ABBEVILLE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Creative
economic development consulting
July 2016

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Abbeville County is a beautiful place full of caring people who love the community. It has a prosperous history that is not reflected in the current economy. It has natural resources untapped for tourism and recreation. The survey quote captures the sentiment of people who participated in the strategic plan – they love the county and want to see it grow.

"Abbeville County is a great place to live, with great schools, opportunities for growth, history, tourism opportunities and wonderful people. It is time we all work together to see our great county grow and take advantage of our wonderful assets."
Survey Quote

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis revealed the many assets of the community along with its many challenges. Abbeville County citizens enjoy a small-town quality of life and all of the benefits that come with it. Businesses have located in the area because they found a loyal workforce, supportive technical college, and a pro-business climate. The county is struggling because of a shrinking labor force, skills mismatched for current jobs, and an overall declining population. Citizen comments gravitated to the opportunities that abound in tourism, recreation, and small business development that will bring new job opportunities.

The economic data show the unemployment rate is low (so low that finding enough skilled workers is hard), wages are growing, and manufacturing is strong. However, the population decline is a major red flag. The population is aging and young people are not staying or moving to Abbeville County. Almost half of the workforce out-commutes. The overall education level is lower than the region and state. This has led to a higher poverty rate and low income levels. A proactive economic development effort is needed to turn the trends positive.

The strategic planning process included an organizational analysis of the structure of the economic development program. We found that the budget and staff levels are below that of peer and aspirational communities. We also found that most organizations operate a public-private, nonprofit economic development corporation to support economic development. One of our recommendations is for Abbeville County to restructure the Development Board into a proactive nonprofit. Another recommendation is to increase funding for economic development.

The strategic plan recommends initiatives in organizational development, education and workforce development, existing business support, small business and entrepreneur development, business development, marketing, tourism and recreation, and leadership development. The summary of goals, strategies, and action steps on the next page is explained in detail in this report. We encourage a full reading to understand the context.

Abbeville County is at a crossroads. It can decide that the declining economy is good enough or decide to change course and make investments that will encourage young people to stay and new people to call Abbeville County home.

Abbeville County Strategic Plan Summary

Organizational Development	Restructure economic development into a nonprofit
	Increase private sector funding for economic development
	Expand staff
Education and Workforce	Create an Abbeville "Promise"college scholarship program
	Raise career awareness
	Investigate a work ethics program
Existing Business	Initiate a Business Expanson and Retention Program
Small Business & Entrepreneurs	Designate a smal l business liaison
	Create a start-up pathway for small businesses
	Become a Certified Entrepreneurial Community
	Restructure the incubator
Business Development	Recruit new businesses
	Create a building development
	Enhance sites and parks
	Tackle blight
Marketing	Launch new marketing brand
	Focus on internal marketing
Tourism & Recreation	Designate tourism leadership
	Focus on recreation development
Leadership Development	Launch a Leadership Abbeville County program

SWOT Analysis

Abbeville County is a beautiful place. The natural beauty of Lakes Russell and Secession and Calhoun Falls State Park draws people for recreation and relaxation. The towns of Abbeville, Due West, Honea Path, Calhoun Falls, Lowndesville, Ware Shoals, and Donalds have a small-town atmosphere that draws people who want to live in a special place. The people of Abbeville County enjoy a quality of life that includes low crime, a close-knit community, and a relaxed pace of life. Businesses come to Abbeville County to be close to Columbia and Greenville. They find a loyal workforce, a supportive technical college, and a positive business climate. Leadership in the county has made economic development, and this strategic plan, a priority.

Calhoun Falls State Park

In spite of all of the wonderful reasons to live, work, and play in Abbeville County, the economy is struggling. Doing business the same way the county always has is not an option any more, with a declining population, rising poverty, and poor job prospects for youth. Even though the workforce is loyal, more workers are needed. Businesses cannot find enough skilled labor to fill vacant positions. Elected leaders struggle with limited funds to invest in aging infrastructure and aging school facilities along with many other needs in the county. Some of the most promising economic opportunities, such as tourism and recreation, have underdeveloped assets.

With a commitment to a vision of prosperity, Abbeville County can capture the many opportunities waiting on the horizon. Investing in tourism and recreation will bring more visitors and spur retail sales. Providing a support network for small businesses will help more people start new businesses and grow existing small businesses. Investments in business parks will provide a home for new employers moving to the area. We believe the greatest opportunity in Abbeville County is its people. Investing in today's youth will reap economic and social rewards far into the future.

There are threats that could stall Abbeville County's progress forward. The threat of no action is likely the greatest threat. Companies do not invest in communities that do not invest in themselves. Not investing for the future (education, infrastructure, business development, etc.) will stall economic progress. Abbeville County can continue to tax a smaller and smaller population to provide the same basic services, or it can invest to turn around the population decline and tax a larger group of people at a lower level.

The SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) Analysis was derived from online surveys completed by 110 citizens, interviews and small group meetings with 25 people, a survey of middle and high school students, and the input of the Steering Committee. In total, approximately 150 people had input into the planning process. The full survey results can be reviewed in Appendix A.

SWOT Analysis Summary

Strengths

- Available land, spec bldg., incubator
- Downtown and small businesses
- Tourism, history
- Natural resources: Lake Russell, forests, agriculture
- New, talented leadership in the county
- Quality of life, small town atmosphere, lack of crime
- Education: Tech College, Erskine, teachers
- Workforce: work ethic, nonunion, Work-Ready Community
- Location
- Telecommunications

Weaknesses

- Ready sites
- Workforce availability, skills, lack of jobs
- Education: aging high school facility
- Quality of Life: poverty level, demographics
- Aging infrastructure, cost of utilities
- Distance to interstate
- Underdeveloped recreation assets
- Tourism: destinations, lodging, arts development
- Limited county revenue

Opportunities

- Business recruitment
- Existing businesses
- Education: investment in schools, training, regional universities
- Recreation development: Lake Russell
- Tourism: marketing, recreation, heritage
- Agriculture and other rural opportunities
- Entrepreneurship and business start ups
- Improve industrial sites
- Infrastructure upgrades

Threats

- Lack of investments in education and training
- Leadership: not investing in ourselves
- Continued decline of industry
- Quality of Life: quality jobs, diversity, long-term poverty
- Resistance to change
- Lack of financial resources at the County and ally agencies
- Appearance of community
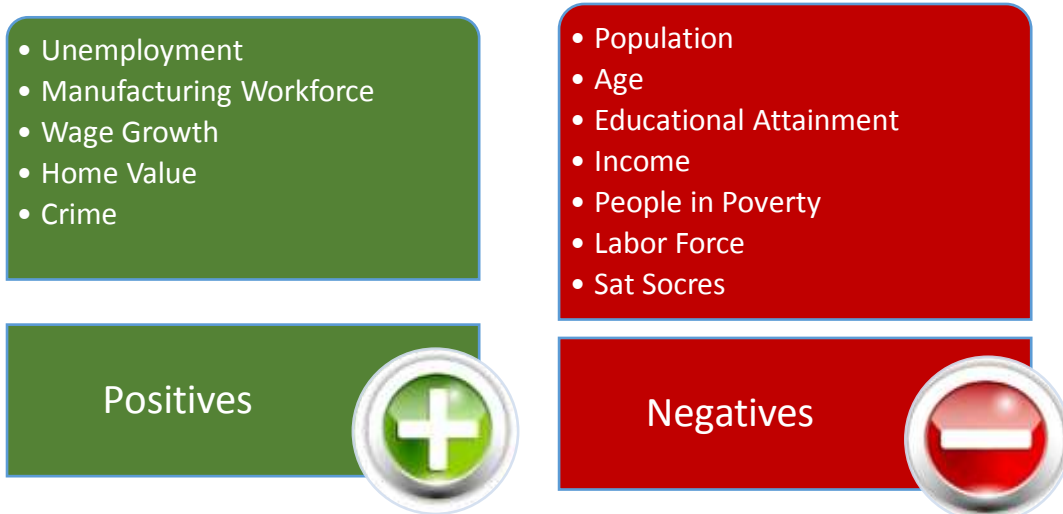
Economic and Demographic Trends

Abbeville County's population decline is not unique among small, rural communities. This alarming trend means that not only the economy but the social fabric of the county is in jeopardy. Employers are having a difficult time finding skilled workers. Elected officials have fewer and fewer people to tax to provide revenue for basic services. Small businesses are suffering from a shrinking market. The greatest hurdle posed by the population decline may be the loss of leadership talent. Fewer and fewer people are available to lead initiatives, start innovative programs, volunteer, and provide the "people power" that is needed to make social and economic change.

A declining population is not the county's only concern. The lack of educational attainment, skill levels, increase in poverty, and increasing age of the population are also threats to sustainability. Educational attainment is consistently below the regional and state averages. Given that most jobs today require a higher skill level than jobs a decade ago, this means that some of Abbeville County's citizens are not prepared to fill vacant jobs. The fact that SAT scores have been rising means there is an opportunity to develop the future workforce which will, in time, improve overall educational attainment. Today, the brightest youth are not staying in Abbeville County.

The positive economic trends are important to a strategic planning process – we build upon those assets. They give us an indication of Abbeville County's value proposition. Unemployment has been declining and wages have been growing. This can be attributed to the strong presence of manufacturing. Capitalizing on the strong manufacturing cluster will increase wages and job opportunities. Almost half of the workforce out-commutes, representing a potential labor pool.

Contributing to the good quality of life are reasonable home values and a low crime rate. Both violent and property crime are low in Abbeville County. The low cost of housing can mean two things. First, reasonably priced homes can be found. Second, there may not be enough demand for new housing to increase housing prices.

The full analysis of economic and demographic trends can be found in Appendix B.

Positives	Negatives
• Unemployment • Manufacturing Workforce • Wage Growth • Home Value • Crime	• Population • Age • Educational Attainment • Income • People in Poverty • Labor Force • Sat Socres

Organizational Benchmarking

As part of the strategic planning process, Abbeville County Development Services staff, along with the consulting team, selected six peer counties to review. The goal of the review was to benchmark Abbeville County's economic development organization and to identify best practices of those peer counties that have achieved a level of economic development success. Benchmarking is an exercise to help gauge whether the Development Services Department is adequately structured, funded, and staffed.

The following counties were selected for the benchmark analysis: Chester, Florence, Lexington, Marlboro, Oconee, and Union Counties. These benchmark counties vary in population size, overall budget, infrastructure, program elements, best practices, and geographic setting (rural vs. urban). However, each county has witnessed tremendous recent economic development success through their program efforts. If Abbeville County wants to leap frog peer communities, it must look to communities that are successful no matter the size.

The benchmarking analysis included a review of structure, budget, staff, leadership, program elements, and best practices. Commonalities among the peer counties include organizational structure, association memberships, regional alliance memberships and program elements. All but one of the counties receives private sector support either through private sector sister organizations or through their own public/private organization (i.e. the county's economic development office is not a county government department but rather a non-profit organization). Through private sector financial support, these counties are able to fund non-operational activities such as travel, marketing, product development, and business recruitment. Through our interviews with these counties, we have learned that many of them are currently in the process of restructuring their public sector funding to include a percentage of all future fee in lieu of tax (FILOT) revenues, thereby doubling or even tripling their current overall budget. We comment on Abbeville County's use of FILOT later in the report.

Funding by program element is perhaps the most notable difference among the peer counties. Overall budgets range from $255,000 to $1,630,000, compared to Abbeville County's budget at $132,606. There is wide variation among the counties in terms of funding priority with some counties directing a majority of their budget toward marketing and product development and others (typically those with smaller overall budgets) using the majority of their funds for operations. Abbeville County, for example, has no budget allocated to programming, except a small amount for travel.

The organizations are staffed with between two and five positions. Comparatively, Abbeville County has two full-time staff.

The results of our interviews and discussions with the benchmark counties are included in Comparison Matrix A and Comparison Matrix B, attached.

Comparison Matrix A

	County A	County B	County C
Organizational Structure			
Type	County Dept.	County Dept.	County Dept.
Structure	County Government	County Government	County Government
Support Organization	Yes	Yes	Yes
Type	501(c)(3)	501(c)(6)	Nonprofit
Board Membership	Yes, based on financial contribution	Yes; appointed by County & elected by FCP	Yes; elected by membership
Membership Levels	$250; $1,500; Board: 4,000; $5,000	None	$100; $250; $500; $750; $1,000; $2,500; $5,000; $10,000
Last Re-Organization	2004	N/A	N/A
Regional Alliance	I-77 Alliance & Charlotte Regional Partnership	NESA	Central SC Alliance
Funding & Finance			
Overall Budget	$155,000 (County) + $100,000 (support org)	$900,000	$600,000
Source of Funds	County (support org augments)	County & support org (50/50)	County (support org augments)
Staffing & Operations			
Staff Size	2 full 1 vacant	4	3
Staff Titles	Director, Admin. Assistant, Marketing & Research (vacant)	Director, Project Manager, Membership & Industry Relations Manager & Exec. Assistant	Director, Project Manager, Administrative Assistant
Assoc. Memberships	SCEDA & SEDC	SEDC, SCEDA, IAMC, IEDC	SCEDA & SEDC
Professional Dev.	Yes, through association memberships	Yes, through association memberships	Yes, through association memberships
Best Practices	Product development, recruitment	Client Responsiveness	Recruitment and retention
Program "Gaps"	Community development and planning	Would like to expand staff to cover additional program areas	Existing industry registration program to track all existing industries.

Comparison Matrix B

	County D	County E	County F
Organizational Structure			
Type	County Dept.	Hybrid Public/Private Partnership	County Dept.
Structure	County Government w/ Advisory Board	Nonprofit – 501(c)(6) w/ Advisory Board	County Government w/ Advisory Board
Support Organization	Yes	No	No
Type	501(c)(3)	N/A	N/A
Board Membership	Yes, appointed, and by virtue of office/position	Yes, based on financial contribution	Yes, appointed, and by virtue of office/position, then approved by council
Membership Levels	No	$500, $1,500, Board: $3,000	N/A
Last Re-Organization	2011	2012 – merged three organizations into one	2009 (split from Chamber)
Regional Alliance	NESA	Upstate Alliance	Upstate Alliance
Funding & Finance			
Overall Budget	$320,000	$1,630,000	$300,000
Source of Funds	Majority from County & City, additional funding from support org.	Private sector and County	Majority from County with support from City & Utilities
Staffing & Operations			
Staff Size	2	4 full 1 vacant	2
Staff Titles	Director, Admin. Assistant	Director, Project Manager, Marketing & Research, Comm. Dev. (vacant), & volunteer	Director, Admin. Assistant / Marketing Specialist
Assoc. Memberships	SCEDA & IEDC	SCEDA & IEDC	SCEDA & SEDC
Professional Dev.	Yes, through association memberships	Yes, through association memberships	Yes, through association memberships
Best Practices	Prospect Preparedness & Presentations	BRE, Workforce, Website, Product Development	Product Dev., Marketing Plans, Strategic Relationships
Program "Gaps"	Product Development, Workforce Development, Community Development	Due to limited staff they are unable to conduct enough marketing trips	Community Development, QOL, Workforce Development

Economic Development Strategic Plan

Overview

The development of a local economy, especially one in a rural community with many challenges, can seem like a daunting task. The investment needed is high; the projects are complex; and many partners are required. However, Abbeville County does not have a choice whether or not to invest in economic development. Its population and labor force are declining. Young people are moving away. Local businesses are struggling. Half of the young people surveyed want to stay in Abbeville County if there are opportunities for them. Without aggressive action, the county will continue to decline.

The strategies in this plan may seem overwhelming given the limited resources of the county; however, the people of Abbeville County are committed to changing course. We witnessed their commitment in community meetings and by the overwhelming response to the strategic plan survey. Citizens wrote about their vision for a prosperous future.

By adopting this strategic plan and implementing a few action items each year, over time Abbeville County will turn the tide. Economic development is a long-term process, not a one-time event. The real work developing the Abbeville County economy will start when the planning process concludes.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

– Margaret Mead

Organizational Development

Abbeville County cannot expect stellar results in economic development without funding and staffing a stellar organization. Currently, the Development Services Department budget of $132,606 includes no funding for programs such as marketing, existing business retention and expansion, product development, or any of the activities the organization is expected to carry out. We recommend transforming the department into a leader among rural communities in South Carolina through adequate funding, staffing, and best-practice programs.

Goal: Transform the Abbeville County Development Board into a Leading Economic Development Organization in South Carolina

Strategy: Restructure the Abbeville County Development Board into a Public-Private Partnership

> "Create a public private partnership similar to what Greenwood has today. This would better facilitate a collaborative approach to economic development that could get better buy in from the private sector."
> Survey Quote

Action Steps:
- ◎ Appoint a task force (comprised of members of Council and the Development Board) to lead a restructuring of the Development Board into a public-private partnership that will leverage the leadership talents, resources, and network of the private sector. The new Abbeville County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) will be a sister organization to the Development Services Department.
- ◎ As part of the restructure of the new EDC, the board should include four appointments from the county, four from private sector investors, seats for any municipality that invests, and ex-officio non-voting seats for Piedmont Technical College, Abbeville County Schools, and the county and town administrators.
- ◎ Private sector investors will be developed through a private sector fundraising campaign (more below). Their board representatives will be elected from the investor group.
- ◎ Public appointments should be made following these guidelines:
    - o Knowledge of economic and business development in Abbeville County.
    - o Private sector experiences that translate to being a resource for the county. Examples are finance, marketing, manufacturing, real estate development, business management, etc.
    - o Knowledge of the growth sectors in the local economy.
    - o Experience with local and regional organizations that support economic development.
    - o Experience leading community organizations in Abbeville County, such as a recent chairman or officer.

- o Board members must be able to adhere to the county's Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policies, placing the good of the organization before personal interest.
        - o Board members should be able to effectively communicate the economic development mission to the general public and community organizations.
        - o Board members should live and/or work in Abbeville County.
    - ◎ Board members should rotate after two consecutive three-year terms, including the public appointments.

In the future, we recommend merging the Development Services Department and the Economic Development Corporation into a fully integrated public-private partnership, similar to the Greenwood Partnership Alliance and the Oconee Economic Alliance. We do not recommend this step immediately; rather, we believe restructuring the Development Board is a first step. After a few years of operating the new Economic Development Corporation, and a few years of securing private funds are successful, we suggest merging the public entity into the non-profit corporation.

Strategy: Make Funding Economic Development a Priority

Action Steps:
- ◎ Increase county funding for economic development by $68,000 in FY17 and maintain a public budget of approximately $200,000 a year.
- ◎ Solicit annual investments for the EDC from each municipality based on $3 per capita. The roughly $43,000 of revenue will have a significant impact on economic development across the county; however, the real value will be in having municipal leadership as stakeholders in economic development.
- ◎ Launch a private sector fundraising campaign. We recommend using professional fundraisers because they have the skills and expertise to ensure no money is left on the table. Paying for professional fundraisers is often a hurdle. We recommend requesting a zero-interest loan from the county to pay for a fundraising campaign. Repay the loan over the life of the campaign, typically five years. This ensures that funds raised in the first year do not all go directly to pay fundraising costs.
    - o Do not co-mingle public and private dollars. Use private funds for expenditures such as professional services, travel, and marketing. Use public funds for administration and operations.
- ◎ Clarify the fee-in-lieu-of-tax revenue policy for economic development. We recommend a percentage of every new fee be allocated to economic development. For existing business expansions this means a percentage of the net new revenue generated by the expansion project.

Strategy: Expand Staffing Capacity

Action Steps:
- ◎ In fiscal years 2017 and 2018, expand staffing capacity by using contractors to support internal and external marketing. Have as a goal to add a third staff position in 2019.
  - o Contractors can be used effectively for marketing in social media, website development and maintenance, and e-communications.
  - o A part-time contractor could be retained to make BRE visits, utilizing the talents of a recent retiree or other local supporter.
- ◎ In fiscal year 2019, plan to add a third staff position to the organization. The third positon should be an Assistant Director position that assists with existing business retention and expansion, research, and marketing.

Education and Workforce Development

The number one threat to Abbeville County is the loss of population, especially young people. With a declining population, the county will tax a smaller and smaller group of people more and more to provide basic services. We need to turn the tide by retaining young people and attracting others to move to Abbeville County. Growing the population is the only way to grow the local economy by providing labor for companies and a growing market for small businesses.

Goal: Develop a Pipeline of Talent

Strategy: Provide a K-14 Education to all Abbeville County Youth

Action Steps:
- ◎ Implement a program like Greenwood Promise. Greenwood County is raising an endowment that will fund enough scholarships to pay for every high school graduate to attend Piedmont Technical College for two years. The community's expectation then becomes a K-14 education rather than a K-12 education. Similar programs are up and running in Wythe County and the Roanoke Region in Virginia, as well as Laurens County.
  - o In other communities it has been estimated that scholarships will need to be raised for approximately 35% of the graduating class because a portion will go to four-year schools, a portion will receive scholarships, and a portion will not participate.
- ◎ Seek partners such as the Freshwater Coast Community Foundation to lead the effort. A community-based nonprofit is a good fit to raise and manage the funds that will provide scholarships for high school graduates.
  - o We recommend combining fundraising efforts for an Abbeville College Promise program and the newly formed Economic Development Corporation. Professional fundraisers can raise money for economic development and the college scholarship endowment at the same time.

Strategy: Raise Awareness of Career Pathways

Action Steps:

◎ Create an online video that showcases career pathways in Abbeville County. The information can be used to move workers in low-end service jobs to higher wage manufacturing jobs and show young people local career opportunities. A best practice video can be found in Henderson County, NC. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYRHwDmpb4Q Similar videos cost $10,000-$16,000. Oconee County has recently launched a video series on local employment opportunities. We recommend working with the local cable television channel to see if it can be produced at little to no charge.

◎ Review the STEM Early College Academy in Fairfield County for best practices. The program allows seventh graders to qualify and elect to enter the "academy" and take college level courses in a STEM curriculum. When graduating from high school the student also receives an Associate Degree from Midlands Technical College given the coursework completed. Effectively, the student has been able to earn an Associate's Degree (or two years toward a Bachelor's Degree) at no cost. http://www.wistv.com/story/29073020/cool-school-fairfield-centrals-partnership-with-midlands-tech-shines

Strategy: Improve Work Ethic Among High School Graduates

Action Steps:

◎ Implement a Work Ethics Certification program similar to the one in Greenwood County. Students volunteer to be included in the program that assess soft skills. Students finish the program earning a bronze, silver, or gold credential, which local employers recognize in the hiring process. Dorchester County also recently implemented the program.

Existing Business Retention and Expansion

Existing business expansions represent 60-80% of new investment and job creation in a community. Abbeville County is overlooking up to 80% of its prospects for job and investment growth by not having a proactive Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) BRE program.

Goal: Support Existing Businesses

Strategy: Initiate a Pro-Active Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Program

Action Steps:

◎ Set a goal to visit at least one existing business each week, or 50 each year.

- ◎ Develop a BRE survey to gather information on regular visits.
- ◎ Input the information into a tracking system. We like SalesForce, ExecutivePulse, or a simple Excel spreadsheet if the budget will not support a CRM (customer relationship management) program.
- ◎ Mine BRE data for trends in cluster growth/decline, at-risk companies, gazelles, leadership changes, employment trends, etc.
- ◎ Use information to shape county policy and advocate for business climate improvements at the local and state levels.
- ◎ Develop a BRE team of allies that support existing business such as Piedmont Technical College, utility providers, and municipal partners.
  - o Conduct a team training session to introduce everyone to the BRE program, its goals, and how they can be supportive partners.
- ◎ The revolving loan program described below can be used to support existing businesses.

Small Business and Entrepreneur Development

Small businesses makes up the bulk of businesses in Abbeville County. We heard from citizens and county leaders that they want to focus on small business and entrepreneur development. There is currently a gap in small business development services. We propose some action steps for Development Services that will fill in the gaps.

Goal: Increase Small Business Start-Ups and Growth

Strategy: Create a Pathway to Business Start-Ups

Action Steps:
- ◎ Create start-up kits for new businesses and post on the website. Starter-kits show the steps a person would take to start a new business in Abbeville County. Examples are permits, licenses, plan review, agency contacts, etc. Some communities have starter-kits for the most-often started businesses such as restaurants, hair salons, day cares, etc.
- ◎ Add a resource directory to the website. The listing will include all agencies (local, regional, state, and federal) that support small business development.
- ◎ Start a revolving loan fund to create another financing option for small businesses. Revolving loan funds have been seeded by USDA Rural Development grants, other grant programs, and local investors. Some economic development organizations contract with certified development corporations to administer the loan program, others manage the program in-house. Given the small staff size of Abbeville County, we recommend the former.

Strategy: Designate Development Services as Small Business Liaison

Action Steps:
- ◎ Designate the Development Services Department as the Small Business Liaison Agency. As the first and single point of contact, staff at Development Services can lead a new business through the maze, clearing the path to launch.
- ◎ Bring county allies together to introduce the Liaison Program, how to make referrals, and how their agency can support small businesses.

Strategy: Create a Culture of No Wrong Door for Entrepreneurs

Action Steps:
- ◎ Consider becoming a Certified Entrepreneurial Community®. The program supports the development of an entrepreneurship ecosystem, provides action planning for entrepreneurship, and measures results via a scorecard. Creative Economic Development Consulting relaunched the award-winning Certified Entrepreneurial Community® program in 2015. The program was originally developed by AdvantageWest Regional Economic Development Partnership. It has won several national innovation awards. Given Abbeville County's focus on entrepreneurship and small business development, a logical next step would be to bolster the effort with energetic action planning for entrepreneurship.

The cost of the program, roughly $20,000, could be paid for by grants such as a new economic development grant program for municipalities.

Goal: Restructure the Incubator for Growth

Strategy: Manage the Incubator as a Public-Private Partnership

Action Steps:
- ◎ Transfer ownership of the incubator to the newly restructured Economic Development Corporation. For liability purposes, a public entity typically does not own an incubator. For business purposes, it is best to manage an incubator in a non-profit so that decisions can be made swiftly and, when needed, business negotiations can be handled confidentially.

Business Development

The number one economic development goal of citizens in Abbeville County is better jobs. Better jobs will come from growth in existing businesses, recruiting new businesses, and new business start-ups. During times of high unemployment, all jobs are welcome. Given the current low unemployment rate, focus on jobs that will raise the standard of living.

We recommend Abbeville County target automotive, advanced materials, and aerospace industry sectors because these align with the community's assets and the Upstate Alliance.

Goal: Provide New Job Opportunities to Abbeville County Citizens

Strategy: Recruit New Businesses to Abbeville County

Action Steps:
- Leverage the Upstate Alliance's external marketing and business recruitment program.
  - The Upstate Alliance target sectors of automotive, advanced materials, and aerospace align well with Abbeville County assets.
  - Participate in trade shows, mission trips, and consultant events organized by the Upstate Alliance.
- Expand the opportunities provided by the Alliance to make sales calls and industry visits while traveling with the region. Stay an extra day or two to maximize the trip and call on the headquarters of existing businesses, customers and suppliers of existing businesses, and target leads.
- Host the Department of Commerce recruiters for a familiarization tour in Abbeville County. Showcase business parks, especially the incubator facility.

Goal: Create the Space Businesses Need to Grow and Locate in Abbeville County

Strategy: Create a Building Development Program

Action Steps:
- Create a spec building program such that one is always in the planning stage. As much as 80% of all expanding companies want an existing building. There are currently three available buildings in Abbeville County: Mohawk Carpet Corporation, Carolina Fabrication, and the Abbeville County Spec Building.
- Identify the best site for the next spec building. It may be the site now being graded by the Army National Guard.
- Develop a virtual building to market the site until an actual spec building is built.
- When the current spec building is sold, move to constructing the next spec building.

◎ Seek funding through the Santee Cooper loan fund, utility tax credits, or other grant/loan programs. Spec buildings can be paid for using Santee Cooper loan funds, bank consortiums, and public dollars.

Strategy: Enhance Current Business Parks and Sites

Action Steps:
- ◎ Lakelands Commerce Center
  - o Complete the grading project with the Army National Guard.
  - o Complete all due diligence items, whether or not site re-certification is pursued. Items include protected species assessment, geotech, phase 1, wetlands approximation, etc.
    - ▪ It is irrelevant whether re-certification is pursued. The real value in certification is in the body of due diligence. The site can be marketed as a previously certified site.
  - o Develop a virtual spec building for the site graded by the Army National Guard.
  - o Study whether adjoining land can be used for future park expansion.
- ◎ Calhoun Falls Sites
  - o The highest and best use of Calhoun Falls Site A is likely to sell to an adjoining property owner or a location for public services. The site abuts residential areas, making it incompatible for some industrial uses.
  - o Calhoun Falls Site B is likely best used by an adjoining property owner. The site is only 2.6 acres, too small to invest significant marketing dollars to attract a company.
  - o Calhoun Falls Site C is shaped as a long rectangle which will prohibit some building footprints. The site would be more appealing if the acreage inside the adjoining "circle" could be secured.
- ◎ Hall Site (119 acres of county owned land on SC 72 adjacent to rail)
  - o This site would not be especially appealing except that it is rail-served and county-owned.
  - o Conduct a conceptual site plan to determine how it can be served by a rail spur and the cost of a spur. CSX should assist with this study.
- ◎ Ware Shoals Industrial Site
  - o The Ware Shoals site is in an existing industry area. Our main concern with this site is the use of septic tanks. If the site can be connected to town sewer, then we recommend proceeding with investing in completing due diligence. If not, we recommend pursuing other opportunities for site development.

Strategy: Identify Future Sites for Development

Action Steps:
- ◎ Conduct an infill analysis to determine if there are sites on existing water and sewer service that have development potentials. Extending service is expensive, thus, we recommend first examining opportunities along existing water and sewer lines.
- ◎ Analyze properties next to existing business parks and industrial area to determine if the park/site/area can be expanded. We recommend this as a priority for Lakelands Commerce Center.
- ◎ Conduct an analysis of all county and municipal owned properties to determine if any have development potential. Often local governments have an inventory of properties that are underutilized and/or vacant.

Strategy: Manage Site Development Efficiently

Action Steps:
- ◎ Transfer ownership of all sites, parks, and spec buildings owned by the county to the EDC. This limits the liability of the county; allows for quick decisions for projects; allows for confidential negotiations; and allows for expedited professional services to be contracted to develop the properties. Since the county has not expended funds on these properties (all expenditures have been grants or ally dollars), there is no financial loss with the transfer.

Strategy: Tackle Blighted Areas

Action Steps:
- ◎ Review zoning ordinances to identify opportunities for the county to combat blight through the regulatory process. Examples are active storefront ordinances in downtowns and requiring owners to fix broken windows. Other examples include updating sign ordinances, greenspace requirements, and building materials requirements.
- ◎ Create an incentive program that targets blighted areas:
  - o Incentive grants to redevelop vacant buildings. See this program recently started in Columbia: http://www.charlestonbusiness.com/news/57567-columbia-launches-incentive-program-to-rehab-abandoned-buildings
  - o Hickory, NC, has a matching landscape grant programs that encourages blighted areas to invest in small landscaping projects.
  - o Charlotte, NC, has a security grant that provides matching funds for security upgrades to small businesses locating in higher crime areas.
  - o Create a façade grant program to encourage the redevelopment of façades in blighted areas.

◎ Raise awareness of two state programs: Abandoned Buildings Tax Credit and Retail Facilities Revitalization Act. Both of these incentives could be used to spur improvements to vacant buildings in Abbeville County.

Goal: Ensure Adequate Infrastructure to Service Businesses

Strategy: Leverage the Capacity of Existing Systems

Action Steps:
◎ Fund a countywide infrastructure analysis, aligned with the county comprehensive plan and all utility long-term plans to determine where current systems should be connected.
◎ Inform utility partners of future site development plans so strategic water/sewer extensions can be planned. Host a semi-annual meeting of all utility providers to discuss long range plans.

Marketing

Often in economic development, internal marketing takes a back seat to external marketing. Internal marketing is important because every community has a story to tell and internal marketing shapes how that story is told. Abbeville County's story is told by small business owners to tourists, by the schools to the future workforce, and by elected officials to new industry.

Goal: Market Abbeville County

Strategy: Leverage the New Brand

Action Steps:
◎ Brands are most effective when they are repeated consistently over time. Leverage the new brand being developed in conjunction with the new website. Even though the brand was created for economic development, is there a way for county government, tourism, recreation destinations, and others to leverage the brand for a wider purpose?

ABBEVILLE COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Strategy: Leverage Partners for External Marketing

Action Steps:
◎ Leverage the Upstate Alliance and the South Carolina Department of Commerce for external marketing. The limited budget of Abbeville County should not be wasted on advertising or one-off marketing activities. Review the most effective marketing techniques in this executive survey report: http://aboutdci.com/winning-strategies/

- ◎ Spend the marketing budget on maintaining the website, target industry brochures, travel to shows and on missions with the region and state, and internal marketing.
    - ○ Focus on the following targets which align with the Upstate region: automotive, advance materials, and aerospace.

Strategy: Tell the Abbeville County Story Internally

Action Steps:

- ◎ Create and maintain social media networks on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. This could be done through contracted services until staff is expanded.
- ◎ Host an annual economic development or "state of the county" event. Share the state of the economy and the economic development strategic plan and accomplishments.
- ◎ Once a year convene all agencies and allies involved in economic development for a roundtable discussion of the current economy, agency future plans, and Development Services progress on the strategic plan.
- ◎ As part of the tourism contract, develop and maintain a common calendar of events.

"There are so many ways that Abbeville is, and can be great. I feel like Abbeville is going to experience a great awakening very soon, and I'm excited to get to see it. As a family with children we are invested in the industry of the area, schools, recreation, arts and entertainment to help our children thrive. We look forward to seeing the next steps!"
Survey Quote

Tourism and Recreation Development

Tourism is an opportunity waiting to be captured in Abbeville County. Heritage tourism, recreation tourism, eco-tourism, sports tourism, agri-tourism, and many other forms all have prospects in Abbeville County. What has been missing is leadership, collaboration, and strategic funding.

Goal: Develop the Tourism Economy

Strategy: Bring Unity and Leadership to Tourism

Action Steps:

- ◎ Designate a well-established organization as the countywide tourism leader and contract with that organization to carry out a countywide tourism development program on an annual basis.
- ◎ Redirect all tourism-related tax revenues to the contract with the tourism organization. A concern with the current policy of parceling out tourism tax dollars to many agencies is that the funds become so diluted that little impact is made. By redirecting all dollars to a countywide promotion effort, all tourism agencies will benefit from an increase in tourists coming to the county.

- o If the viability of smaller tourism organizations is a concern, the county could develop a grant program whereby tourism agencies would apply annually. As part of the grant, agencies would prove return on investment with their application.
- ◎ Under an annual services agreement between the county and the tourism organization, outline the work plan; and, thus, the expenditure of funds.
  - o Ensure the organization takes a countywide approach through an annual review of the program of work. If the group is found not to be working countywide in tourism promotion with occupancy tax dollars, the service agreement will not be renewed.
  - o Consider the following as part of the services agreement:
    - Develop and implement a marketing and promotions plan such that all tourism destinations would benefit.
    - Inventory Abbeville County tourism assets.
    - Develop a list of needed investments in tourism assets.
    - Prepare grant applications for state and federal tourism programs.

Goal: Make Recreation an Economic Engine

Strategy: Develop Recreation Assets

Action Steps:
- ◎ Create an Abbeville County Recreation Department. The goal will be to coordinate recreation programs across the county. Currently youth recreation is carried out by a couple of nonprofit agencies and the City of Abbeville. Recreation opportunities are important to businesses when recruiting employees but also to young people and families.
- ◎ Leverage resources with the City of Abbeville. Develop a joint city-county master plan for recreation investments.
  - o The joint master plan should include trail systems, connectivity with walking and bicycle paths, and mini-parks.
- ◎ Given the natural recreation assets of Abbeville County, focus on non-traditional sports venues such as canoeing, kayaking, fishing, mountain biking around the lakes, and camping.

Leadership Development

The declining and aging population of Abbeville County has led to a leadership shortage. We saw many of the same people wearing different hats in our meetings in Abbeville County. As is the case in most small towns and rural communities, the same group is called upon every time to tackle projects. Abbeville County needs to expand and diversify the leadership pool.

Goal: Develop the Future Abbeville County Leaders

Strategy: Launch Leadership Abbeville County

Action Steps:

◎ Re-launch a countywide leadership development program. Seek partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and Erskine College. The college could be a great partner in this program given the leadership talent pool. Development Services may be the project initiator, but it should look for another entity to take on the program over time. Leadership Greenwood, under the Chamber, is a model program.

   o Typically county leadership programs recruit a class to meet one day a month for eight months. At each meeting the class focuses on a particular topics such as economic development, history, local government, natural resources, etc. Often the class tackles a community project.

◎ Request that every civic club, local government committee, and non-profit board recruit at least one member under the age of 40 to serve. This will encourage young leaders to become involved in shaping Abbeville County's future.

Implementation Timeline

The Abbeville County Economic Development Strategic Plan is designed to be implemented over three to five years. Most tasks in economic development take longer than we anticipate for two reasons: 1) because of the need to form partnerships and 2) many projects are grant dependent. Even though partnerships take time, we find that the collaboration produces a superior end product.

We recommend a planning retreat each year to identify priorities from the strategic plan for action in the coming year. The implementation schedule below is subject to change depending upon funding.

FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Nonprofit EDO	Career awareness	Abbeville "Promise"	Work ethics program
BRE Program	Tourism development	Expand staff	Tackle blight
Small business liaison	Private sector funding	Building program	Leadership program
Incubator in nonprofit	Pathways for small business	Future site development	
Business recruitment	Certified Entrepreneurial Community	Recreation development	
Enhance parks	Internal marketing		
Launch brand			

Staff Resources Needed for Implementation

The most important resource for implementation is people power. Much of economic development is the time-consuming task of forming partnerships and facilitating projects. Development Services currently operates with two full-time staff. We recommend expanding capacity with contractors in fiscal years 2017 and 2018 with a goal of expanding staff in 2019. Without adequate staff, meeting the timelines for some strategic plan action steps is unrealistic.

Dashboard

The Abbeville County Economic Development should measure its activities to report to stakeholders as well as to assist with internal decision-making regarding allocation of resources. We recommend two levels of reporting. First, we recommend a dashboard be reported on the website and in internal marketing. Second, we recommend a dataset be tracked internally to influence policy and program decisions.

Dashboard
We recommend the following data points be tracked on a dashboard at least quarterly. New business starts will capture small business and entrepreneurial activity. Changes in unemployment and labor force are affected by the business recruitment and existing business programs. The dashboard can be summarized in a return on investment for economic development. We recommend conducting an economic impact analysis of companies expanding, growing, and creating jobs. Another part of the return on investment can be quantified through business satisfaction data gathered through the BRE program.
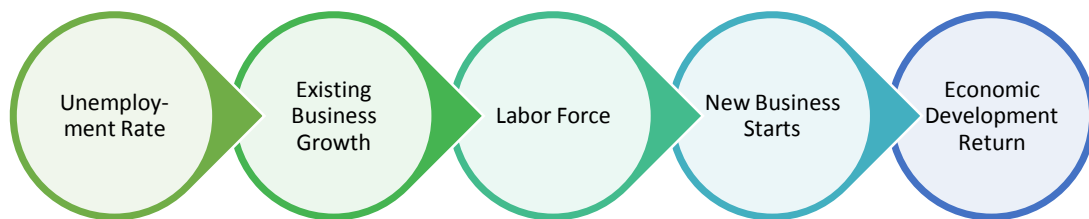
Economic Development Data
We recommend the following data be tracked and trended over time for internal purposes of policy making and program of work development. Over time, Development Services will impact all of these areas. It will take years, possibly decades, to move the needle on areas such as poverty; however, start tracking now so you'll know when progress has been made.

- ◎ Progress on strategic plan initiatives
- ◎ "Touches" – business contacts, inquiries, etc.
- ◎ Leads, projects, announcements
- ◎ BRE visits
- ◎ Website analytics
- ◎ Opens and clicks on e-communications
- ◎ New business starts and failures
- ◎ Private sector funding
- ◎ Incubator outcomes of business starts, growth
- ◎ Job creation, unemployment rate, labor force, and employment by industry
- ◎ Income, wages, and poverty
- ◎ Population

- ◎ Age demographics
- ◎ New capital investment
- ◎ Retail sales
- ◎ Tourism impact
- ◎ Building permits, commercial and residential
- ◎ Available buildings
- ◎ Available sites, qualified sites
- ◎ Water and sewer capacity, excess capacity
- ◎ Employment by size of business
- ◎ Local government capital improvement projects that impact economic development
- ◎ Education statistics on graduation rates (high school and technical college), degrees conferred, educational attainment, post-graduation plans, training program completions
- ◎ Leadership Abbeville County graduates

Appendix A: Community Survey Results

An online survey was distributed to business and community databases by Abbeville County Development Services and posted on the Abbeville County website. A total of 110 responses were collected.

1. **On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, how do you rate the current business climate of the area?**

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest, how do you rate the current business climate of the area?

8.2% 1.8% 10.9%

27.3%

51.8%

5 4 3 2 1
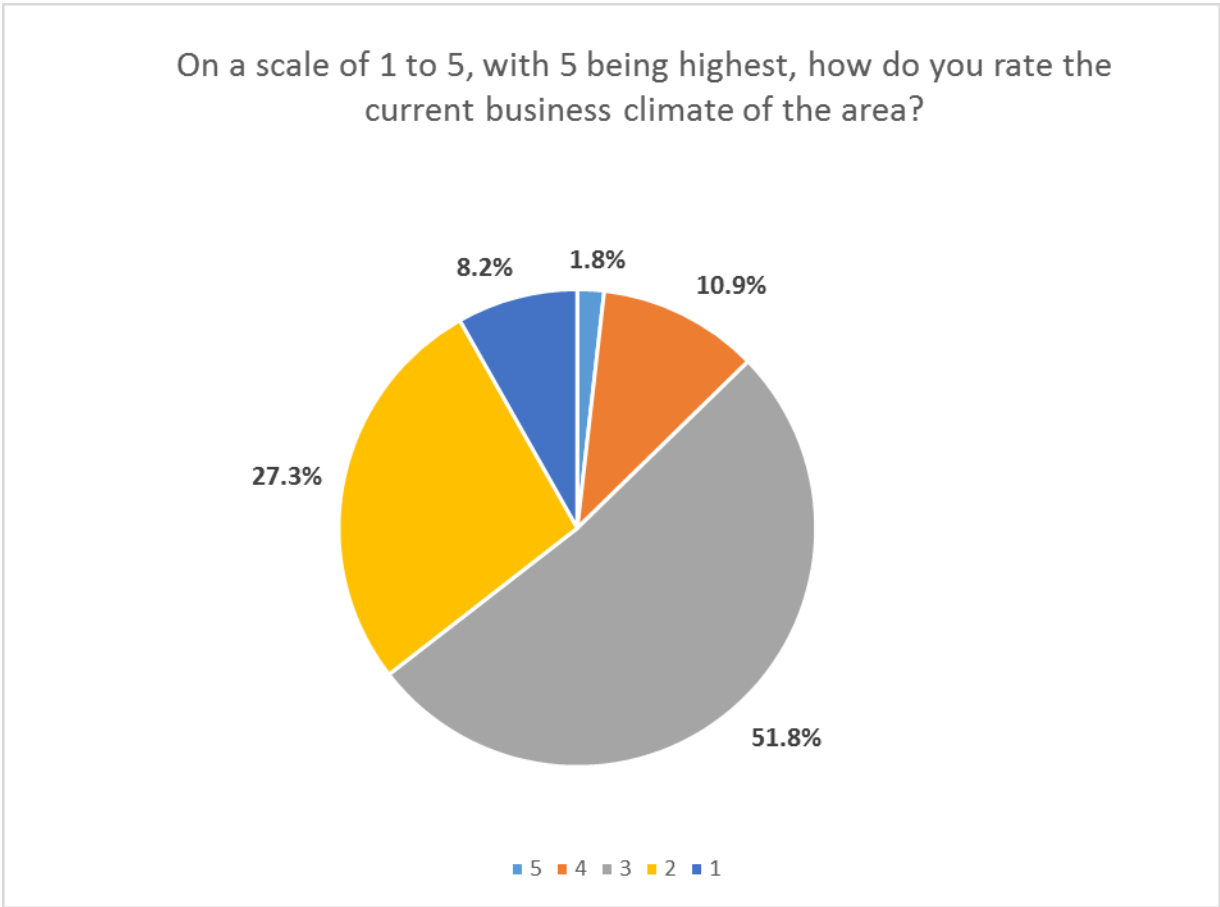
2. **Rate the following as an asset supporting economic development, a weakness hindering economic growth, or neither.**

Rate the following as an asset supporting economic development or a weakness hindering economic growth or neither.
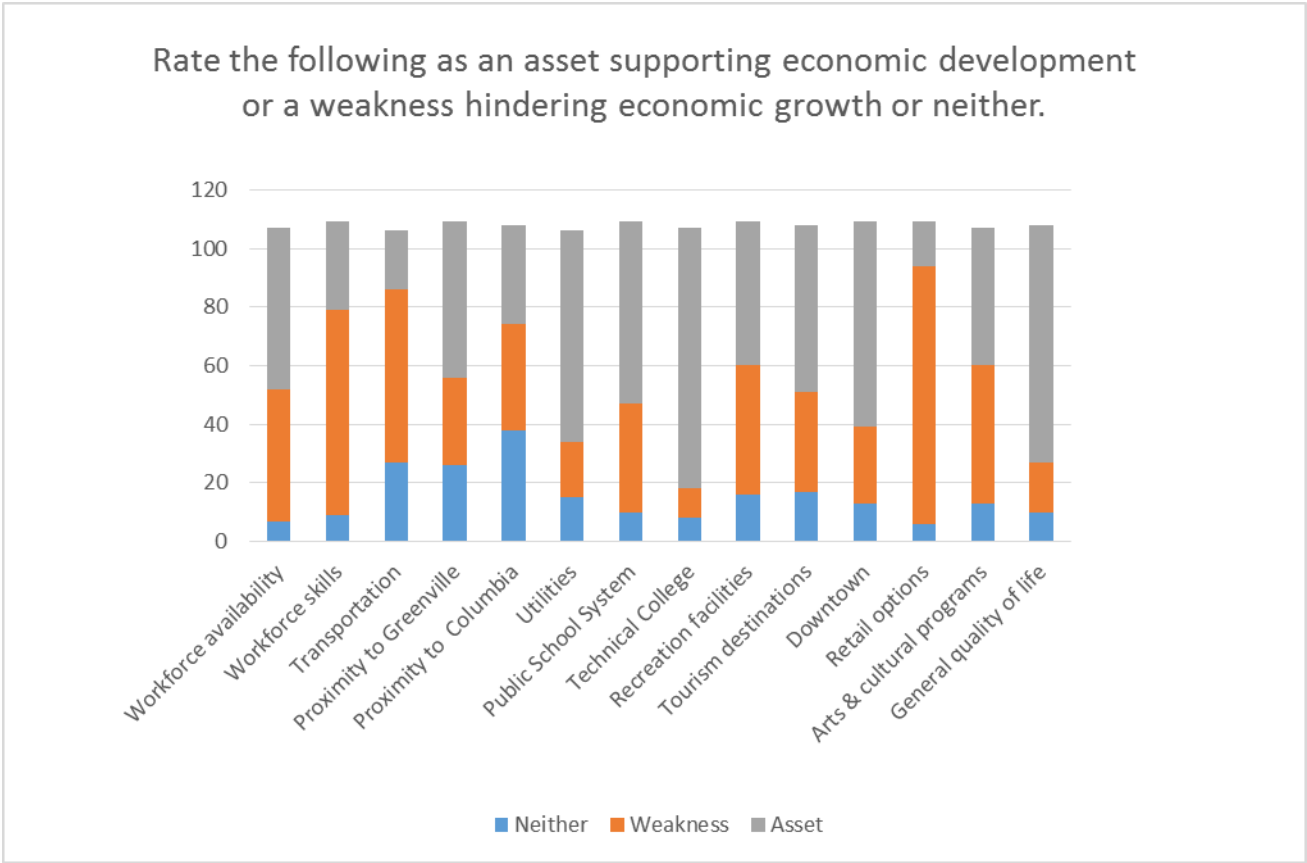
3. **What are Abbeville County's most significant assets supporting economic growth?**

The consulting team compiled the responses into similar categories then listed specific notes from survey responses.

- Available land and buildings – *Spec building, incubator*

- Infrastructure – *Telecommunications, utilities*

- Transportation – *Hwy 72 and 28, four-lane access to 26, railroad, US 178*

- Natural Resources – *Water, forests, Lake Russell, Lake Secession, agriculture, recreation (hunting, fishing, water sports), rural setting*

- Location – *Proximity to technical colleges, Anderson/Greenville/Spartanburg, between Atlanta and Charlotte*

- Education – *Public schools' academic scores, technical college, Erskine College, teachers*

- Workforce – *WorkReady Community Certification, skilled workforce, work ethic, nonunion, available workforce*

- Quality of Life – *Good people, small-town feel, low crime rate, church community, housing prices, downtown Abbeville, low cost of living, controlled growth, youth athletics*

- Tourism destinations - *Village Grill, festivals, Abbeville Opera House, hisotrical assets, West 105 Boutique, Main Street Coffee*

- Leadership – *New, young, talented leadership in county positions, town leadership, partnerships between agencies*

- Business Community – *Merchant's Association, established new companies, manufaturing base, proximity to BMW plant in Spartanburg*

- Business Climate – *Tax incentives, low taxes*

4. What are Abbeville County's most significant challenges to economic growth?

The consulting team compiled the responses into similar categories then listed specific notes from survey responses.

- Sites and Buildings – *Sites ready with infrastructure, land availability*

- Location – *Distance to major city and interstate, rural*

- Business Recruitment – *Difficulty in attracting new businesses*

- Workforce – *Availability of workers, skills, no quality jobs for trained/educated workers, low wages*

- Business Climate – *Lack of industry concentration*

- Education – *Aging high school facility*

- Utilities – *Cost, aging infrastructure, sewer system, planning for growth*

- Leadership – *Some do not want change, anti-tax sentiment, town-county collaborative efforts, leadership development*

- Transportation – *Distance to a commercial airport, roads linking to 85/385/26, public transportation*

- Quality of Life – *Poverty level, underfunded public safety, stagnate population growth, recreation and cultural activities, aging population*

- Retail – *Lack of options, redevelopment on the square*

- Tourism – *Destinations, lodging, arts development*

- Housing – *Options, multi-family housing*

- Lack of common vision for the future

- Limited county revenue

5. What are Abbeville County's most significant opportunities for economic growth?

The consulting team compiled the responses into similar categories then listed specific notes from survey responses.

- Business Recruitment – *Tech jobs, manufacturing, automotive suppliers, wood-related industries, distribution/warehousing*

- Existing Businesses – *Sage Automotive Interiors, Prysmian*

- Small Business Development – *Locations on the square, entrepreneur programs for start-ups*

- Infrastructure – *Expanded telecommunications, WCTEL fiber internet*

- Sites and Buildings – *Expanded incubator, additional sites and building development, rail site development, redevelopment of vacant or underutilized buildings*

- Workforce – *Availability*

- Recreation – *Facility development, events, sports programming, national forests*

- Lake Russell and Lake Secession - *Camping, water sports*

- Education – *Investment in schools, tech school, training at Piedmont Technical College, leverage regional universities, Erskine College*

- Quality of Life – *Housing developments, history, small town atmosphere*

- Retail and Restaurants

- Transportation

- Agriculture and Farming

- Health Care – *Businesses supporting aging population, retirement communities*

- Tourism – *Marketing, lodging, heritage tourism, theater, arts*

- Marketing – *All aspects of living, working, playing, and doing business in Abbeville County*

- Partnerships with Greenwood area

6. What are the three most critical threats to economic growth?

The consulting team compiled the responses into similar categories then listed specific notes from survey responses.

- Education – *New high school facility needed, lack of basic skills*
- Workforce – *Skills, pay scale*
- Leadership – *Not investing in ourselves, lack of progressive leadership, resistance to change, lack of collaboration, complacency*
- Demographics – *Small population, median age of population, decreasing education levels, loss of young population/graduates*
- Business Climate - *Industries closing, lack of cluster of businesses, increased taxes, modernizing zoning codes, lack of entrepreneurial development*
- Transportation – *Distance to interstate*
- Quality of Life – *Lack of quality jobs, lack of diversity, long-term poverty*
- Appearance of Community – *Blight areas, dilapidated properties*
- Infrastructure – *Areas lacking infrastructure*
- Erskine College not expanding
- Tourism – *Lodging development, lack of restaurants, entertainment activities, cultural activities*

7. **Rank order the following economic development strategies in order of importance with 1 being the most important.**
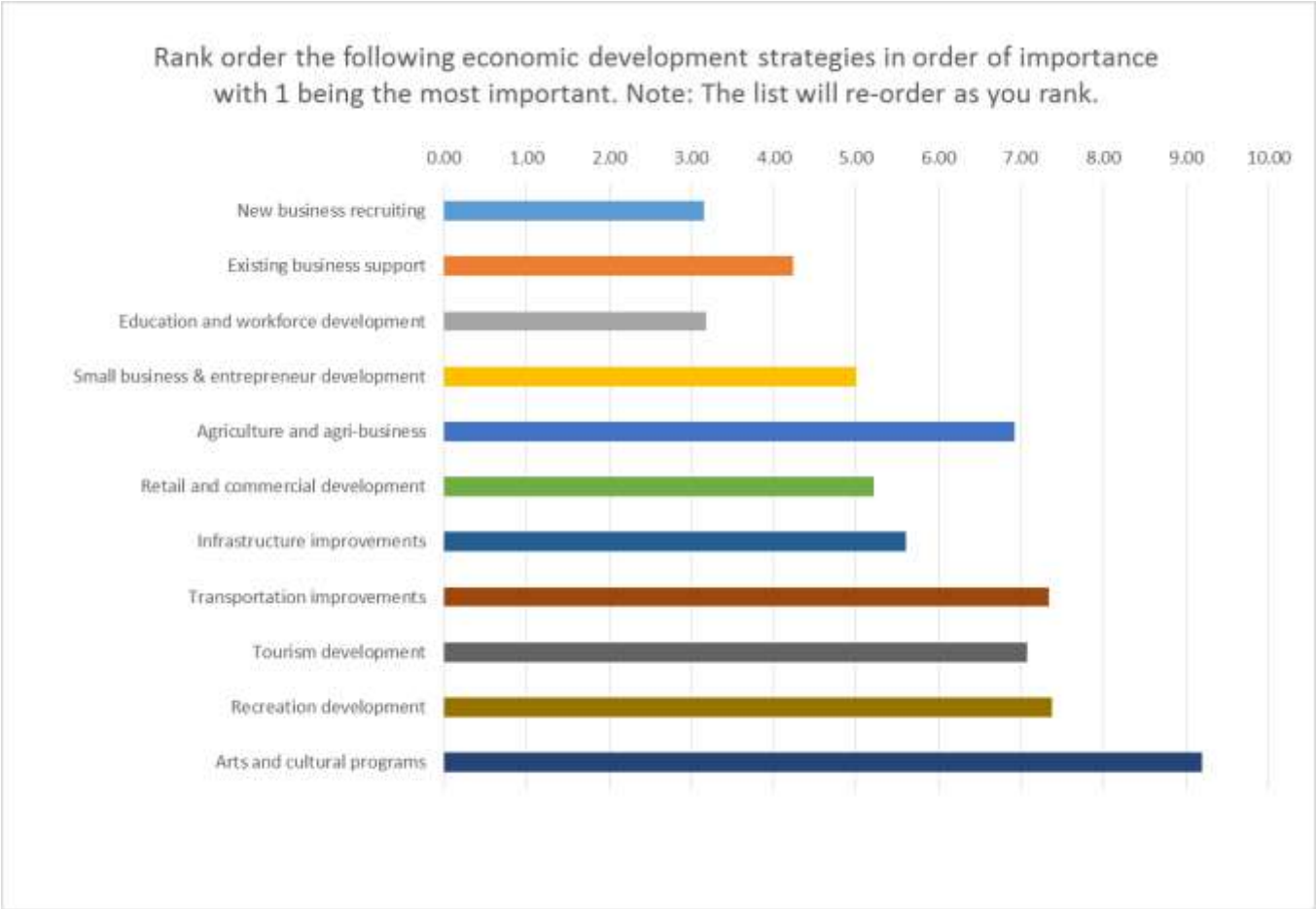
8. **What should be the top three goals of the Abbeville County economic development strategic plan? CHOOSE THREE.**

What should be the top three goals of the Abbeville County economic development strategic plan? CHOOSE THREE.
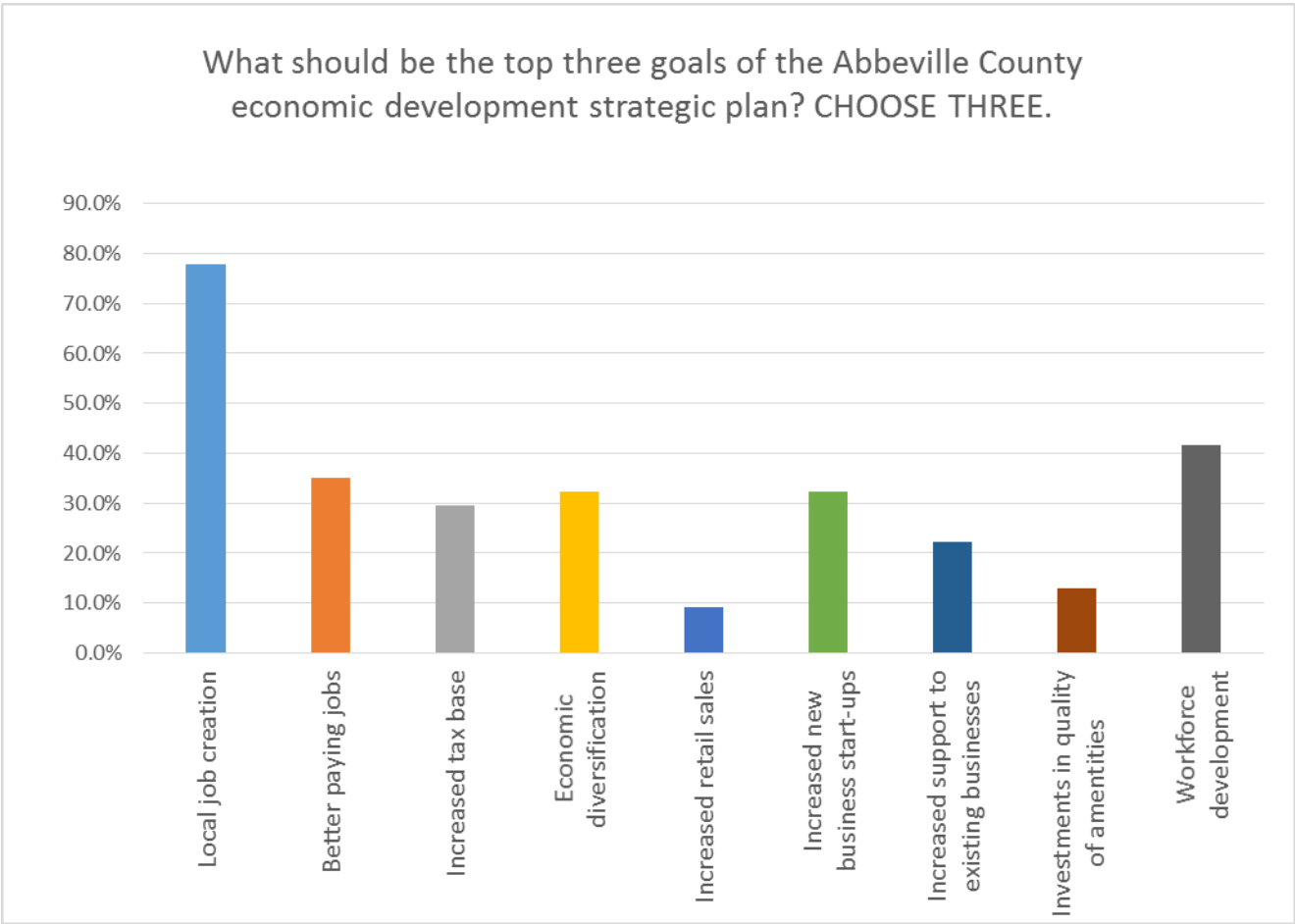
9. **What is the most important investment Abbeville County could make to ensure long-term, sustainable economic growth? CHOOSE ONLY ONE.**
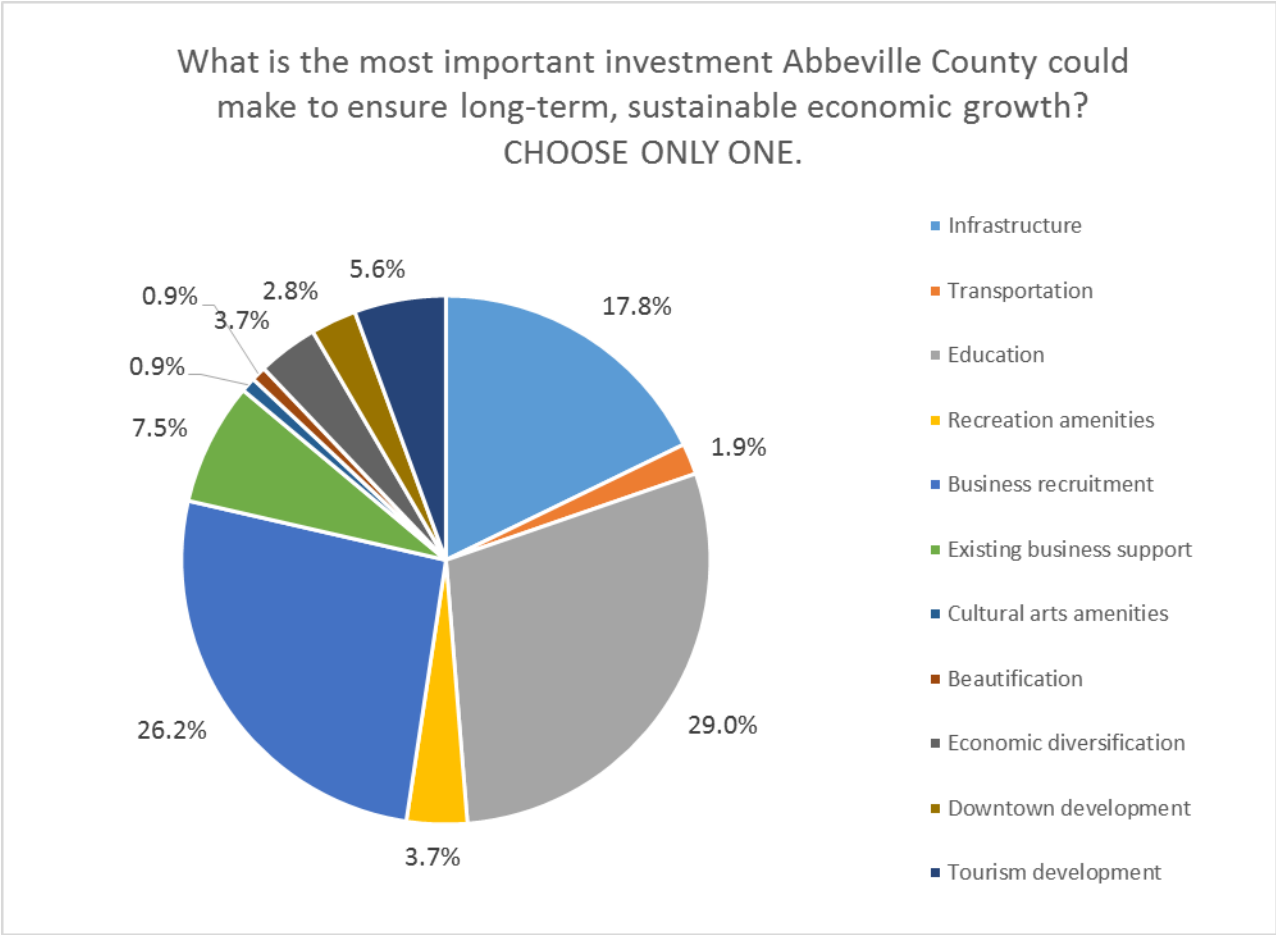
10. What is an outcome you would like to see from the strategic plan?

The comments from this question ranged from county collaboration to better jobs for its citizens. We list several of the most frequent answers given.

- Better paying jobs
- All of the county working together
- Economic diversity
- New county high school
- Developing the tourism economy including recreation related tourism
- Implement the strategic plan

Appendix B: Economic and Demographic Trends

Population

The current population of Abbeville County is 24,932. The largest municipality is Abbeville, with a population of 5,191. The other six municipalities range from 167 residents in Lowndesville to 2,092 in Ware Shoals.

Over the decade from 2000 – 2010, the population of Abbeville and Abbeville County have decreased. The only towns in the county with population growth were Honea Path and Due West, with growth rates below 3% for the ten-year period. These declines differ sharply from the significant growth rates in the Greenville MSA and the State of South Carolina.

	2014
Abbeville County	24,932
Abbeville	5,191
Calhoun Falls	1,912
Donalds	323
Due West	1,120
Honea Path	3,610
Lowndesville	167
Ware Shoals	2,092

Source: U.S. Census

% Change 2000 - 2010

Location	% Change
South Carolina	15.29%
Greenville MSA	13.80%
Abbeville County	-2.87%
Ware Shoals	-8.17%
Lowndesville	-22.89%
Honea Path	2.65%
Due West	3.14%
Donalds	-1.69%
Calhoun Falls	-12.98%
Abbeville	-10.33%
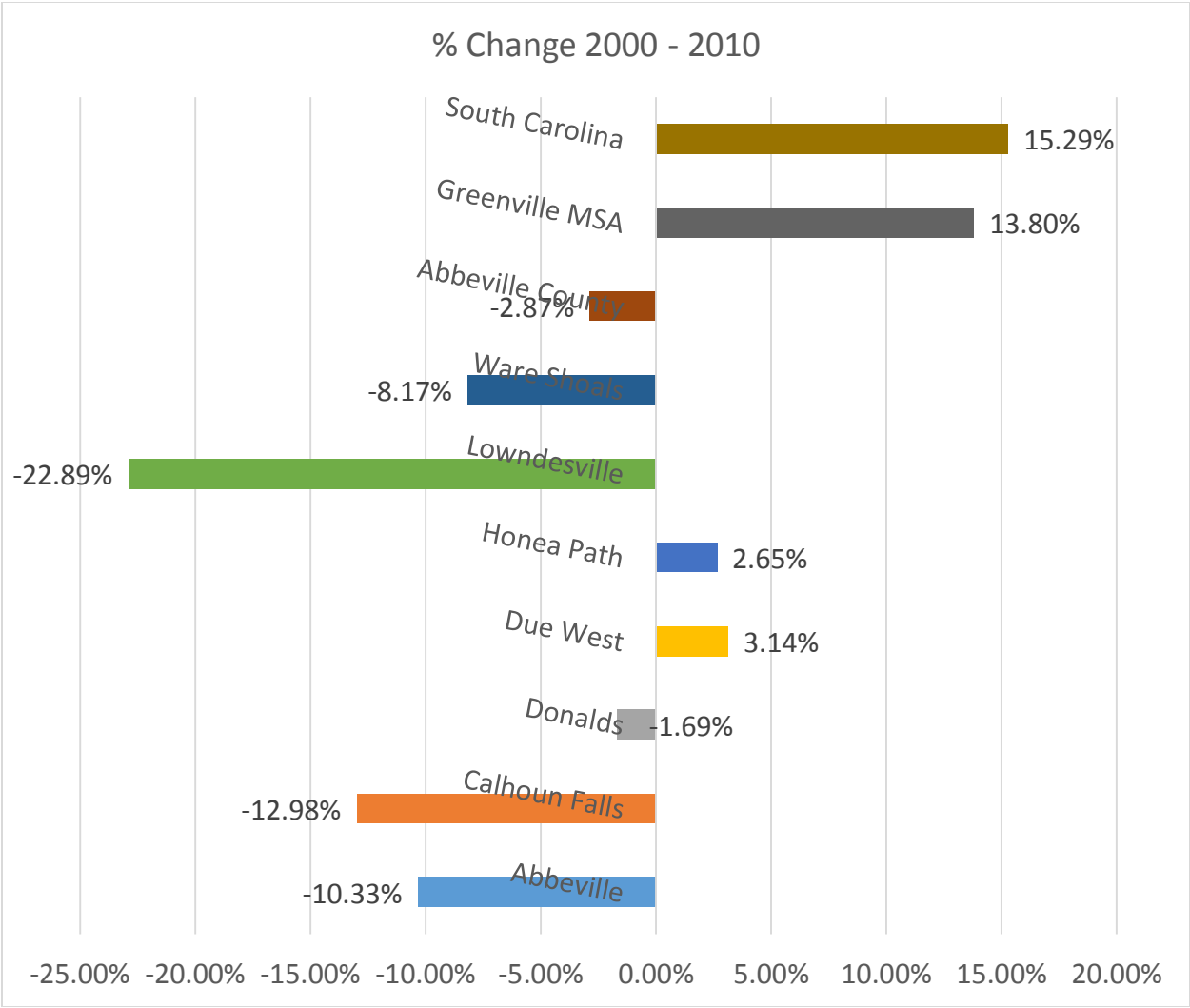
Source: U.S. Census

Age Demographics

The population in Abbeville County trends older than the population in the Greenville MSA and the State of South Carolina. The percentage of the population over age 60 is more than 25% in Abbeville County, compared with only 18.7% in the Greenville MSA. Likewise, the percentage of the population that is young adults, age 25-34, is significantly lower than the MSA and the State.

Population by Age

Age	South Carolina	Greenville MSA	Abbeville County
85 years and over	1.5%	1.6%	1.7%
75 to 84 years	4.2%	4.0%	5.7%
65 to 74 years	8.1%	7.5%	10.4%
60 to 64 years	6.0%	5.6%	7.5%
55 to 59 years	6.6%	6.3%	7.4%
45 to 54 years	14.1%	14.2%	13.8%
35 to 44 years	13.1%	13.4%	12.4%
25 to 34 years	12.8%	12.8%	8.9%
20 to 24 years	7.2%	7.7%	6.8%
15 to 19 years	7.0%	7.4%	7.0%
10 to 14 years	6.4%	6.5%	6.7%
5 to 9 years	6.4%	6.3%	5.8%
Under 5 years	6.5%	6.6%	5.7%
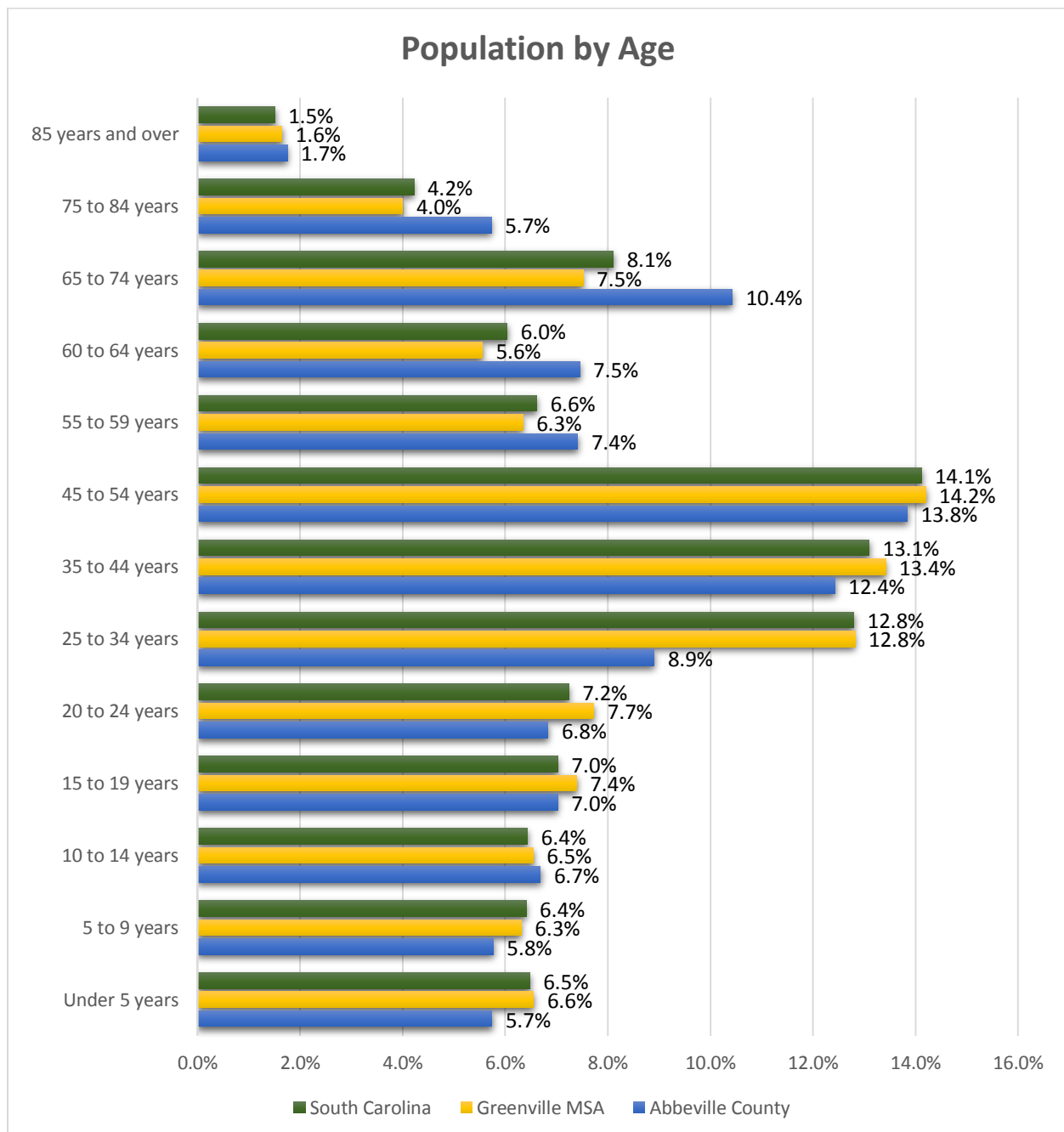
Source: U.S. Census, ACS 2008-2012

Race and Ethnicity Demographics

The race and ethnicity of Abbeville County residents nearly mirrors that of the State of South Carolina as a whole. However, the Greenville MSA has some notable differences. While Abbeville County has very low representation of races other than White and Black, Greenville MSA and South Carolina do have small but significant populations of these races. In Abbeville County, the percentage of the population that is Black is higher than that in the MSA, which the opposite is true for the percentage of population that is White.

2014 Population Ethnicity

Category	South Carolina	Greenville MSA	Abbeville County
Hispanic Origin	4.63%	6.43%	0.55%
Two or More Races	1.62%	1.54%	1.51%
Some Other Race Alone	1.67%	1.00%	0.00%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.09%	0.18%	0.00%
Asian Alone	1.48%	2.08%	0.00%
American Indian Alone	0.80%	0.63%	0.16%
Black Alone	26.54%	15.93%	28.82%
White Alone	63.18%	72.22%	68.95%
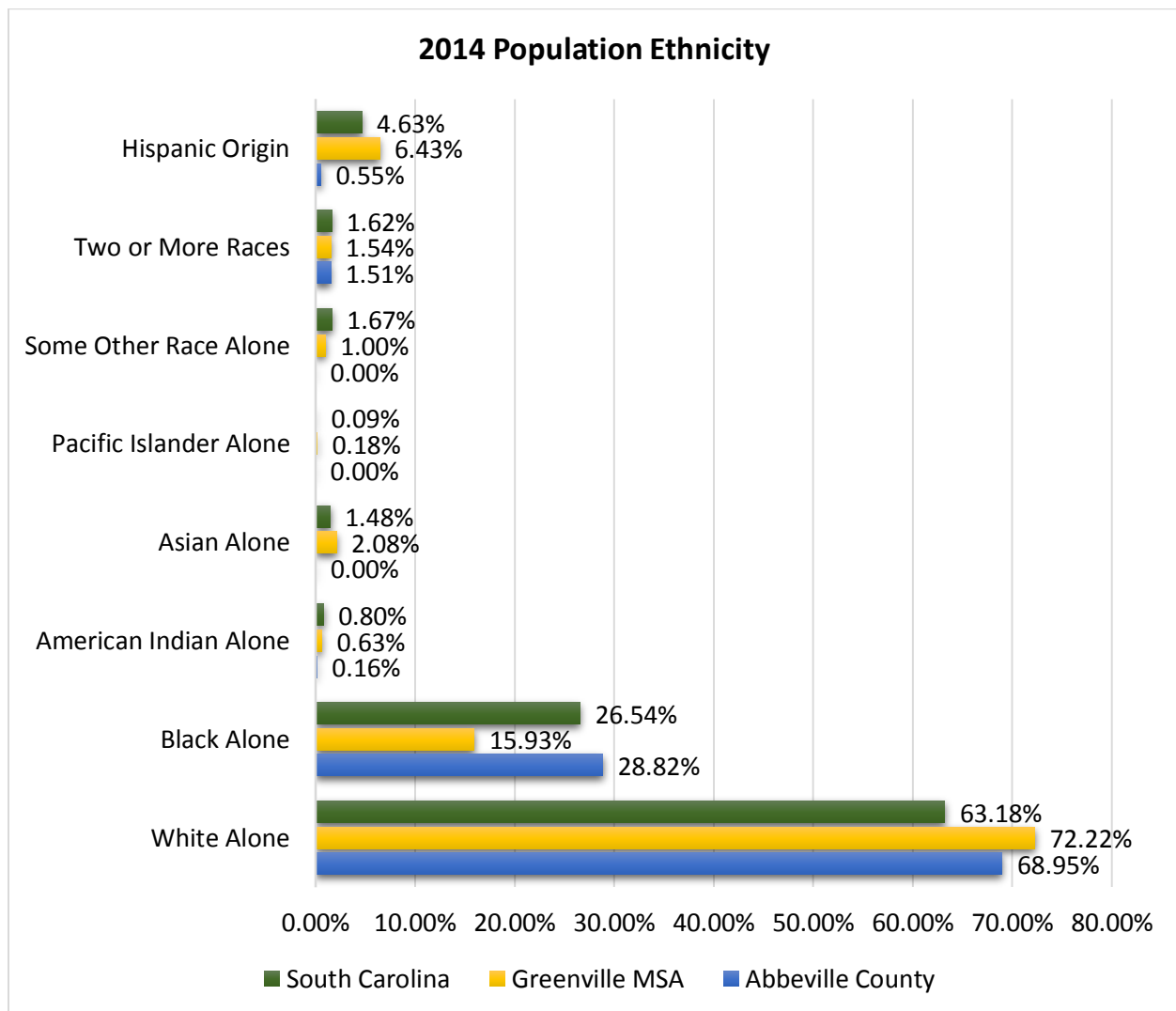
Source: U.S. Census

Educational Attainment

The educational attainment of residents of Abbeville County lags the attainment in the Greenville MSA and the State of South Carolina. This difference is notable in the number of residents without a high school diploma – more than 22% in Abbeville County, but only 15% in the Greenville MSA. Likewise, the percentages in Abbeville County with a bachelor's degree or graduate degree was less than half the rates for the MSA.

2014 Educational Attainment

Category	South Carolina	Greenville MSA	Abbeville County
Graduate or professional degree	9.2%	10.9%	4.0%
Bachelor's degree	16.2%	17.5%	8.3%
Associate's degree	8.7%	8.3%	9.4%
Some college, no degree	21.0%	18.8%	20.3%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	30.0%	28.1%	35.7%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	9.8%	9.9%	14.4%
Less than 9th grade	5.2%	6.4%	7.8%
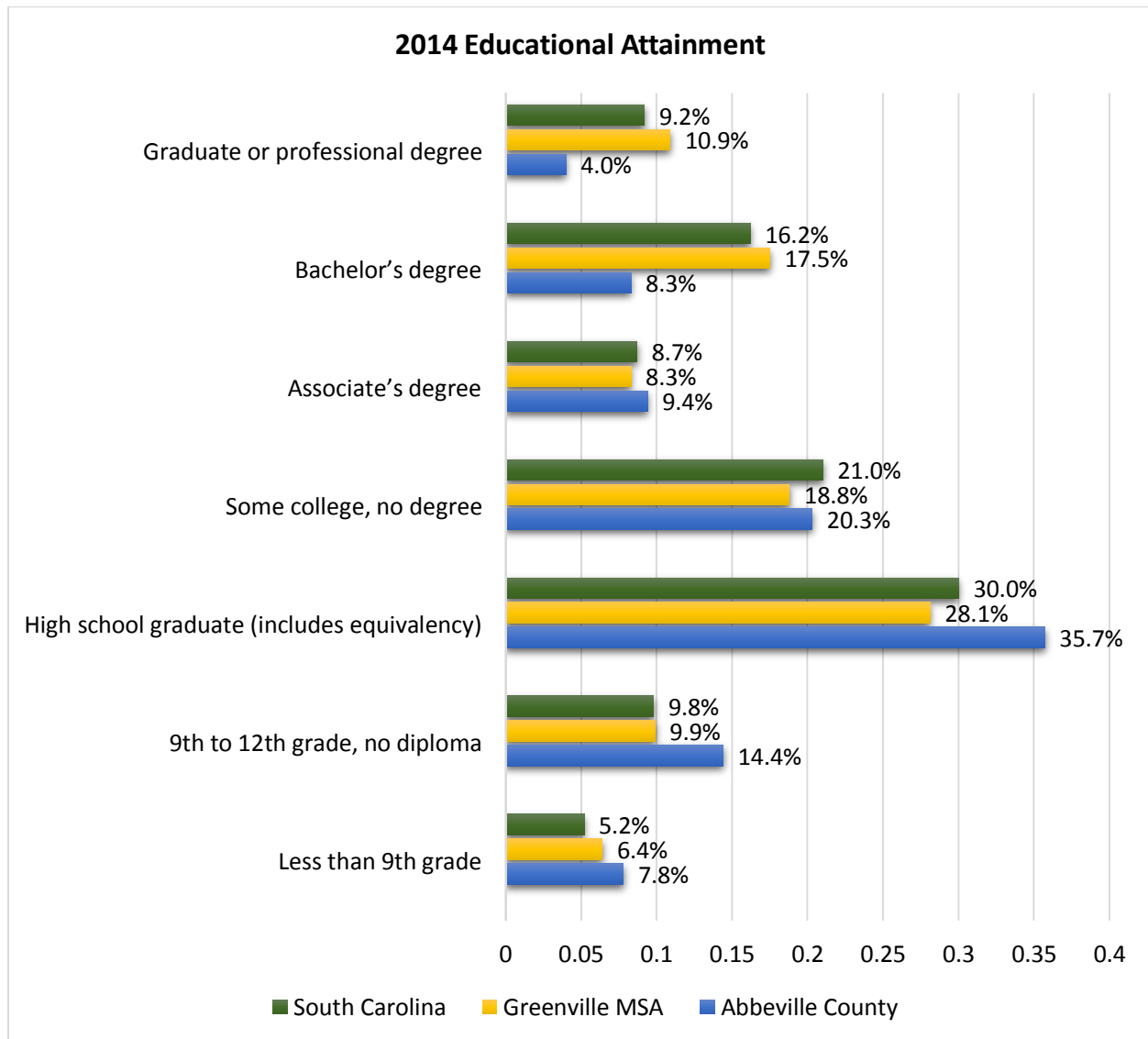
Source: U.S. Census

SAT Scores

The average scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test for Abbeville County students had lagged both South Carolina and the U.S. since 2010. In 2013, however, the average score in Abbeville increased by nearly 100 points, outpacing the State of South Carolina and closing the gap with the U.S. considerably. Since 2013, the score has slightly declined but remains at a much higher level since 2010.

SAT Scores
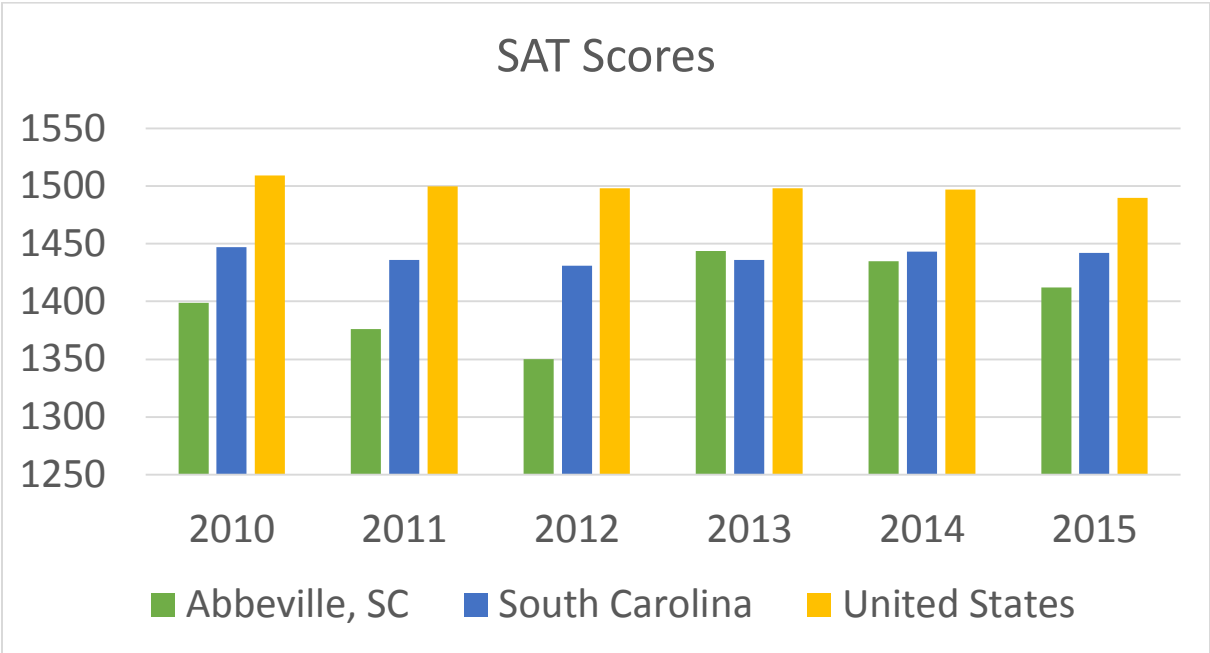
Source: South Carolina Department of Education

Income

Per capita income ($18,303) and median household income ($35,409) levels in Abbeville County lag behind both the Greenville MSA and the state of South Carolina. While the region and the state have comparable pay rates, Abbeville trends lower in both measures.

2014 Income
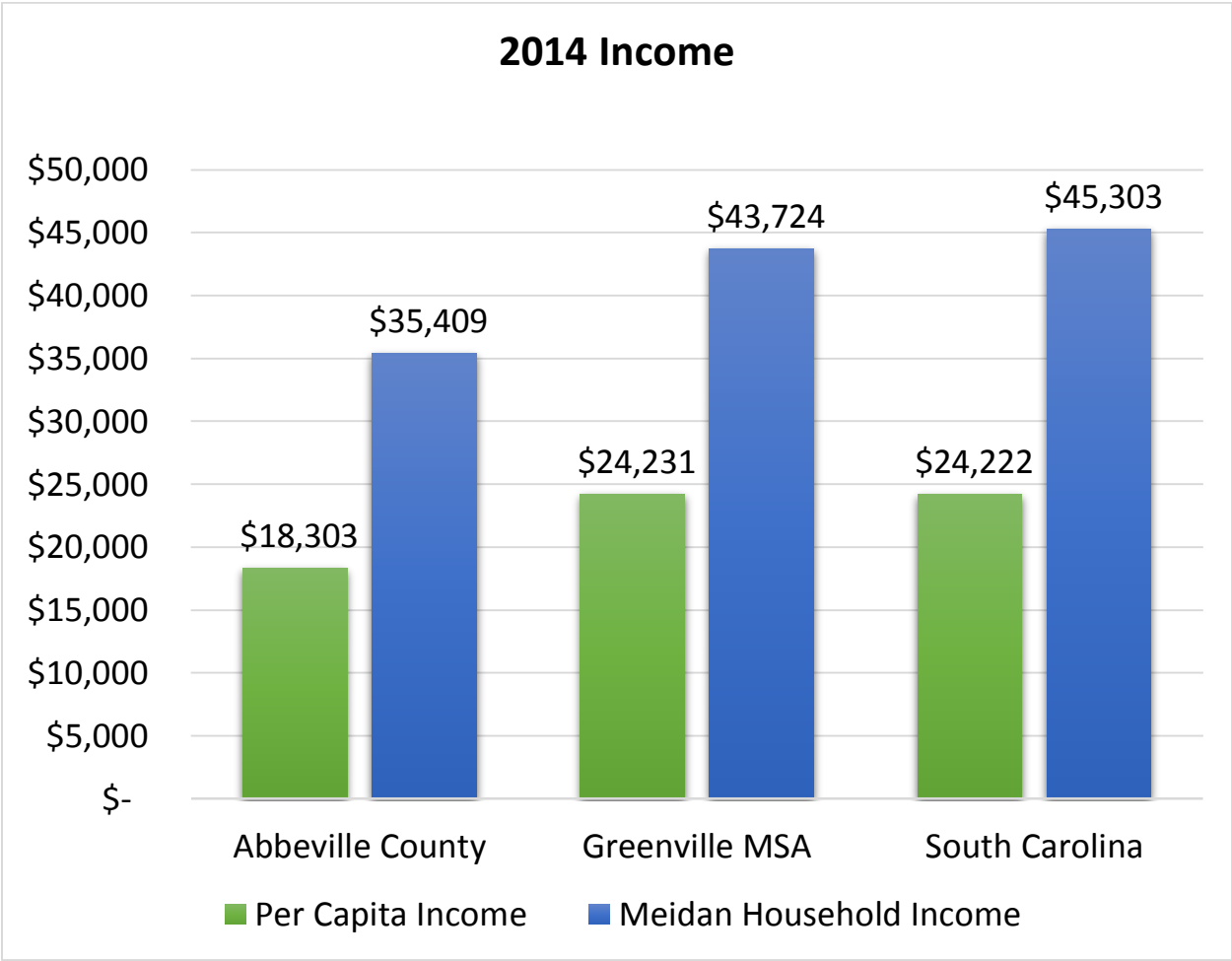
Source: U.S. Census

Poverty

Abbeville County has a higher percentage of people in poverty than neighboring counties except for Greenwood County. Note that the percent in poverty is rising in Abbeville County as it is all counties.
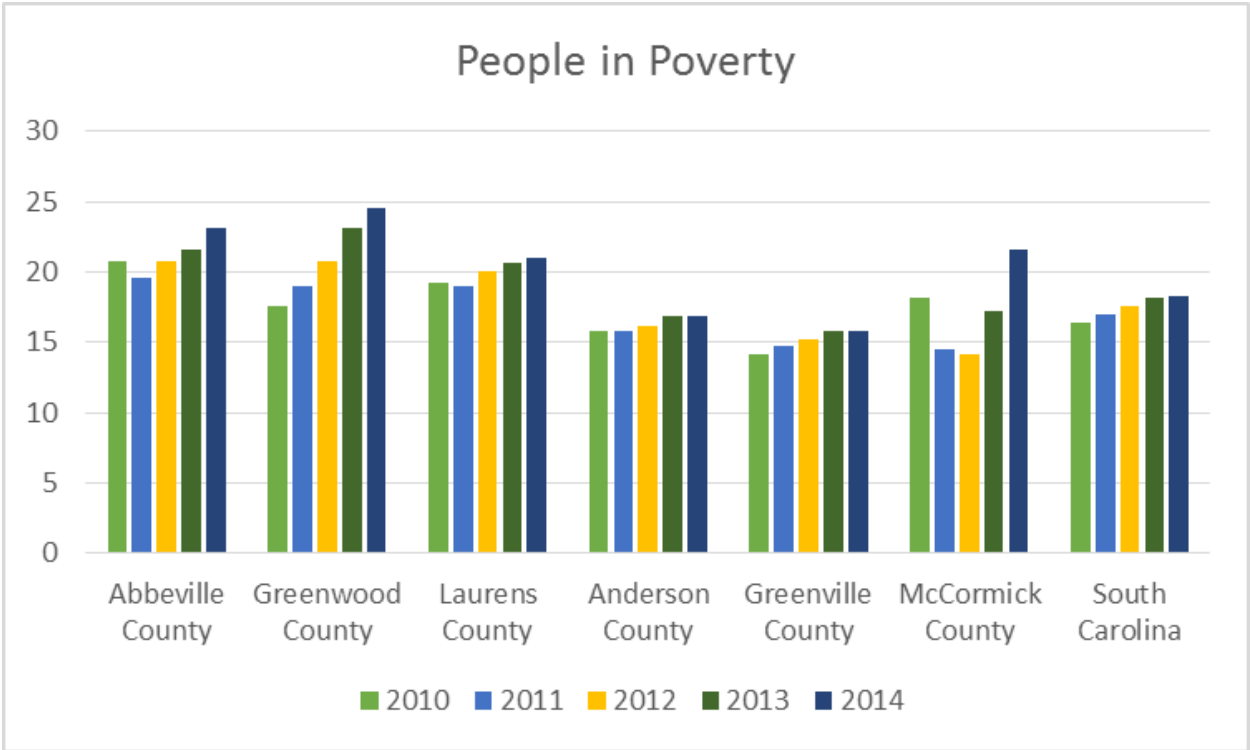
Source: U.S. Census

Home Values

Median home value in Abbeville County ($89,000) lags behind values in the MSA and in the state. While the Greenville MSA has values above the state as a whole, this does not hold true in Abbeville County, where the median value is only 65% of the state's median value.

2014 Median Home Value

A bar chart titled "2014 Median Home Value" with a y-axis ranging from $- to $160,000 in $20,000 increments. The bars show: Abbeville County $89,000, Greenville MSA $142,200, South Carolina $137,600.
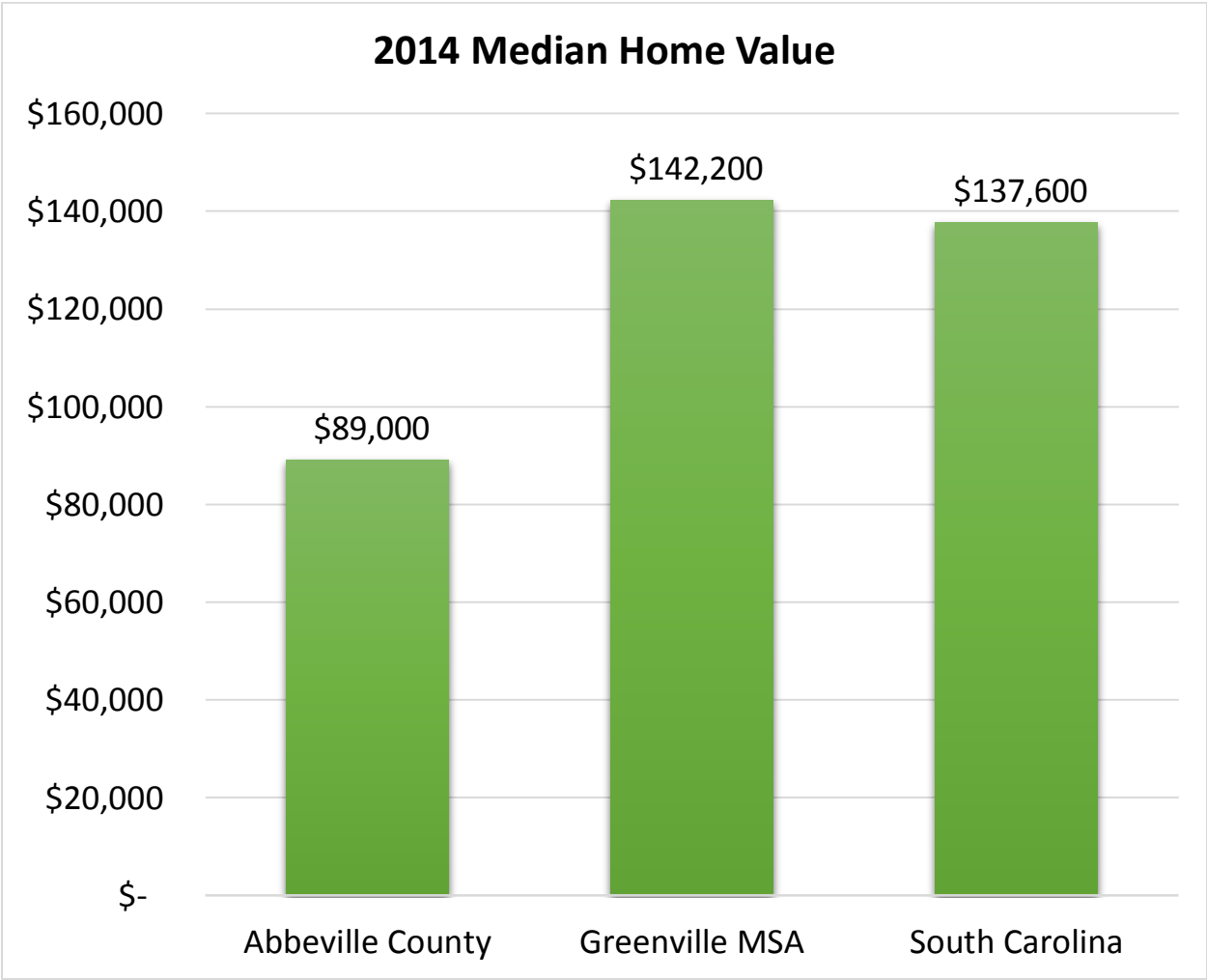
Source: U.S. Census

Labor Force

The labor force in Abbeville County has been relatively flat since 2010. The actual number of residents in the labor market declined by about 500 persons to 2014 and then increased by about 300 through 2015. The total labor force in December 2015 was 10,810. This flatness could reflect the aging of the labor market, with fewer adults replacing the retiring workers in the county. It could also reflect a lack of new working-age residents migrating to the county. The uptick from 2014 to 2015 could signal a reverse of the decline since 2010.

Abbeville County Labor Force

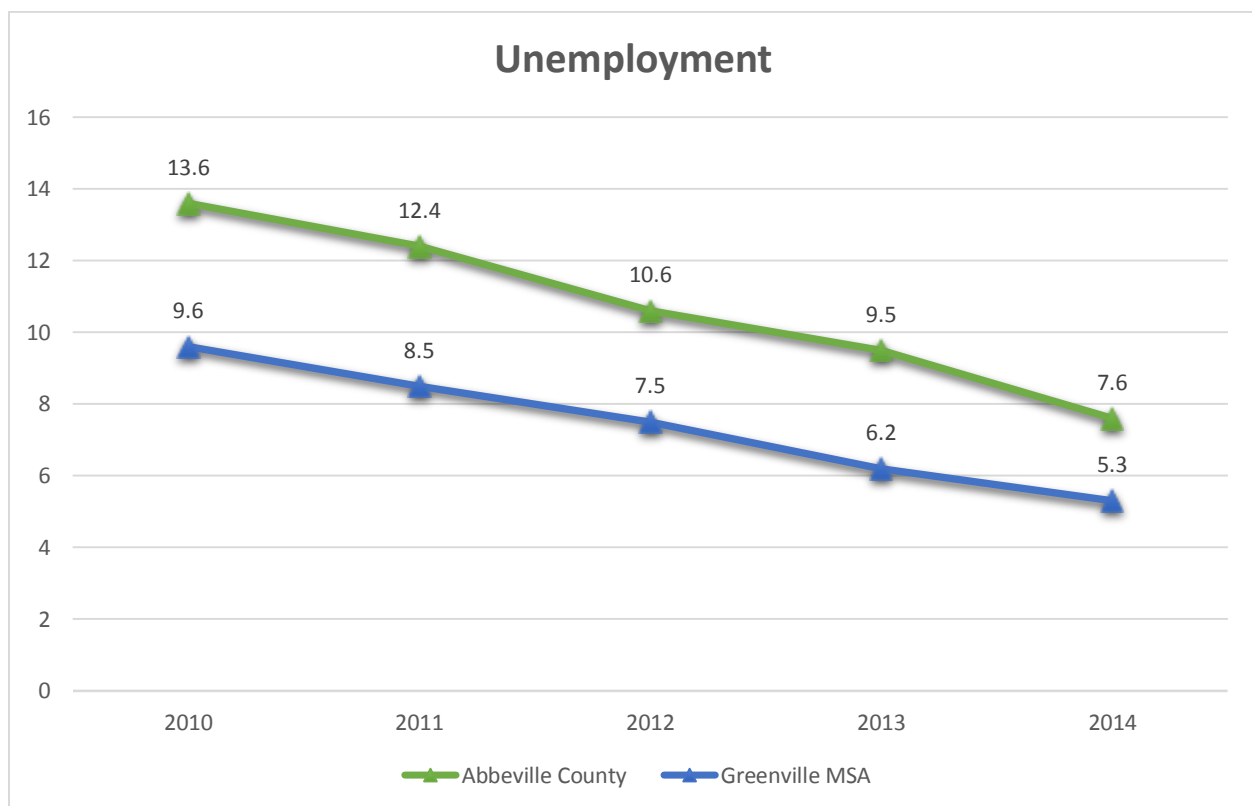|	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
	10,926	10,758	10,641	10,490	10,457
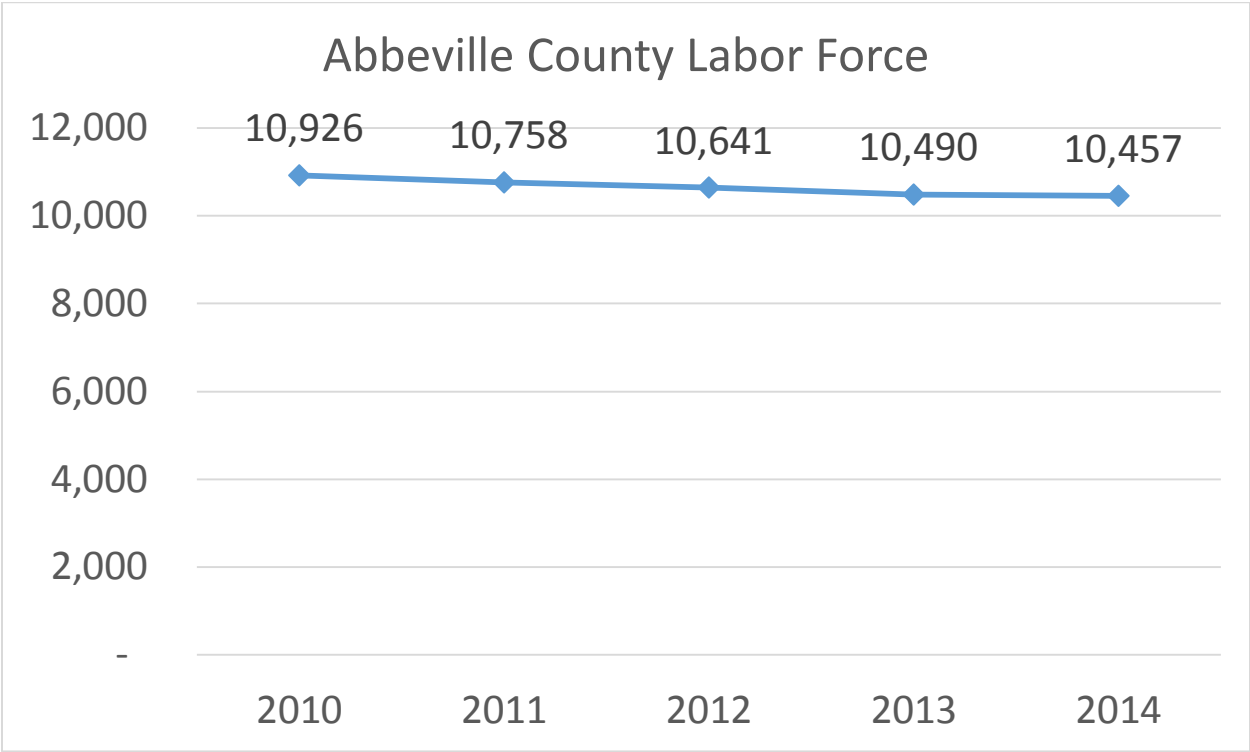
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Unemployment

The gap between the unemployment rate in Abbeville County and the Greenville MSA has been declining over the last five years. The latest data available is a rate of 5.5% for Abbeville County. This rate is less than one point higher than the latest for the MSA – 4.6%, which continues the trend of these two rates coming together. With rates this low, the region is considered to be at full employment.

Important to note is that an unemployment rate for Abbeville County of 5.5% means there are only approximately 600 people available for work. The availability of labor is a concern of existing and new businesses.

Unemployment

Year	Abbeville County	Greenville MSA
2010	13.6	9.6
2011	12.4	8.5
2012	10.6	7.5
2013	9.5	6.2
2014	7.6	5.3

Legend: ▲ Abbeville County ▲ Greenville MSA

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Employment by Industry

With nearly one half of its employment in the "goods producing" sector, Abbeville County is well-positioned to support additional manufacturing employment. These jobs tend to have higher wages and to return more economic activity back into the region. Employment in some sectors is extremely low, which may also be an opportunity to diversify.

2014 Employment by Industry

Industry	Employment
Other Services	99
Liesure and Hospitality	298
Education and Health Services	583
Professional and Business Services	286
Financial Activities	111
Information	80
Trade Transportation and Utilities	592
Manufacturing	1,788
Construction	155
Natural Resources and Mining	28
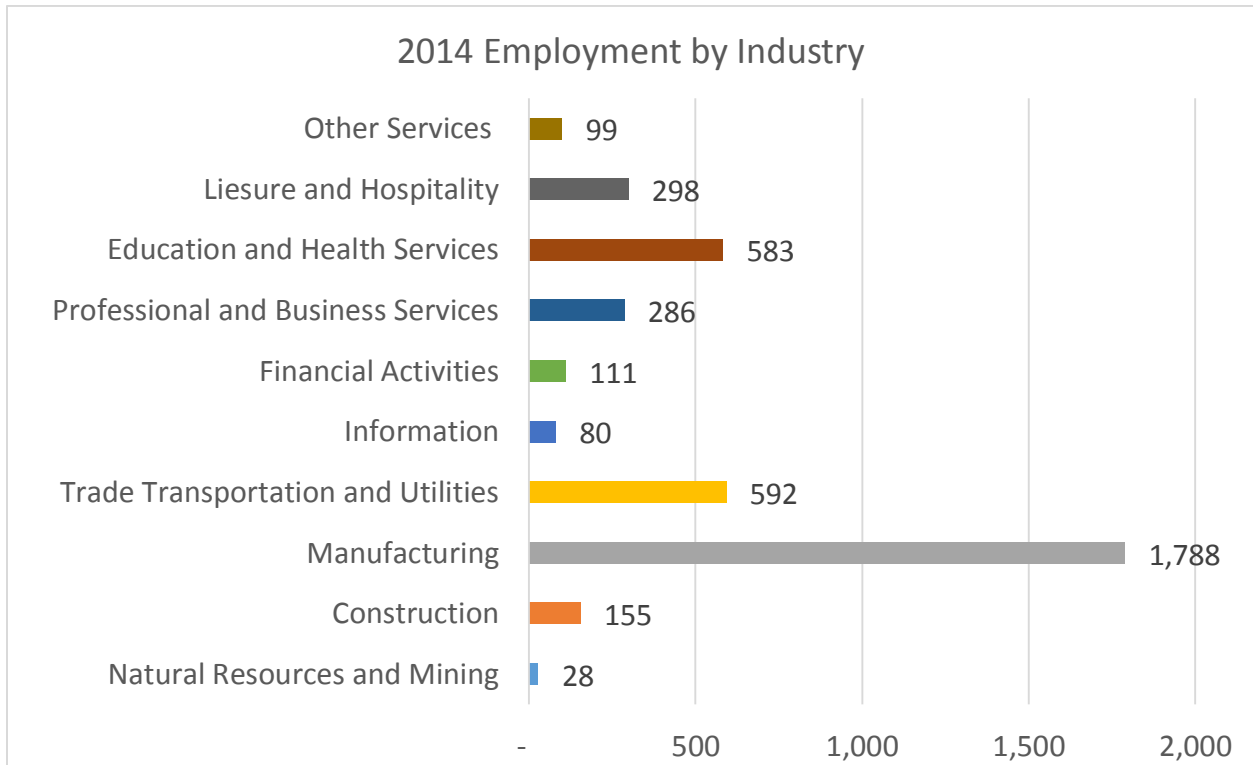
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Wages

Average weekly wage by sector shows a small variance across sectors. "Goods producing" wages, which tend to be among the highest, are higher than average. Leisure and Hospitality wages are the lowest in the county. The current average weekly wage for Abbeville County is $657. The highest wage is in Information ($1,177), followed by Manufacturing ($872).

2015 Average Weekly Wages

Sector	Weekly Wage
Other Services	$419
Liesure and Hospitality	$230
Education and Health Services	$476
Professional and Business Services	$446
Financial Activities	$642
Information	$1,177
Trade Transportation and Utilities	$434
Service Providing	$458
Manufacturing	$872
Construction	$594
Natural Resources and Mining	$579
Goods Producing	$846
Total, Private	$648
Total, All Industries	$657

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

Commuting

The Census gathers some data about commuters. The table below shows information on people living and working in Abbeville County, the labor force. It also shows people working in Abbeville County which includes residents who work locally as well as in-commuters. From this information we can see that out-commuters are younger, less affluent, and more educated.

	People Living and Working in Abbeville County		People Working in Abbeville County	
Total Primary Jobs				
	2014		**2014**	
	Count	**Share**	**Count**	**Share**
Total Primary Jobs	9,547	100.0%	6,539	100.0%
Jobs by Worker Age				
	2014		**2014**	
	Count	**Share**	**Count**	**Share**
Age 29 or younger	2,033	21.3%	1,248	19.1%
Age 30 to 54	5,302	55.5%	3,720	56.9%
Age 55 or older	2,212	23.2%	1,571	24.0%
Jobs by Earnings				
	2014		**2014**	
	Count	**Share**	**Count**	**Share**
$1,250 per month or less	2,176	22.8%	1,251	19.1%
$1,251 to $3,333 per month	4,378	45.9%	2,891	44.2%
More than $3,333 per month	2,993	31.4%	2,397	36.7%
Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector				
	2014		**2014**	
	Count	**Share**	**Count**	**Share**
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	43	0.5%	30	0.5%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	5	0.1%	0	0.0%
Utilities	78	0.8%	45	0.7%
Construction	374	3.9%	180	2.8%
Manufacturing	2,338	24.5%	3,052	46.7%
Wholesale Trade	254	2.7%	82	1.3%
Retail Trade	1,004	10.5%	372	5.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	225	2.4%	31	0.5%
Information	117	1.2%	69	1.1%
Finance and Insurance	219	2.3%	106	1.6%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	70	0.7%	10	0.2%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	231	2.4%	77	1.2%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	68	0.7%	3	0.0%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	647	6.8%	226	3.5%

Educational Services	1,003	10.5%	886	13.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1,331	13.9%	579	8.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	71	0.7%	0	0.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	647	6.8%	273	4.2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	187	2.0%	98	1.5%
Public Administration	635	6.7%	420	6.4%

Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment

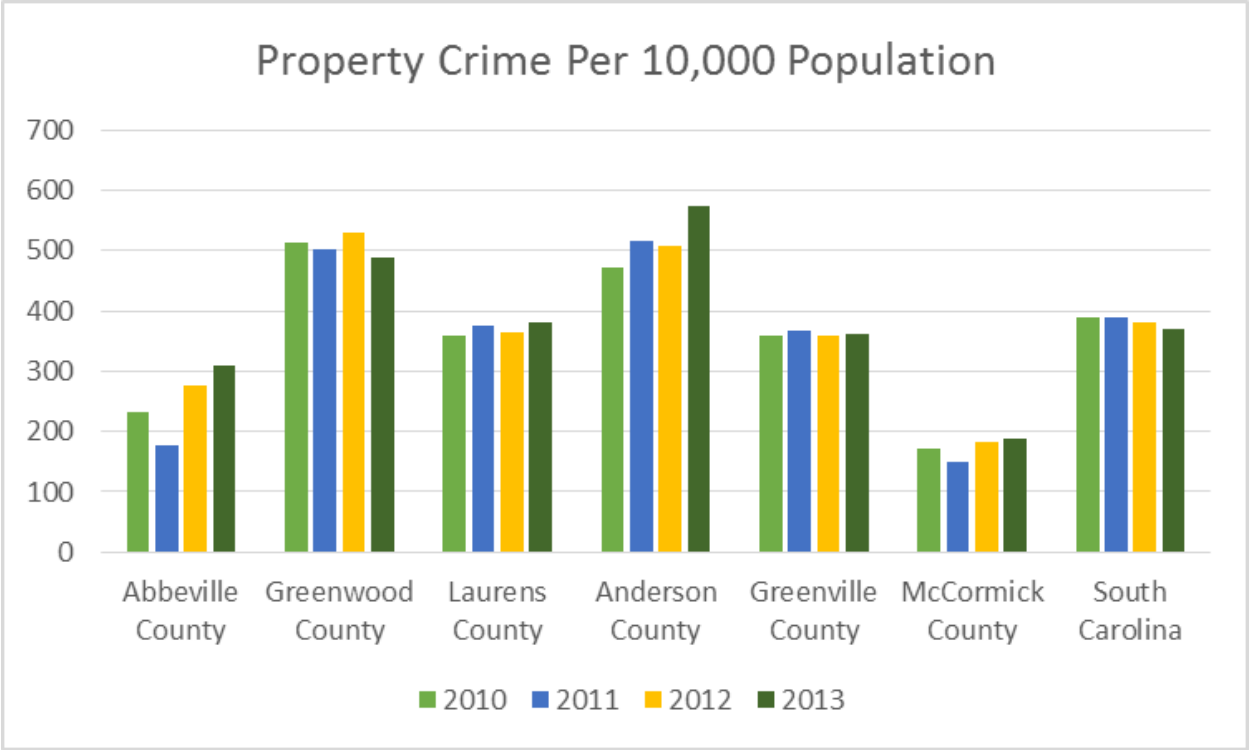|	2014		2014	
	Count	**Share**	**Count**	**Share**
Less than high school	977	10.2%	733	11.2%
High school or equivalent, no college	2,569	26.9%	1,851	28.3%
Some college or Associate degree	2,414	25.3%	1,679	25.7%
Bachelor's degree or advanced degree	1,554	16.3%	1,028	15.7%
Educational attainment not available (workers aged 29 or younger)	2,033	21.3%	1,248	19.1%

Source: Census on the Map

Crime

Crime data was pulled from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division. Abbeville County is a safer place than most neighboring counties, except for McCormick. Violent crime declined in 2013 after slight increases. Property crime rose in 2012 and 2013 after falling in 2011.

Source: South Carolina Law Enforcement Division

Property Crime Per 10,000 Population

Source: South Carolina Law Enforcement Division