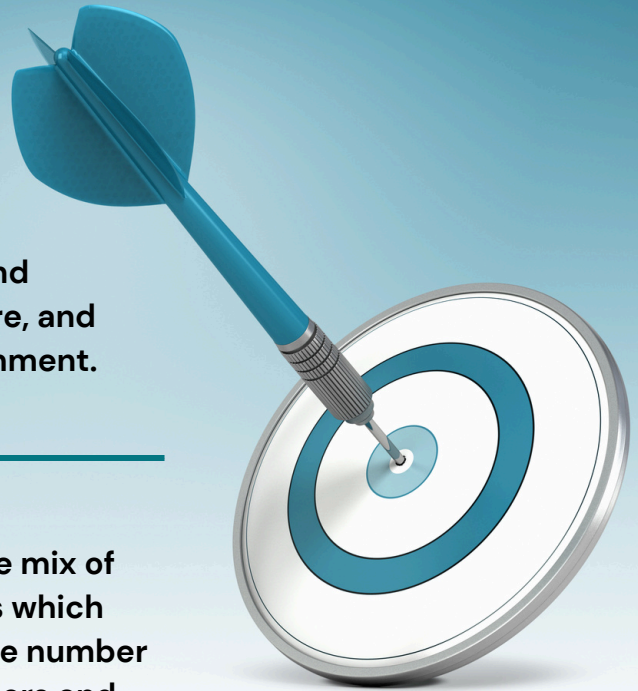
6

Environment & Quality of Life:

Maintain a region which is attractive to residents and visitors, offering a mix of housing options, healthcare, and additional services which enhance the local environment.

Objective:

Increase amenities which can be used by a diverse mix of people and improve downtown and historic areas which attract residents and development; also increase the number of housing units to attract and accommodate renters and buyers at various income levels.



STRATEGIES AND MILESTONES ACHIEVED TOWARDS GOAL:

- Williamsburg County successfully completed construction of the Senior Pavilion and Garden Project at the Hemingway Senior Wellness Center. This initiative was fully financed by a CDBG-Covid Grant totaling \$188,410.
- Georgetown County's Regional Food Distribution Project, in collaboration with the Lowcountry Food Bank, has been completed with full funding from a CDBG Covid Grant amounting to \$893,777, benefiting 29,908 individuals in the Waccamaw Region.
- The Town of Kingstree has finalized its Main Street Streetscape Improvements project, which received \$744,730 in CDBG grant funding.
- The Open Space Institute Land Trust Inc. has secured \$500,000 in SCRC SEID funding for the Black River State Park project, aimed at creating 3,710 linear feet of trails to promote outdoor recreation and stimulate economic revitalization in Williamsburg County.
- The City of Myrtle Beach has been awarded a \$150,000 SCRC SEID grant for updates to its zoning ordinance, focusing on workforce housing to address the needs of its growing population.



Appendix

RESOURCES

American Community Survey 5-year Estimates (ACS)
Coastal Carolina University
Galen College of Nursing
Georgetown County
Georgetown County Comprehensive Plan
Georgetown County School District
Georgetown County Economic Development
Horry County
Horry County Comprehensive plan
Horry County School District
Horry Georgetown Technical College
Horry Independent
JobsEq
Miller-Motte Technical College
Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation
National Weather Service
North Eastern Strategic Alliance: South Carolina's Business Corner
Pittsburg Institute of Aeronautics
Post and Courier
Regional Economic Outlook
South Carolina Office of Research and Statistics
South Carolina Department of Commerce
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce
South Carolina Forestry Commission
South Strand News
StatsAmerica
The Sun News
U.S. Census Bureau
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Global Change Research Program
Waccamaw Economic Outlook
Webster University
Williamsburg county
Williamsburg County Economic Development Board
Williamsburg County School District
Williamsburg Technical College
WMBF News
WPDE



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