

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2023-2024  
Annual Update  
Year 1

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 1 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.

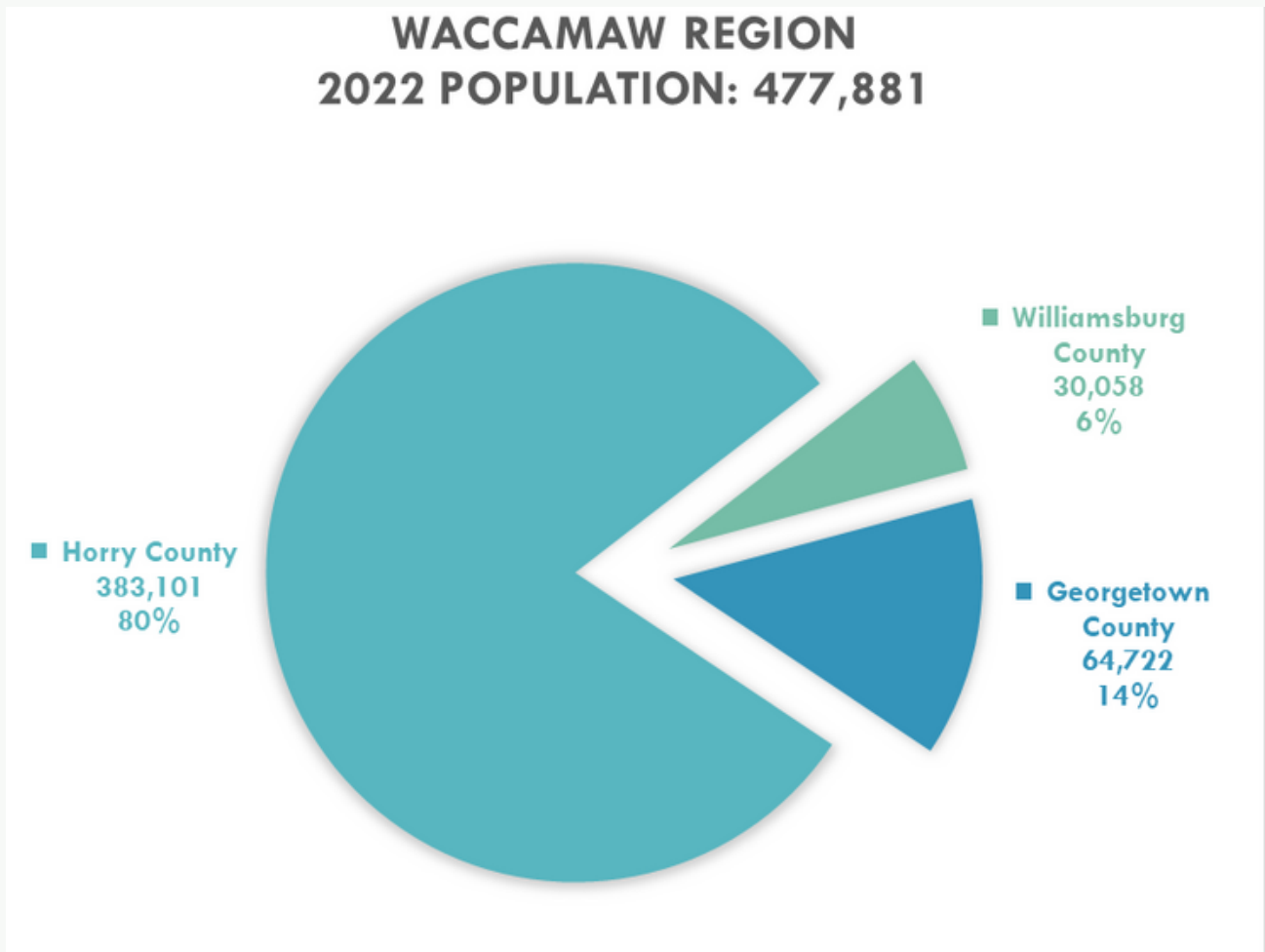
Myrtle Beach, located in Horry County, is the most populous city in the region and it is also designated as part of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which is the 4th largest MSA in the state. The US Census Bureau report on the fastest growing metros in the US ranked the Myrtle Beach MSA as third in the nation for annual growth (3.7%) from July 2020 to July 2021. According to the 2022 Census estimates, the population in Horry County is 383,101 persons. 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

According to the US Census Bureau 2022 population estimates, the Waccamaw EDD's population is 477,881 which is a total population increase of 4.9% (22,422) since 2020 and 31.33% (114,009) increase since 2010.

Seven of the regions sixteen municipalities have experienced population decline while nine have increased in total population during the 2010-2021 period. The Town of Aynor has experienced the greatest percentage increase in population within the region with an increase of 69.92% (361 people). However, the City of Myrtle Beach has seen the largest increase of residents, with an increase of 8,007 people (a growth rate of 29.54%).

The Town of Pawleys Island's population declined 15.53% (-16 people) during the eleven year period. The City of Georgetown's population also decreased by 728 (-7.95%) people during the same period, which indicated the largest numerical decline within the region.



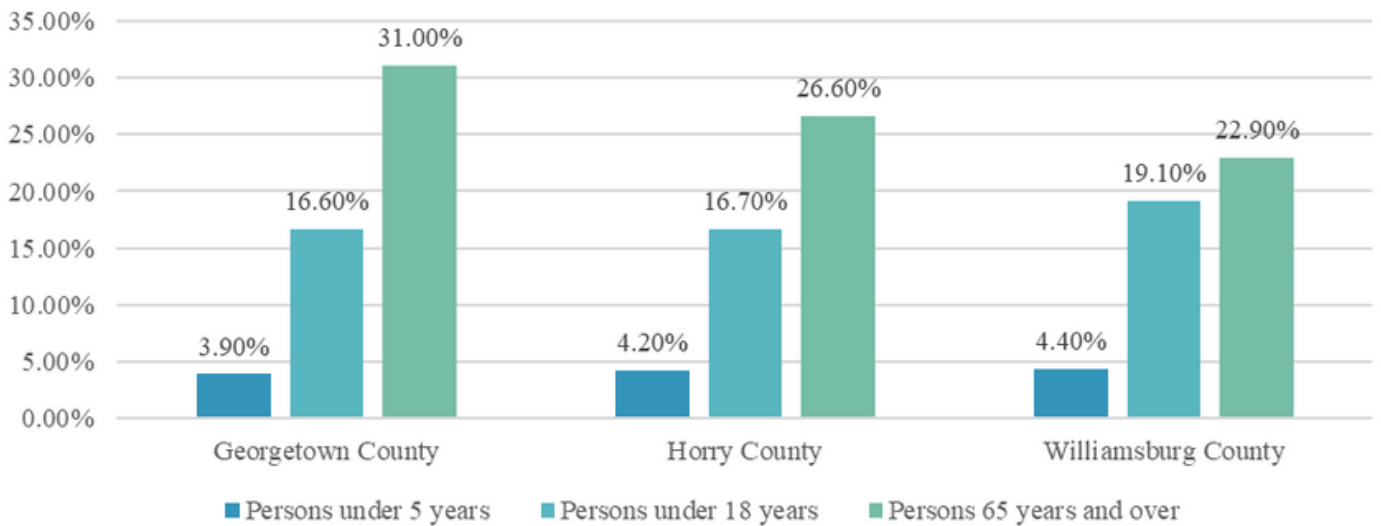


<u>City/Town</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2010-2021 Change</u>
Andrews	2,861	3,041	2,721	-4.89%
Atlantic Beach	334	237	299	-10.48%
Aynor	560	785	951	69.82%
Briarcliffe Acres	457	529	571	24.94%
Conway	17,103	24,747	22,001	28.64%
Georgetown	9,163	8,884	8,435	-7.95%
Greeleyville	438	344	389	-11.19%
Hemingway	459	522	555	20.92%
Kingstree	3,328	3,058	3,244	-2.52%
Lane	508	569	447	-12.01%
Loris	2,396	2,676	2,473	3.21%
Myrtle Beach	27,109	33,638	35,116	29.54%
North Myrtle Beach	13,752	16,684	18,502	34.54%
Pawleys Island	103	83	87	-15.53%
Stuckey	245	349	349	42.45%
Surfside Beach	3,837	4,470	4,155	8.29%

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU, AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY LAST 5 YEAR ESTIMATES

# Age and Racial Demographics

2022 Population by Age Group



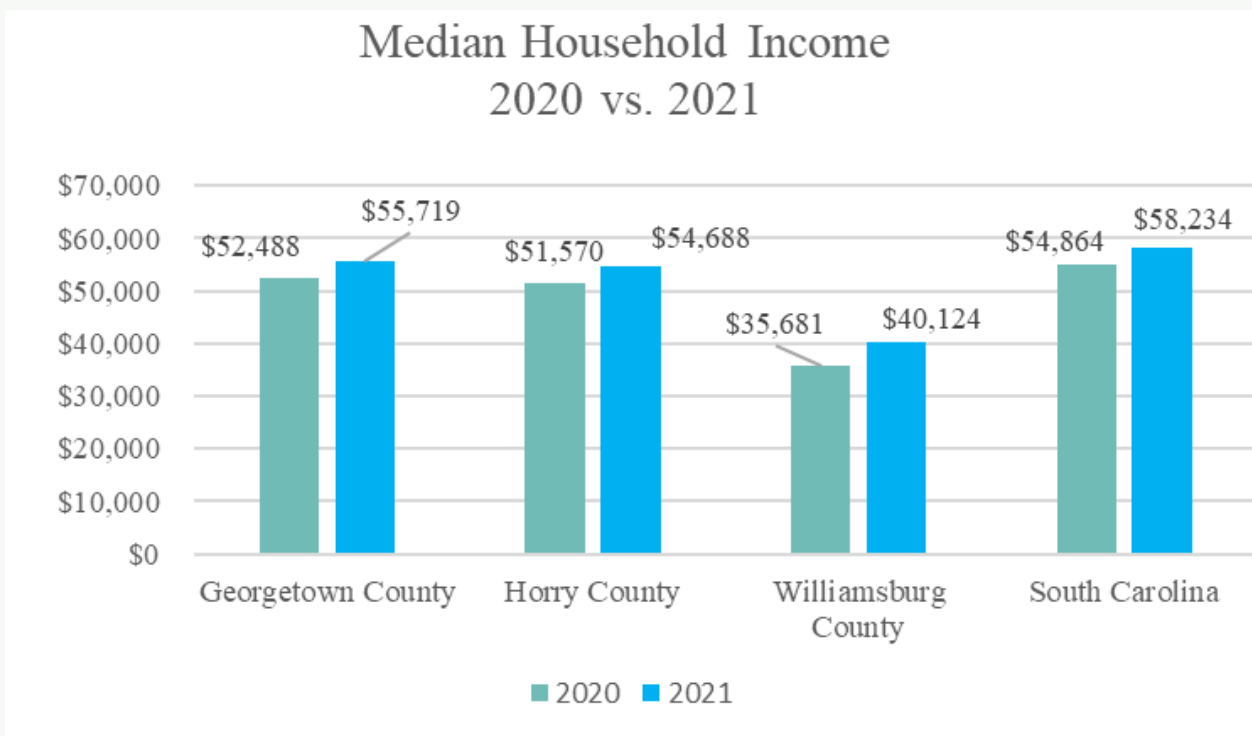
Race	Georgetown County	Horry County	Williamsburg County
White alone	69.30%	83.20%	34.50%
Black or African American alone	28.60%	12.30%	62.90%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0.40%	0.60%	0.60%
Asian alone	0.70%	1.50%	0.80%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.10%	0.10%	0%
Two or More Races	1.10%	2.30%	1.20%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	3.30%	6.50%	3.10%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	66.70%	77.70%	32.40%

2022 US CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS, 2017-2021 ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES



## Median Household Income

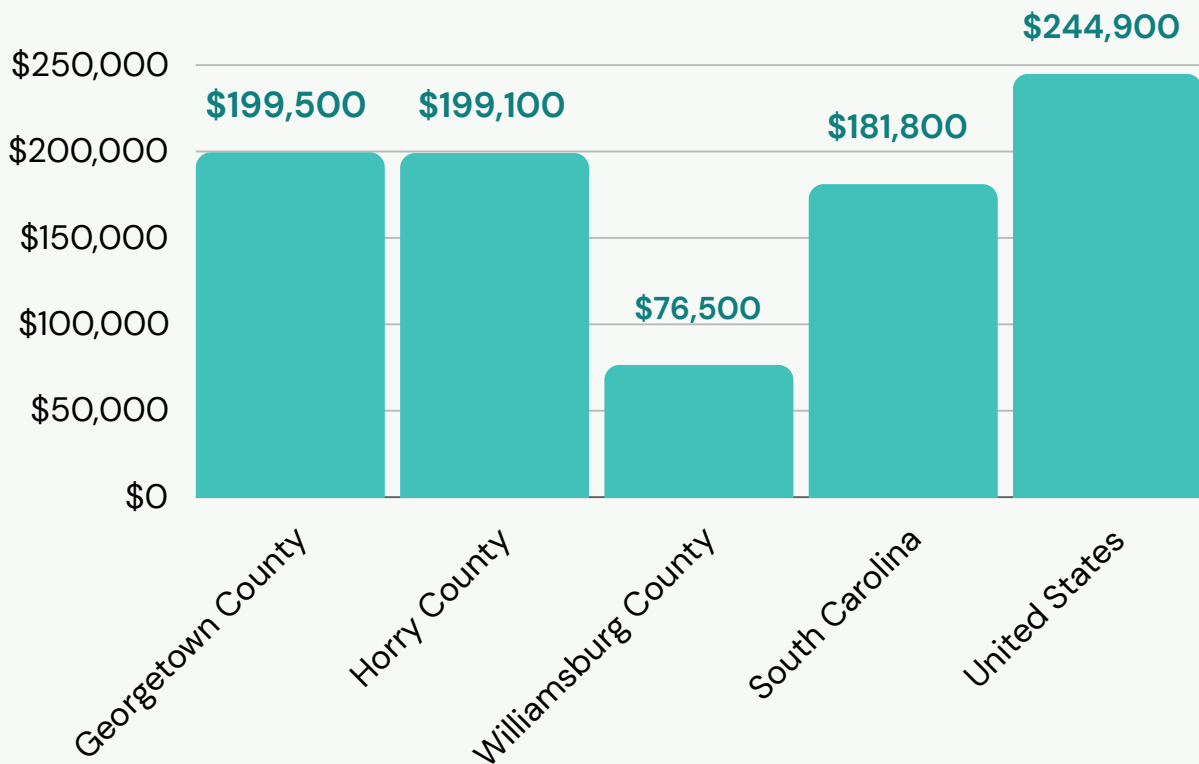
The 2021 median household Income rates in each County has increased significantly from the 2020 median household income values. In 2021, the median household income in Georgetown County was \$55,719 which was a 6.2% increase from the previous year's value of \$52,488. The 2021 median household income in Horry County grew to \$54,688 which is a 6.0% increase from the previous year's value of \$51,570. In 2021 Williamsburg County's median household income increased by \$4,443 or 12.5% to a value of \$40,124 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 (-28.0%) and Horry County (-26.6%).



Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2016-2020 ACS 5 Year Estimates; 2022 US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2017-2021 ACS 5-year Estimates



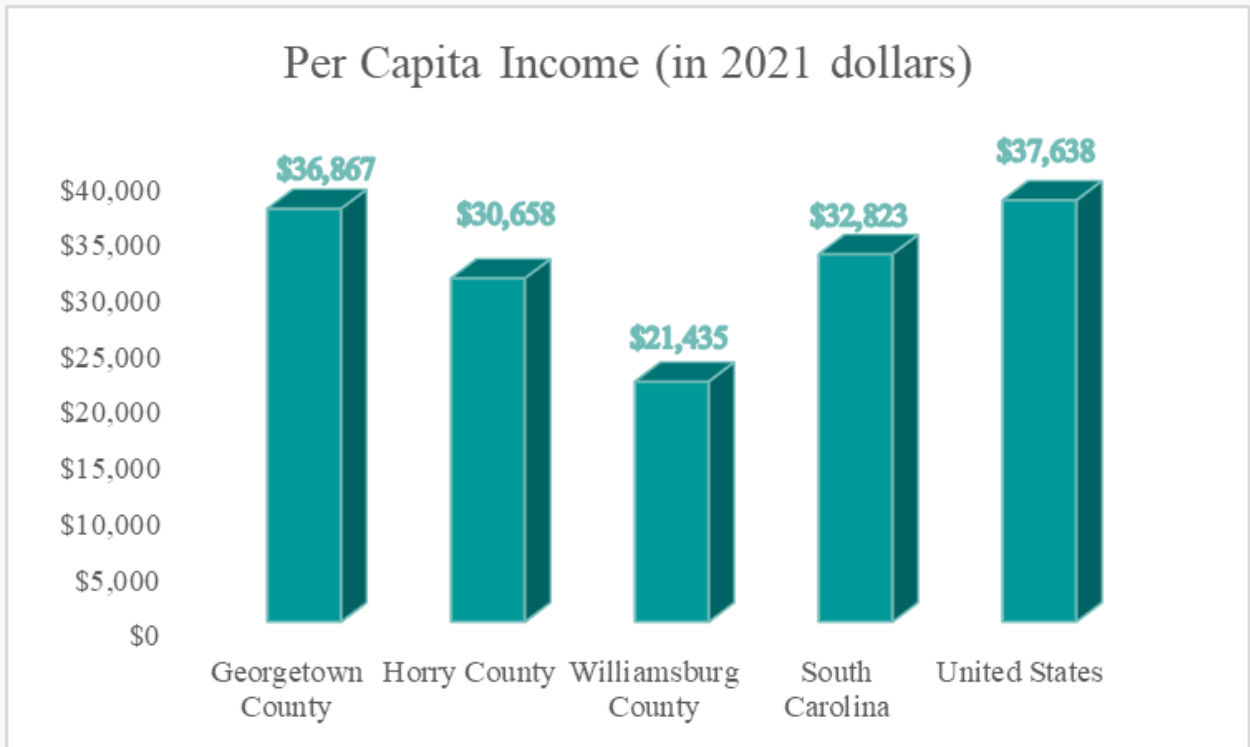
# Median House Value (2017–2021)



SOURCE: 2017–2021 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, 5 YEAR ESTIMATE, 2022 US CENSUS SURVEY QUICK FACTS

# Per Capita Income

The 2021 total per capita income in the Waccamaw region is \$88,960. The per capita income in Georgetown County is higher than the per capita income for the state of South Carolina (\$32,823) and is relatively close to the national per capita income of \$37,638. Both Horry and Williamsburg County's per capita income is lower than the per capita income for the state and nation.

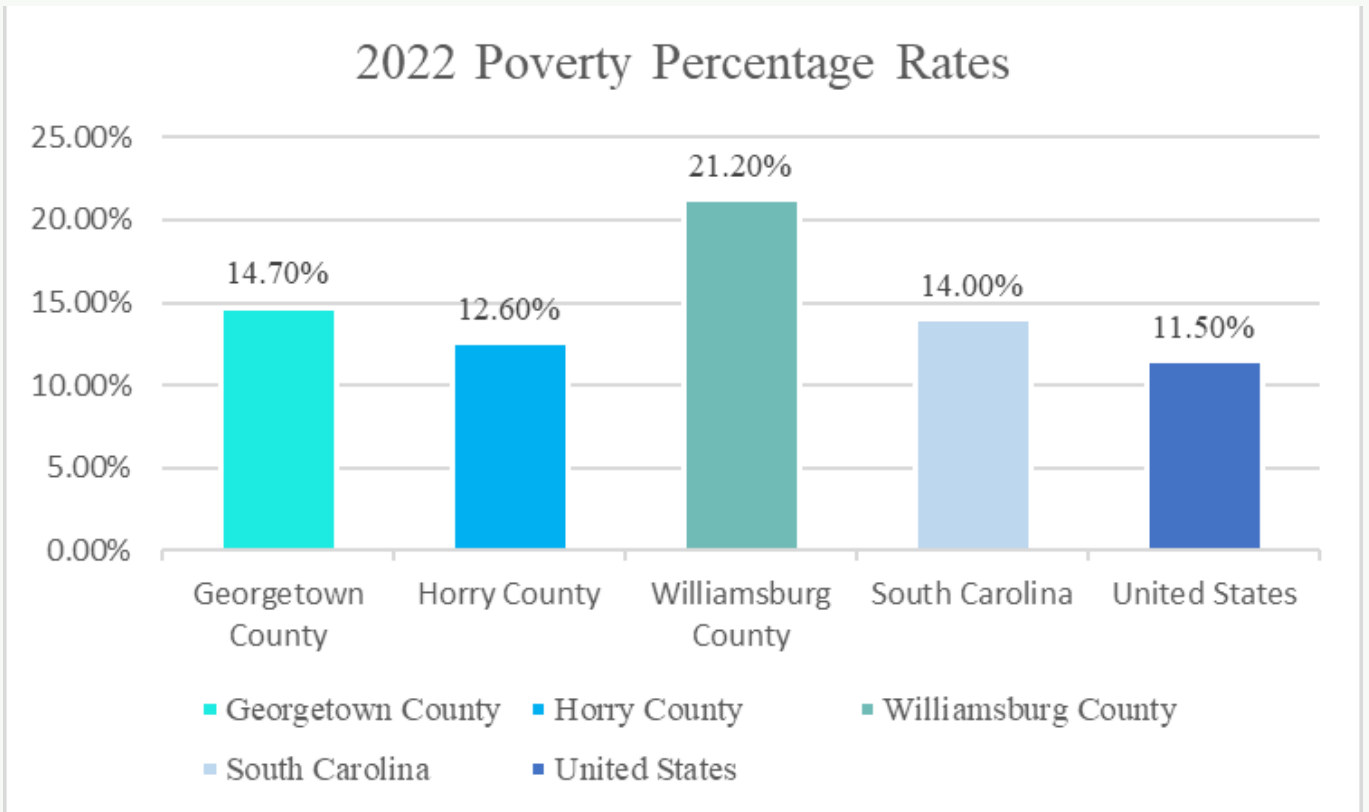


SOURCE: 2022 US CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS, 2017-2021 ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES

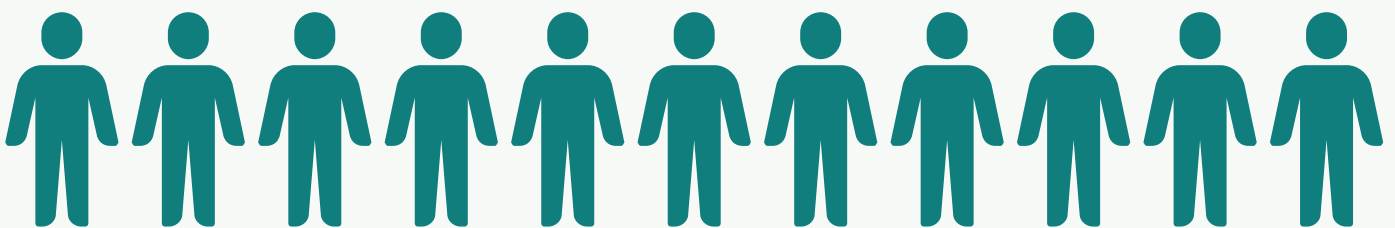
**\$88,960** PER CAPITA INCOME  
(WACCAMAW REGION)



# Poverty Percentage Rates

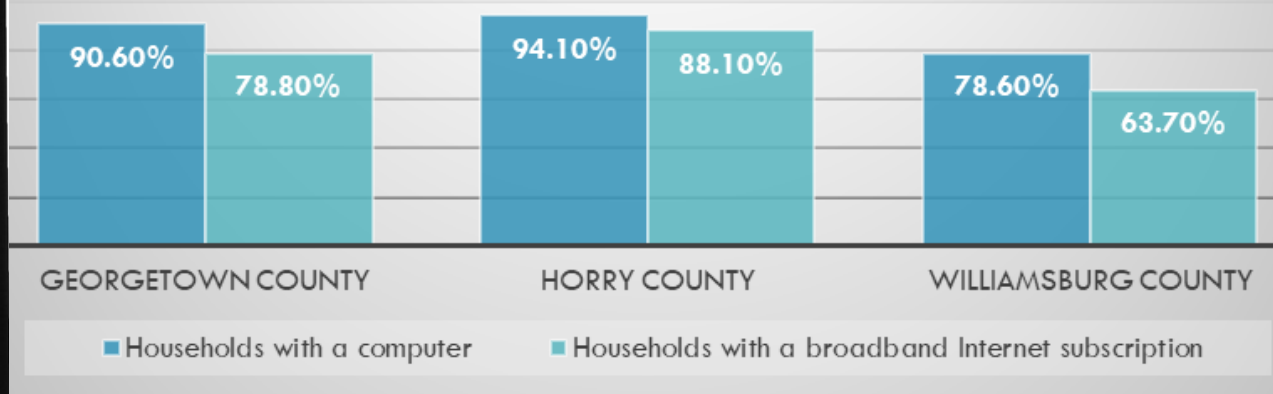


2022 US CENSUS BUREAU QUICK FACTS, 2017-2021 ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES





## Households with a Computer and Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription



Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey, 5 Year Estimate, 2022 US Census Survey Quick Facts

Access to computers and high-speed internet are essential tools for education, work, commerce, healthcare, and access to information. Access to computers and high-speed internet has become essential in today's global society. The importance of equity in access to high-speed internet and affordable computer devices was highlighted during the pandemic as schools, businesses, and healthcare providers moved to more online/remote capabilities. Those who did not have access to internet and computers experienced a greater level of difficulty in gaining access to essential information, education, and even healthcare (such as online registration for vaccination).

# Regional Healthcare Update



The Waccamaw Region's need for quality healthcare has increased over the past few years in both urban and rural areas. Hospital expansions continue to increase along the coast where populations are increasing, however rural areas are also seeing better options for healthcare.

In January 2023, MUSC Health Black River Medical Center, opened a new hospital replacing the severely storm damaged Williamsburg Regional Hospital.

Conway Medical Center announced a new partnership with Novant Health in September 2023, with the focus of the partnership on the expansion of access to healthcare and to better address healthcare needs.

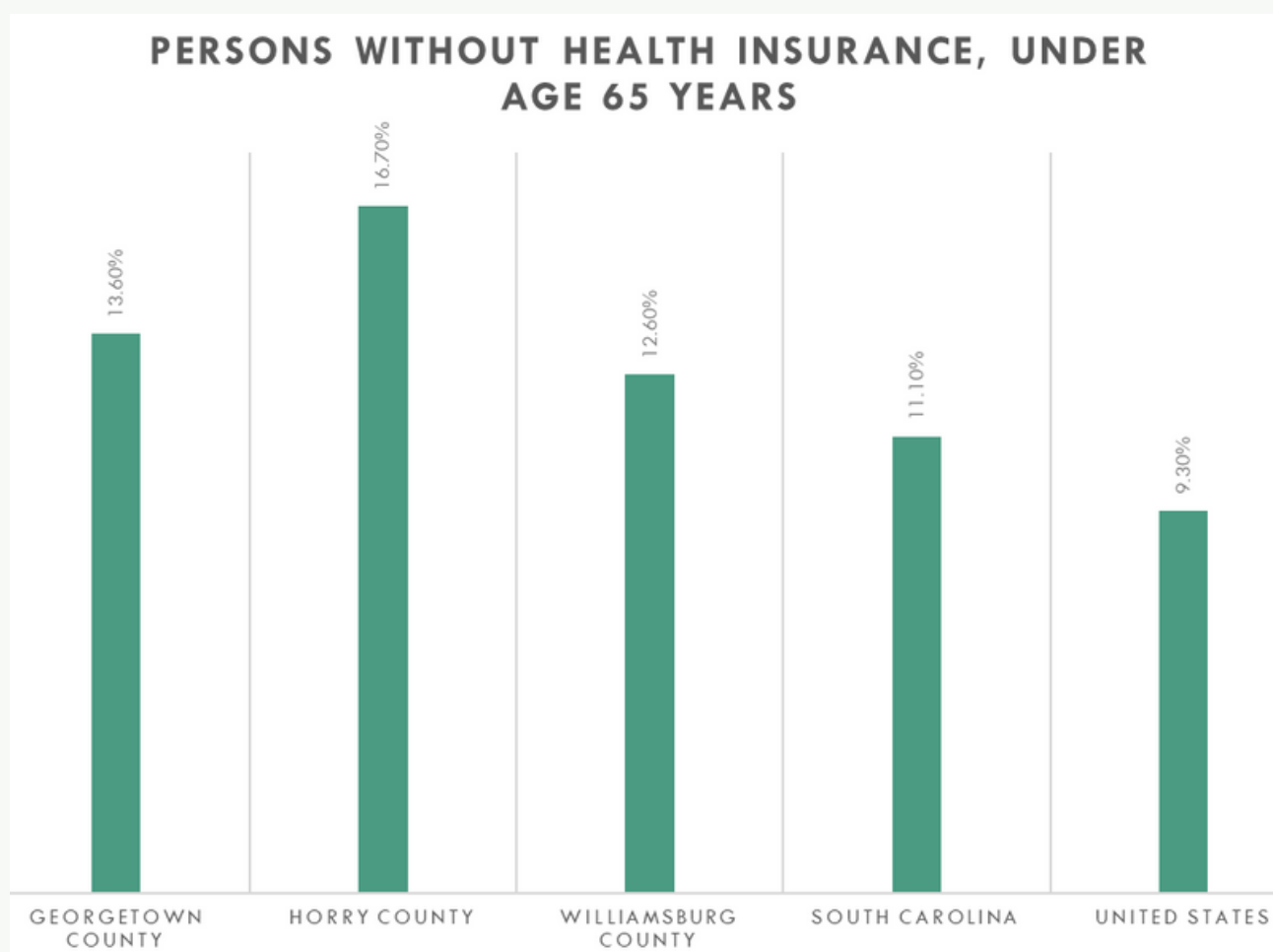
In September 2023 McLeod Health announced that it will construct a new hospital in the Carolina Forest area of Horry County. The certificate of need has been obtained for the new facility on the Carolina Forest Campus. Construction is expected to take 2 years once permitting has been issued.

In September 2023, Tidelands Health received clearance to build a new hospital in Horry County's Socastee area. The new hospital, Tidelands Health Carolina Bays Hospital, received the certificate of need for an acute care hospital, extended care hospital, and inpatient hospital. The projected completion of construction and opening is 2028.

## Regional Health Insurance Coverage

Healthcare is essential to the growth and viability of the region. In order for persons to have affordable access to quality healthcare, health insurance is often a necessity.

The 2017–2021 ACS percentage of persons under age 65 without health insurance is larger in each county within the Waccamaw Region than the percentages without health insurance for the State and the Nation. Nationally, 9.3% of persons under 65 years are uninsured and 11.10% of persons in the State of South Carolina under 65 years are uninsured.



Source: 2022 U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts; 2017–2021 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 the Waccamaw Region have remained unchanged since the 2023-2027 CEDS publication.

The Waccamaw Region has seen significant growth over the past year, with investments of nearly \$60 million from new and expanding manufacturers. These manufacturers will bring an estimated 275 new jobs to the region.

Company	Announcement Date	Investments	Jobs	Selected County	Objective	Products/Services	Activity/Category	Product Description
Zilmet USA	8/2/2023	\$32,700,000	50	Georgetown	New	Expansion Tank & Heat Exchanger	Manufacturing	Global Expansion Tanks
Shed Windows and More, Inc.	11/28/2022	\$4,200,000	42	Horry	Expansion	Windows & Building Materials	Manufacturing	Building Materials
Carolina Refractories, Inc.	11/30/2022	\$3,700,000	38	Horry	Expansion	Refractory Products	Manufacturing	Monolithic Refractories
Moose Logistics & Distribution	12/13/2022	\$2,600,000	75	Horry	New	Athletic Sock Distributor	Manufacturing	Athletic Socks
Pepsi Bottling Ventures, LLC	12/15/2022	\$15,000,000	27	Horry	Expansion	Bottle Manufacturer & Distributor	Manufacturing	Bottles
Summit Paper Tube, Inc.	3/8/2023	\$1,680,000	19	Williamsburg	New	Spiral Wound Paper Tubes	Manufacturing	Paper Tubes
PolyQuest, Inc.	9/20/2023	NA	25	Williamsburg	Expansion	Distributor	Warehouse & Distribution	Plastics Distributor



# Summit Paper Tube



### 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 underway for a 150,000-square-foot facility in Andrews, with an estimated completion date in late 2024. Production is expected to begin in early 2025.
- The construction of Speculative Building # 5 in Andrews began in 2023, and will provide 100,000 square feet of marketable space for prospects.

### Horry County:

- Aerospace, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and marine continue to be the focus of economic development for Horry County.
- Nearly \$23 million in investments and nearly 110 new jobs were announced as expansion projects in Horry County in 2023 including Shed Windows & More Inc., Carolina Refractories, and Pepsi Bottling Ventures, LLC.
- Moose Logistics & Distribution announced plans to establish operations in Horry County. The company will hire approximately 75 employees and make a capital investment of \$2.6 million over the next five years.
- DC BLOX, debuted its new Cable Landing Station (CLS) in Myrtle Beach in 2023. The 125,000 square feet of space can host up to five subsea cables and serves as a colocation space for network and cable operators, communications providers, local enterprises, and partners. The site currently has plans to host two subsea cables from Google, and at least one subsea cable for Meta.
- The Marlboro Development Team began construction on a new 100,000-square-foot industrial speculative development in the Ascott Valley Industrial Park in Conway. The facility is expected to be completed by the end of 2024.
- Edgewater Ventures, a private developer, is constructing an industrial park with four speculative buildings ranging from 157,000 sq. ft. to nearly 220,000 sq. ft. in the North Myrtle Beach area with expected completion by late 2025.

## Williamsburg County:

- Aerospace & aviation, automotive suppliers, agribusiness, chemical operations, Manufacturing, metal fabrication continue to be the focus of economic development for Horry County.
- Williamsburg County announced approximately 45 new jobs and nearly \$1.7 million in investments in 2023.
- Summit Paper Tube, Inc. is setting up it's first facility in Williamsburg County, a \$1.68 million investment that state officials say will create 19 new jobs, the North Carolina company is a manufacturer of spiral wound paper tubes used for paper, nonwoven fabric, shipping and cable reels.
- PolyQuest, Inc., a thermoplastic resin distributor has acquired Baker Transportation. the company aims to expand its capability to deliver resin products to customers in the bottle, sheet, strapping, film, fiber, compounding and injection molding markets. The acquisition will create 25 new jobs.
- The county began construction on a 52,000 square foot speculative building in 2023, with an estimated completion date of early 2024.



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



The following Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants were awarded in the Waccamaw Region over the past year. These EDA investments will improve economic development and resilience in the region through infrastructure improvements:

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

**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.
- Georgetown (Historic District) Stormwater Improvements Project, Grant Award: \$5,488,526 (Georgetown County is co-applicant) 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.

### 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.



Source: Source: Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development/Bucksport Marine Park

The following Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) were awarded in 2023 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.



Source: Source: Town of Andrews, Facebook

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 (administered through WRCOG):

#### 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- Highway 17 Drainage Improvements Project, RIA SCIIP Grant Award: \$2,947,905. The stormwater drainage improvements project along highway 17 in Georgetown County will eliminate flooding along a portion of US Hwy 17 (Litchfield area) which is a hurricane evacuation route and the primary route for routine daily travel between Myrtle Beach, Georgetown, and Charleston. These improvements will result in safer travel conditions for drivers, prevent disruptions to business, and prevent damage to property (businesses and homes) in the impacted 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):

**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 continues to see significant growth in population, which has increased the need for new schools throughout the county. Horry County School District is currently the 3rd largest school district in South Carolina, and out of its 58 total schools, at least 20 of those schools are at or over capacity. The district has announced plans to construct 2 new elementary schools in the Carolina Forest area of the county, which is expected to cost nearly \$50 million. In addition, the district plans to make improvements at several other schools in the county, and should complete the construction of a new middle school in the Conway area.

In contrast, Williamsburg County School District has elected to merge 2 high schools together as the population has seen some decline over the past decade. Georgetown County area schools have not seen significant changes in school infrastructure, although coastal regions of the county are slowly seeing population growth.

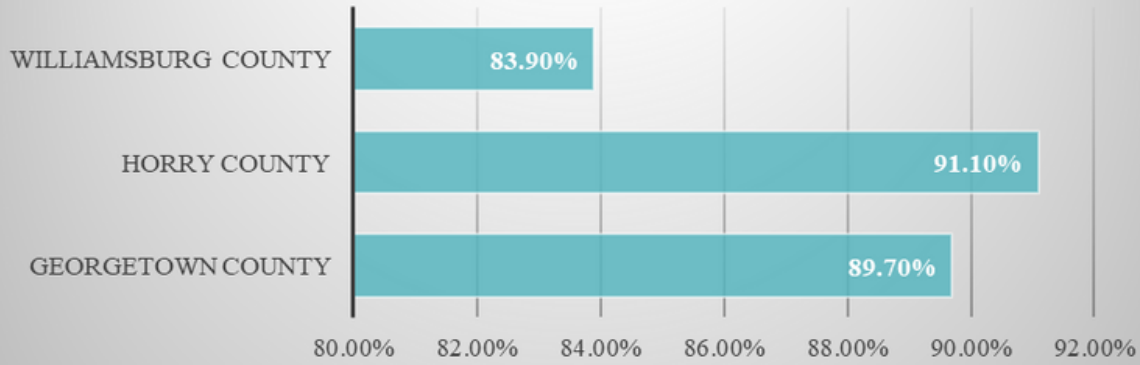


Myrtle Beach Middle School

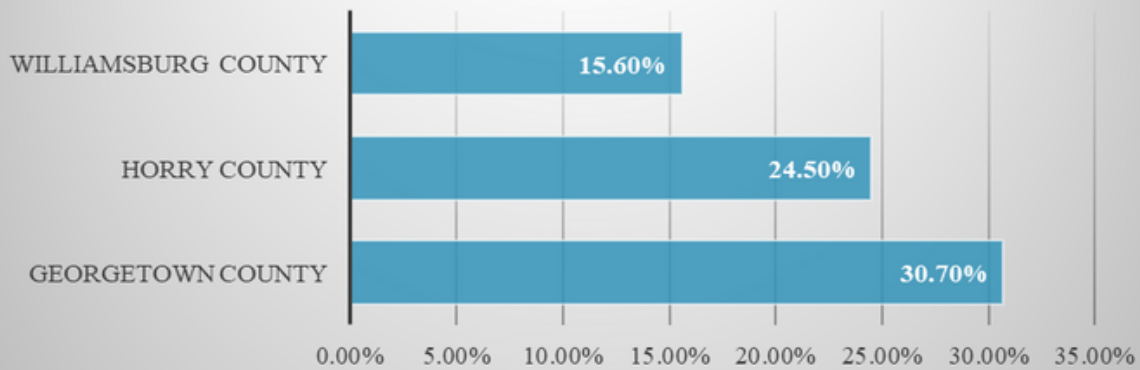


# Regional Educational Attainment Updates

## High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+



## Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+



Source: 2022 US Census Bureau Quick Facts, ACS 2017-2021 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
- Miller-Motte Technical College (MMTC)
- Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics (PIA)
- Webster University
- Williamsburg Technical College (WTC)

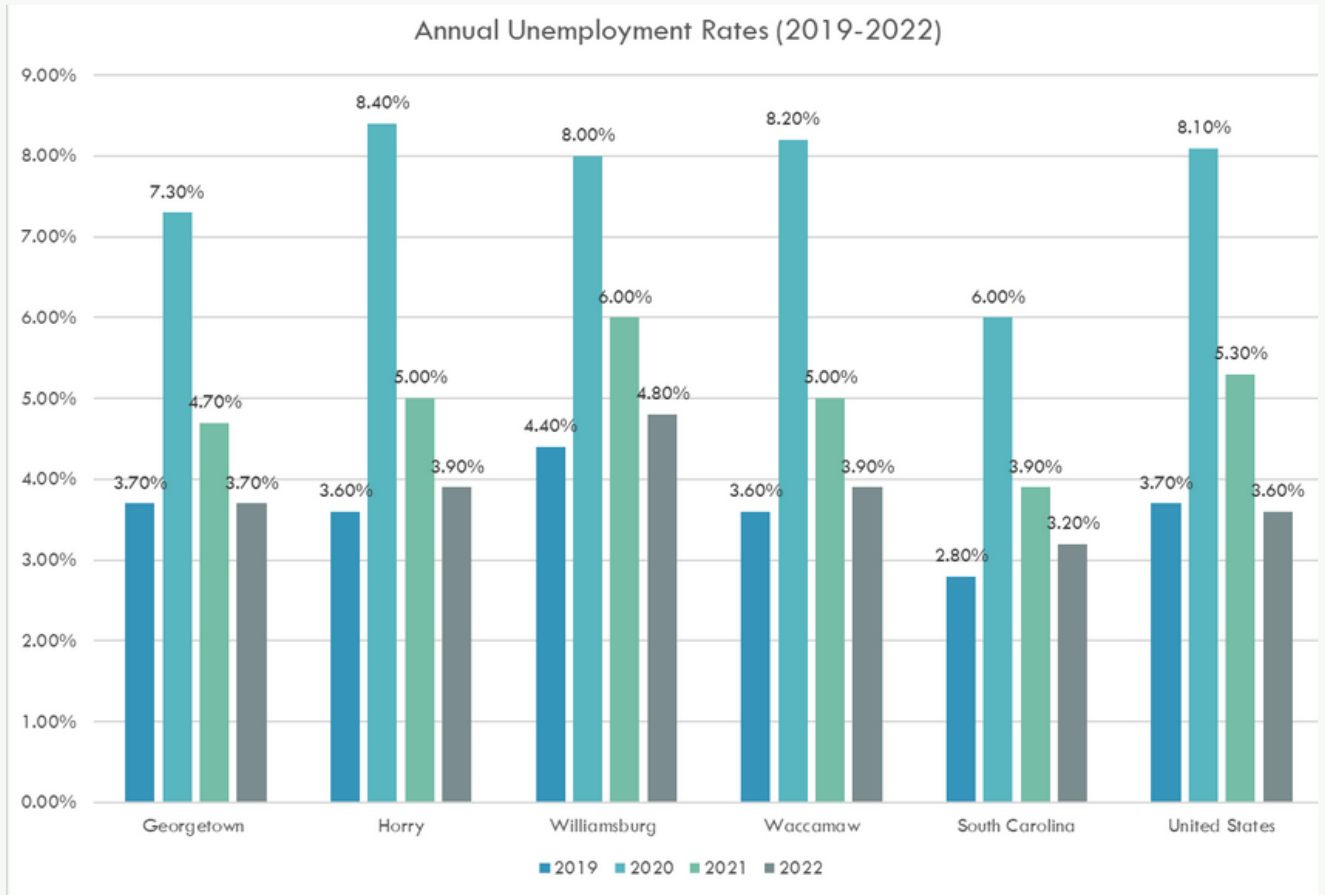


# WORKFORCE UPDATES

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) reports that the September 2023 seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Waccamaw Region was 3.3%. Although the rate is significantly lower than the peak unemployment rate during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The rate is still higher than the State of South Carolina's unemployment rate of 2.9% in September 2023.

The following chart illustrates annual unemployment rates for the region, each county, state and country. The region is nearing the 2019 pre-pandemic rates.



Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce, Community Profile: Waccamaw Workforce Development Area; Georgetown County; Horry County; Williamsburg County (November 2023)



# Economic Distress Criteria

## 24-MONTH AVG. BLS UNEMPLOYMENT RATE ENDING AUGUST 2023 2021 PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME (BEA PCPI)

	24 Month Unemployment	Threshold Calculation	BEA PCPI	Threshold Calculation	ACS 5-Year PCMI	Threshold Calculation
<b>Waccamaw Region</b>	3.87	0.14	\$47,921	74.7	\$30,892	82.1
<b>U.S.</b>	3.73	0.00	\$64,143	100.0	\$37,638	100.0
<b>Georgetown County, SC</b>	3.65	-0.08	\$57,656	89.9	\$36,867	98
<b>Horry County, SC</b>	3.84	0.11	\$46,817	73	\$30,658	81.5
<b>Williamsburg County, SC</b>	4.86	1.13	\$40,746	63.5	\$21,435	57

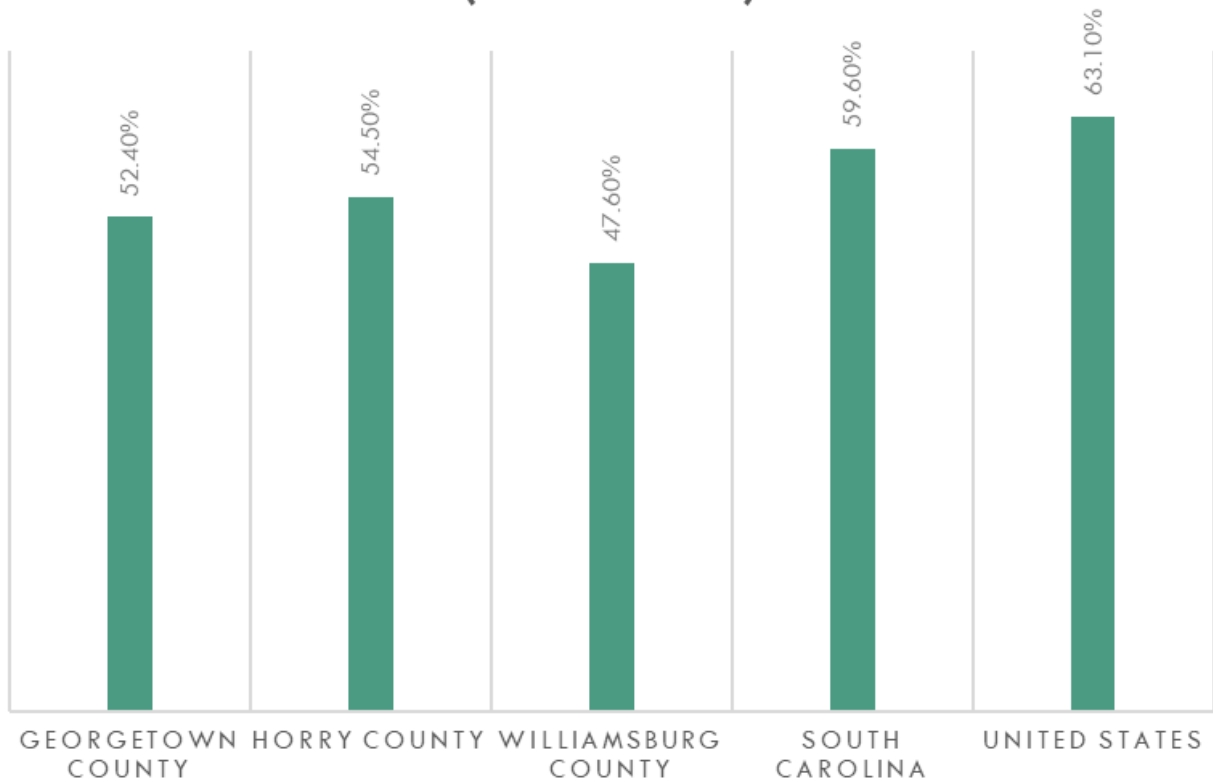
Note: The threshold calculation for unemployment reflects the percentage point difference between the unemployment rate for the selected area and the U.S. figure. For example, if a region has a 24-month rate of 6.9 and the U.S. rate is 7.9, the difference shown in the threshold column is -1.0—meaning 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

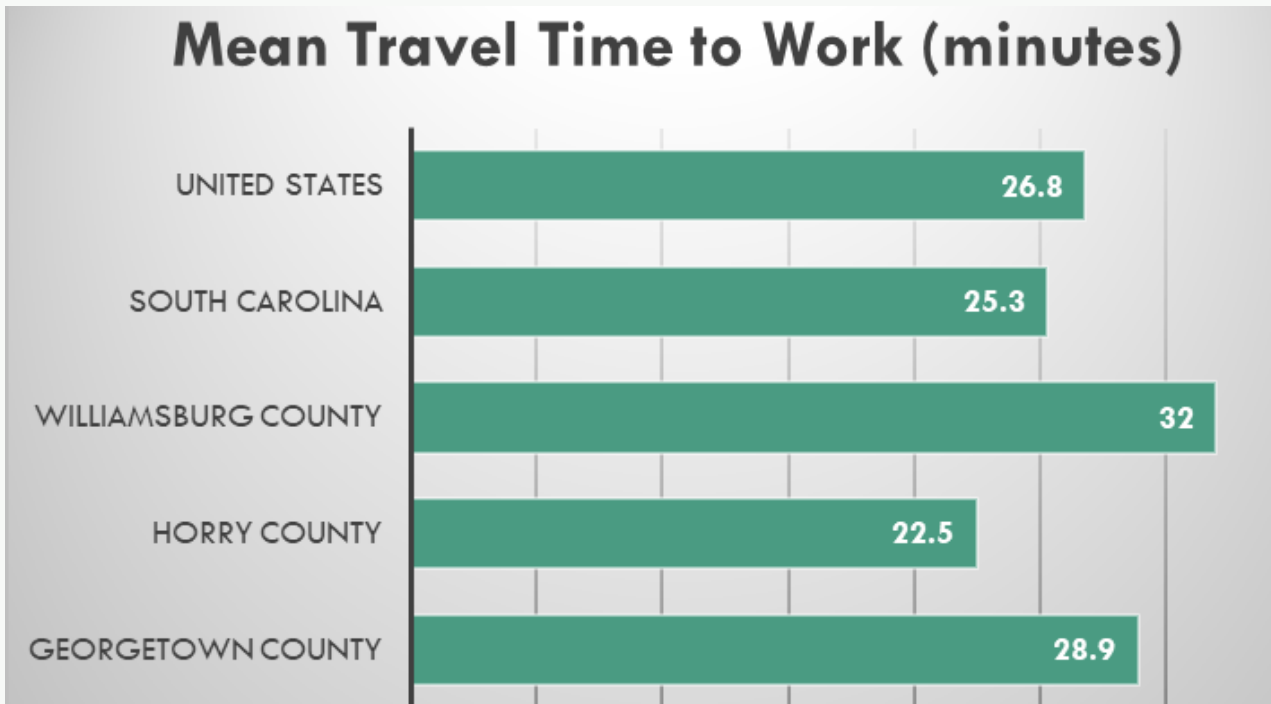
## LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE (AGES 16+)



Source: 2022 US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, ACS 5 Year Estimates 2017-2021, (Civilian Labor Force, total, percent of population age 16+)



## Workforce Commute Times



Source: 2022 US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, ACS 5 Year Estimates 2017-2021, (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 Kingstree	Main & MLK	SC Highway 261/377	Intersection Improvement-Expand turning radius, pedestrian refuge island, textured crosswalk & countdown signal	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 & Enoch	US Highway501	Intersection Improvement-Intersection and road safety improvements	Guideshare
City of Conway	US 701 & Janette	US Highway701	Intersection Improvement-DOT Scoping	Guideshare
Horry County	US 701 & Industrial Park	US Highway 701	Install left turn lane on US 701	Horry County RIDE III
Horry County	US 701 & Harris Short Cut	US Highway701	Install left turn lane on US 701	Horry County RIDE III
Horry County	US 378 & S-134	US Highway 378	Install left turn lanes on US 378 and on S-134	SCDOT
City of Loris	SC 9 & Heritage	SC Highway 9	Install left turn extension on SC 9 onto Perrin; fix offset of roadway to Heritage	Horry County RIDE III
City of Kingstree	Greenhouse Road & Todd Road	Greenhouse Road	Corridor improvement project	SCDOT
Horry County	SC Highway 9 & SC 410	Green Sea Highway	Intersection improvement	SCDOT
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



Waccamaw Region Road Projects				
City/County	Project Name	Road/Highway	Project Description	Funding Source
Horry County	Interstate 73	Interstate 73	Road Widening	HIP Funds
Horry County	Palmetto Swamp	S-97 (Brunson Spring Road)	Bridge Replacement	State Gas Tax
Georgetown County	Sampit River	US 17 ALT	Bridge Replacement	FAST ACT Non-national Highway System/Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBGP)
Horry County	Horsepen Creek (Kingston Lake Branch)	Highway 472	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
Williamsburg County	Soccee Swamp	S-45-381	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
Georgetown County	Boser Swamp	S-45 (Tomahawk Street)	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
Horry County	Maple Swamp	S-26-699 (Louisville Road)	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
City of Loris	Skeebo Branch Swamp	US 701	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT
Horry County	Todd Swamp	S- 31 (Red Bluff Road)	Bridge Replacement	SCDOT

Source: WRCOG Transportation Department, RTIP 9.1.2023

### Airport Activity Updates:

- Myrtle Beach International Airport continues to expand to keep up with the travel growth. In 2022, the airport reported 3.5 million passengers, up nearly 8% from the year prior.
- A new 6 gate expansion project will allow for more planes to park along Terminal A and is expected to cost roughly \$110 million to complete. For the first time ever the State Aeronautics Commission will help fund this project after \$50 million of state funding was allocated following an airport economic impact study. The economic impact from this airport is estimated to be \$3 billion.
- 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:

- The Port of Georgetown was transferred to the County of Georgetown due to lack of activity. The Georgetown Port had been active since the 1700's, however silt has settled over the years and the port was no longer functional for shipments. The last substantial shipment to the port was in 2017. The county will redevelop the 35 acre site for commercial, multifamily residential or recreational purposes.

### Bus Transit Activity Updates:

- Coast RTA celebrated 40 years of transportation service, helping thousands of passengers travel millions of miles over the years within Horry and Georgetown counties.
- Coast RTA announced plans to expand their services by building a new transportation facility off Robert Grissom Parkway in Myrtle Beach and expanding their fleet. The estimated \$53 million dollar project could help alleviate traffic for some of Horry County's busiest roads without the need for construction.



# ECONOMIC RESILIENCE UPDATES

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

The National Climate Assessment predicts average temperatures to increase by 4 to 8 degrees by 2100. This climate change will bring sea level rises and increased vulnerability to flooding, especially our low-lying coastal areas. Issues such as storm surge, beach erosion, and reduction of wetlands will have a significant impact on not only the tourism industry but also our agricultural industry due to salt-water intrusion.

- Tropical Storm Idalia made landfall on August 30th after tracking northward and making landfall in Florida. The storm caused flooding and damage to counties located within the Waccamaw Region. The region was impacted by wind, flooding, isolated tornados, and beach erosion.
- Idalia caused one confirmed tornado in the Cherry Grove section of Horry County, the EFO – 85 mph tornado began as a waterspout which moved ashore near Ocean Blvd. and 56th Avenue North. It tracked north-northwest, causing sporadic damage to homes in the Cherry Grove area. It then crossed Williams Creek into the Tidewater Golf Club, downing a few trees and numerous large limbs. There were likely a few brief spin-ups near the waterspout as it came ashore. Strong straight-lined winds in the Sampit area of Georgetown County also caused minor damage.
- The Waccamaw area continues to make plans to mitigate losses from coal-impacted areas. Santee Cooper closed the Grainger Generating Station in Conway in 2012, and plans for the Winyah Generating Station in Georgetown is expected to close by 2027.

# 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 Myrtle Beach Christian Academy, Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Pathways 2 Possibilities Event, and Apprenticeship Carolina.
- WRCOG staff provided 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.
- A notice of Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) grant fund was released for Healthcare employers in Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg counties. IWT grant application technical assistance was provided to one local hospital.
- Horry Georgetown Technical College was awarded an \$8 million EDA grant to support marine technology workforce development through the construction of a new training facility.

# Goal

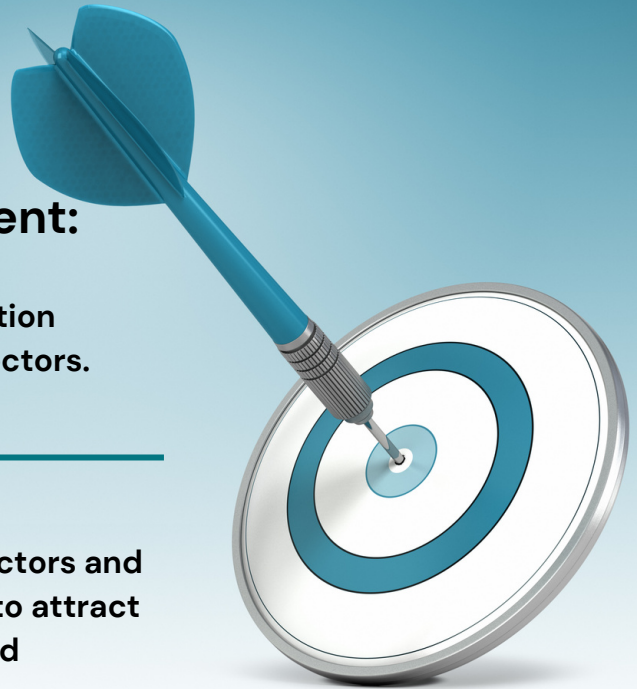
## 2

### **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:**

- Procurement of a Regional Convener was completed which will develop a Manufacturing Sector for the Waccamaw Region. This sector partnership will enhance the region by fostering the way regional partners can assist and respond to the needs of manufacturing stakeholders.
- Established a relationship with Partnership Grand Strand, a non-profit foundation with a five-year strategic initiative designed to accelerate economic prosperity and quality of life for all businesses and residents across Horry and Georgetown counties.
- WRCOG is participating in Industry Awareness Course through Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation. The program aims to connect businesses with regional resources and enlighten and educate area leaders about industry sectors in Horry County.



# Goal

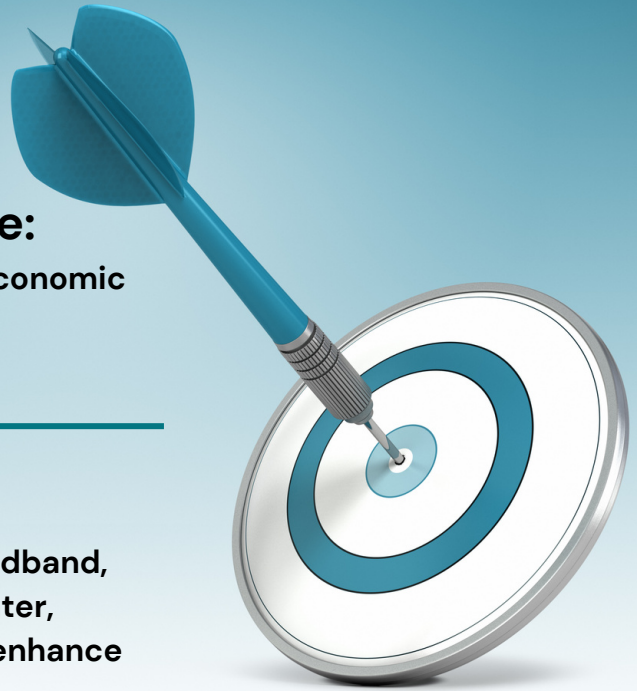
## 3

### **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:**

- WRCOG staff facilitated project development meetings with counties and municipalities as well as assisted with identifying funding sources and applying for grants.
- \$93.5 million in funding was awarded in the Waccamaw Region (13 projects) for water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure improvements through the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority's (RIA) South Carolina Infrastructure Investment Program (SCIIP). Each funded project was required to have a transformative impact.
- \$5.7 million in Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding was awarded in the Waccamaw region for 3 projects which will have impacts on the following types of infrastructure improvements: airport, stormwater system, and feasibility study for marine industrial park.
- \$ 284,160 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding for 1 sewer improvement project in a rural town.

# 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:**

- **Marketed Revolving Loan Services to area businesses and start-ups through networking events with area Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development organizations.**

# Goal

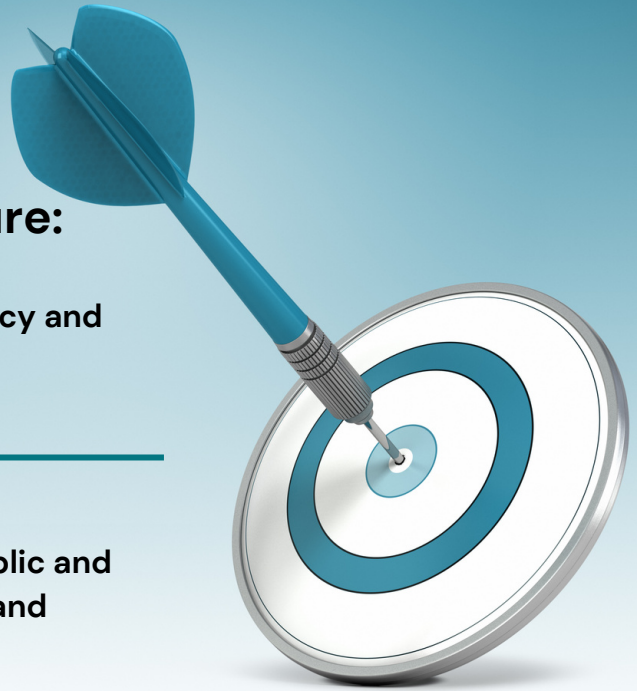
## 5

### **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 are 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.
- The Waccamaw region & community partners throughout the state received insight from conversations in local communities and the surveys to help develop a Five-Year Broadband Plan for South Carolina. The plan will work to ensure everyone is ultimately connected to high-speed internet services.
- Public information meetings and workshops are held regularly in several locations throughout the region to gather input from the public for plans and studies such as Hazzard Mitigation plans and Rural Long Range Transportation studies that contribute to the future and well-being of the citizens in the region.

# Goal

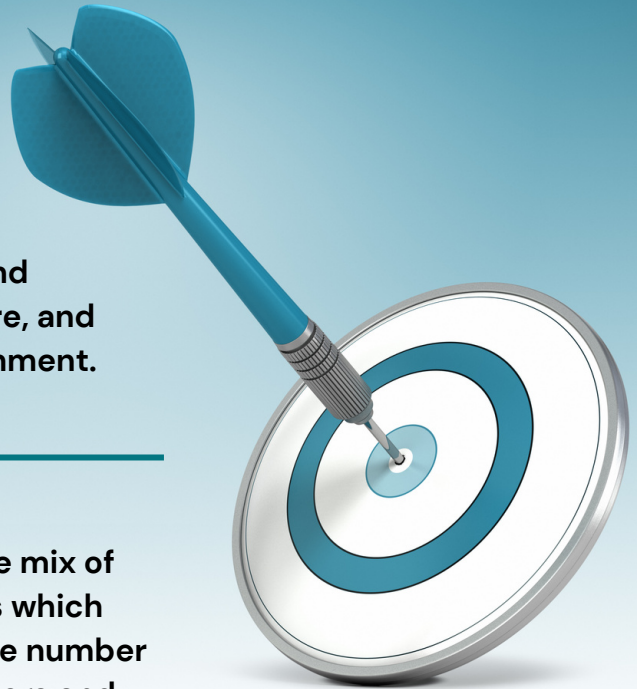
## 6

### 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:

- The Town of Kingstree has begun construction on a downtown/historic district streetscape improvements project. The project was partly funded by the CDBG program in the amount of \$744,730.
- The new Black River State Park is being developed by the State of South Carolina and will have trail head locations along the river in Williamsburg County and Georgetown County. The state park should open in 2024.





# 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



**WACCAMAW**  
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COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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