

CHAPTER 9

Economic Development

For a century Calhoun County has defied the widely held myth that places and economies must grow or die. The County's population peaked at 18,380 in 1920, fell to 16,220 in 1940, continued down to 14,758 in 1950, and has since remained little changed. However, the county continues to provide modern services to its' residents; recruit high quality, clean manufacturing companies; preserve a strong rural character, lifestyle and social fabric that suits its people well; and support an agricultural economy that ranks in the top five in the state for crop production.

Clearly, Calhoun County has neither grown nor died through the past century. Not all economic sectors have thrived, town centers are no longer the commercial and social hubs they once were, and residents are more dependent on adjacent counties for employment and services, but the county continues to function effectively and maintain a productive economy.

Like most historically rural, agricultural counties in South Carolina's upper coastal plain, Calhoun County faces a number of challenges and opportunities, and is at a critical point in its economic progress. The growth of the Columbia metropolitan area now strongly influences the northern part of the county, as manufacturers, distributors, and home buyers increasingly consider Calhoun County locations with good access to both Columbia and Charleston metro areas via Interstate 26. However, the county's limited water and sewer infrastructure constrains employment growth to very few areas, and housing development is limited to large-lots with septic tanks. Some residents prefer the county's constrained growth over the rapid and often problematic growth they see in some nearby suburban areas. But with limited retail outlets in the county, residents make many purchases at suburban retail hubs in adjacent rapidly-growing counties, draining dollars from Calhoun County's economic purse.

The purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to provide County officials and residents with information that will support choices that will best serve the interest of the County. One goal of this Economic Development chapter of the plan is to enable and encourage responsible economic growth while protecting the rural lifestyles and landscapes and preserving community values and identity.

Previous chapters of the plan provide information about the County's people, housing, history, land use, resources, infrastructure and facilities. The information in those chapters provides guidance for the political choices that will help to determine the path of economic change in the county in the next decades. A second goal should be to enable economic prosperity for all of the County's residents.

Today, the County has a thriving agricultural economy because farmers adapted to the changes in agricultural production and demand, and has a thriving manufacturing sector because the infrastructure to support new industry was developed in the I-26 corridor in Sandy Run. Solar electric power is a new source of economic growth and tax base -- bringing clean energy as well as concerns about changes to rural life and landscape -- that is reliant on low land costs and proximity to high voltage power lines.

The focus of the County's economic development efforts should be to guide and influence economic change to create and support economic opportunity, protect the values and interests of all citizens, and

provide sustainable infrastructure and services to support a high quality of life for the next century. This chapter will suggest strategies to achieve those goals.

Economic Development Organizations and Resources

Calhoun County is a member of the **Central SC Alliance**, a regional economic development organization serving Calhoun, Richland, Lexington, Fairfield, Orangeburg, Clarendon, Kershaw and Newberry counties, as well as the City of Columbia. Central SC provides research, promotion, and industry recruitment for its member governments.

South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce (SCDEW) supports the states labor force and economic development through the unemployment insurance program, publications and research on employment trends and forecasts, and a robust workforce training program (SC Works).

South Carolina Department of Commerce (SCDOC) provides statewide industry recruitment, research, promotes the state in numerous ways, coordinates with all of the regional economic development organizations, and provides grants to support recruitment of industry.

Economic Conditions and Trends

The number of employed Calhoun County residents has remained stable since 2010 at around 6,200, as Table 9-1 shows. The unemployment rate has been in a mostly-steady decline during that period and is now at a near historic low of 3.2 percent, a level which economists say is full employment.

Table 9-1

Calhoun County Employment and Labor Force

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Rate
2023	6,581	6,370	211	3.2%
2022	6,397	6,173	224	3.5%
2021	6,394	6,109	285	4.5%
2020	6,351	5,971	380	6.0%
2019	6,414	6,190	224	3.5%
2018	6,378	6,110	268	4.2%
2017	6,597	6,259	338	5.1%
2016	6,878	6,462	416	6.0%
2015	6,887	6,401	486	7.1%
2014	6,880	6,343	537	7.8%
2013	6,948	6,299	649	9.3%
2012	6,958	6,195	763	11.0%
2011	7,123	6,252	871	12.2%
2010	7,173	6,303	870	12.1%
Average	6,711	6,246	466	6.8%

Source: SC Department of Employment and Workforce

The low unemployment rate is a strong economic indicator, but the explanation for the decline in unemployment rate while total employment remains stable points to a long-term economic weakness: Calhoun County's labor force has shrunk by more than eight percent since 2010. As discussed in the Population chapter of this plan, the shrinking labor force is the result of flat population growth and an aging population. Generally, Calhoun County is not retaining younger residents, who gravitate toward more developed counties to find work and leisure activity, and often eventually move to those counties to start families and build their lives. The labor force has stabilized since 2017, but should remain a concern for county leaders.

While Table 9-1 focuses on labor force participation and employment status of Calhoun County residents, Table 9-2 focuses on the number of jobs that are located within Calhoun County. While over 6,000 county residents are employed, businesses in the county provide fewer than 4,000 jobs, a significant imbalance. This imbalance is part, but not all of the reason most county residents commute to jobs outside of the county, as discussed below.

Table 9-2
Jobs in Calhoun County by Industry Sector

Industry Sector	2015	2023	Change	Percent Change
Accommodations and Food Services	111	104	(7)	-6.3%
Admin, Support and Waste Management	115	192	77	67.0%
Agriculture Forestry Fishing and Hunting	191	237	46	24.1%
Construction	416	412	(4)	-1.0%
Finance and Insurance	33	36	3	9.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	263	152	(111)	-42.2%
Information	na	34	na	na
Manufacturing	1,095	1,503	408	37.3%
Other Services except Public Administration	69	78	9	13.0%
Professional Scientific and Technical Svcs	61	84	23	37.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12	24	12	100.0%
Retail Trade	241	246	5	2.1%
Transportation and Warehousing	216	573	357	165.3%
Utilities	75	96	21	28.0%
Wholesale Trade	130	59	(71)	-54.6%
Total	3,028	3,830	802	26.5%

Source: SC Department of Employment and Workforce,
2023 Q1 and 2015 Q1 Employment by Industry

Table 9-2 is based on data from the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, and shows the change in number of private sector jobs in the county from 2015 to 2023 by industry sector. Calhoun County added 802 jobs during the past eight years, a 26.5 percent increase, and now has 3,830 private sector jobs. Nearly all of the additional jobs have come from growth in the Manufacturing sector and the Transportation and Warehousing sector. This is a good indicator that the county's economic development strategy has been achieving positive results.

Table 9-3 is based on data from County Business Patterns (CBP), a publication of the U.S. Census Bureau, and presents employment at Calhoun County businesses in 2000, 2010 and 2020. Data from CBP is based on sample data, whereas SCDEW data is based on quarterly reports required from all covered employers, so the numbers will not match precisely. Minor differences in definitions of industry sectors between the two reports exist as well. Data differences aside, the positive growth in jobs within the county is consistent between the two sources, and the CBP data shows a 66 percent growth in jobs since 2000.

Table 9-3
Calhoun County Jobs, 2000 to 2020

Industry Sector	2000	2010	2020	Change [2]	Percent Change [2]
Agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing	na [1]	10	77	67	670%
Utilities	na	50	66	16	32%
Construction	83	547	475	392	472%
Manufacturing	776	950	1,456	680	88%
Wholesale trade	173	174	216	43	25%
Retail trade	204	259	225	21	10%
Transportation and warehousing	61	50	97	36	59%
Finance and insurance	46	72	32	(14)	-30%
Real estate	na	20	15	(5)	-25%
Professional services	34	27	14	(20)	-59%
Administrative services	na	200	215	15	8%
Health care and social assistance	327	350	353	26	8%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	na	20	4	(16)	-80%
Accommodation and food services	na	79	101	22	28%
Other services	85	118	110	25	29%
Total	2,088	3,032	3,475	1,387	66%

NOTES:

[1] "na" indicates data was not published due to the small number of firms and privacy protections

[2] where 2000 data is not available, calculated using 2010 and 2020 data

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, 2000, 2010 and 2020

Table 9-4 shows the commuting patterns of employed Calhoun residents. While over 6,300 Calhoun residents are employed, only 27 percent worked in Calhoun County in 2020, a slight decline from 2010. Orangeburg County is the destination of 34 percent of Calhoun's workforce, while 19 percent commute to Richland County and 17 percent to Lexington. The decline in the share of county workforce remaining within the county may indicate a need for more workforce training to help residents obtain the new jobs being recruited to the county in manufacturing, warehousing and transportation, and other growing sectors with higher skill demands.

Table 9-4
Commuting Patterns of Calhoun County Residents

Workplace County	2010 Workers	2020 Workers	Percent 2010	Percent 2020	Percent Change
Calhoun County	2,031	1,747	32%	27%	-14%
Lexington County	887	1,091	14%	17%	23%
Orangeburg County	1,759	2,187	27%	34%	24%
Richland County	1,410	1,267	22%	19%	-10%
All other counties	312	220	5%	3%	-29%
Total	6,399	6,512	100%	100%	

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Residence County to Workplace
County Commuting Flows, 5-year estimates, 2006 to 2010 and 2016 to 2020

Table 9-5 shows the change in total private sector payroll in the county from 2000 to 2020, in real dollars and in inflation-adjusted dollars. While jobs located in the county grew by 66 percent during this period, total payroll increased 122 percent in inflation-adjusted terms, which reflects growth in manufacturing and other skilled, higher-wage jobs in the county. The growth in payroll may be the strongest economic indicator for Calhoun County, and validates the success of infrastructure investments and industry recruitment by the county.

Table 9-5
Calhoun County Total Payroll

Year	Reported Payroll	Inflation Adjusted Payroll	Percent Change vs. 2000
2000	44,904,000	68,636,870	na
2010	96,782,000	118,035,040	72%
2020	152,415,000	152,415,000	122%

Sources: County Business Patterns, 2000, 2010 and 2020
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index

The overall economic trends in the county are quite positive, with strong growth in jobs in the county, gains in manufacturing and other higher-skill industry sectors, impressive growth in total payroll of county businesses, and low unemployment. Areas of concern are the shrinking workforce in the county and the increase in out-of-county commuting by the county's workforce, which has occurred in spite of significant growth in jobs within the county since 2010.

Economic Development Strategies

Based on existing conditions, trends, and public input received during development of other sections of this plan, three economic development focus areas are suggested as the most promising for the County: continued manufacturing industry recruitment; agriculture and agribusiness development; and tourism, retail, and local economic development. These three economic focus areas build on existing economic strengths, opportunities and assets; mesh well with responsible growth management strategies; and will allow the county to maximize limited capital resources with a focused infrastructure investment strategy.

Manufacturing Industry Recruitment

Calhoun County relies on Central SC Alliance for industry recruitment, promotion and strategies. The county's collaboration with Central SC has produced positive results; this plan does not propose to adjust the existing strategy for manufacturing industry recruitment, and endorses the current direction and strategy for manufacturing recruitment in the county that is being implemented.

The manufacturing industries recruited through the County's collaboration with SC Department of Commerce and Central SC Alliance are listed in Table 9-6. Since 2012, these newly recruited and expanding industries have invested more than \$200 million in Calhoun County and created more than 600 jobs.

Table 9-6
SC Department of Commerce Recruitment History

Company	Investment (\$)	Jobs	SCDOC Grants Awarded (\$)	Year
Blanchard Machinery Co.	46,000,000	30	-	2023
Zeus Industrial Products, Inc.	76,000,000	350	1,000,000	2018
Lineage Logistics	6,000,000	30	-	2016
Cypress Creek Renewables, LLC	34,000,000	0	-	2015
Hickory Springs Bottling, Inc.	16,300,000	37	200,000	2015
The Fitts Company, Inc.	4,200,000	105	-	2015
Wire Mesh Corporation	13,900,000	50	60,000	2015
Lineage Logistics	4,500,000	10	-	2012
Starbucks Roasting Plant	7,000,000	6	-	2012
Total	207,900,000	618	1,260,000	

Source: SC Department of Commerce, Announced Projects

Central SC, in cooperation and consultation with the SC Department of Commerce, has identified ten Industry sectors for focused recruiting efforts in the region and in Calhoun County. These are listed below in Table 9-7, which includes examples of existing industries in the county, an assessment of the suitability and potential for recruitment of new industries in each sector, and examples of business types that may be good targets for continuing recruitment efforts.

Table 9-7
Target Industry Sectors

Industry Sector	Existing Businesses in or near Calhoun County	Suitability for Calhoun County	Potential Business Types
Advanced Manufacturing and Assembly	The Fitts Company	Moderate	Assembly
Advanced Materials and Plastics	Zeus	High	Plastic manufacturing
Aerospace and Aviation	Boeing (Charleston County)	Low	Aviation Suppliers
Automotive and Electric Vehicles	Scout Motors (Richland County), Volvo Cars (Berkeley County)	Moderate	Automotive Suppliers
Entrepreneurship and Start Ups		Low	Retail, hospitality, tourism
Food and Beverage	Devro, Starbucks, Hickory Springs, Golden Kernel	High	Brewery, nut processing
Information Technology and Office		Low	Data centers
Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology	Nephron Pharmaceutical (Richland County)	Moderate	Pharmaceuticals
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	Crane Transport, R&J Trucking, TMC Transportation, Amazon Fulfillment Center (Lexington County), Lineage Logistics	High (in industrial areas near I-26)	Logistics
Wood and Paper	Cameron Lumber	High	Custom furniture, cabinets

Source: Central SC Alliance

Agriculture and Agribusiness Development

Calhoun County has a large and thriving agricultural sector, ranking fifth in crop production among South Carolina counties, and beef cattle and chickens are also a significant component of the county's agricultural economy.

Agribusinesses in the county include Southland Wildlife Seed, High Cotton Greenhouses, Carolina Peanut, Low Falls Wholesale Nursery, Helena Agri-Enterprises, and Golden Kernel Pecan Company. Each of these businesses produces a value-added product as opposed to a commodity product. The strength of the county's agricultural commodity production can be leveraged to attract additional agribusinesses and new value-added production.

Working with farmers and agribusiness owners to expand and diversify agriculture production and bring additional agribusinesses to the county builds on one of the county's strengths. Golden Kernel Pecan provides a good example of the benefits of producing finished, ready-to-consume products instead of or in addition to commodity products. The county should encourage more local

production and retail sales of value-added agricultural products, including finished food products, seed, and agricultural equipment. An ad hoc advisory group of farmers and agribusiness owners might help identify new opportunities and reveal ways the county can attract more business, support existing operations, and encourage and assist expansion of existing business.

Blanchard Machinery – which supplies and supports machinery for the construction, mining, agricultural and forestry industries -- this year announced an expansion and relocation of some of its' parts and service operations to Sandy Run Industrial Park. Additional focus on recruiting compatible agricultural machinery businesses would be a good strategy and builds on existing industry presence.



An example of a diversified farm and agribusiness operation with produce market, café and farm tours in Spartanburg County, Cooley Farms and Strawberry Hill on SC Highway 11 near Chesnee.

Tourism, Hospitality and Retail Development

Calhoun County's tourism, hospitality and retail sectors of the local economy are underdeveloped. The county has no hotels -- although an early 20th century hotel building still stands in St. Matthews -- and few restaurants and retail stores. For a short time in 2018, the county had no full-service grocery store after the former BiLo store closed in St. Matthews. While a new grocery store has opened in the same space, for a short period in 2018 county residents were reminded how important the local retail economy is to quality of life and convenience.

The limited retail and hospitality presence in the county is an inconvenience for many residents -- especially those whose age, income or disability makes travel to nearby cities burdensome -- but it also drains potential tax base and entry-level jobs from the county and transfers those benefits to adjacent cities and counties with more retail opportunities. Stores, restaurants and hotels are often where young people find their first jobs, and the absence of these jobs magnifies the problem of youth unemployment and underemployment in the county.

With little or no population growth, Calhoun County will not soon develop a robust retail and hospitality economy. However, it is important to strengthen and support the existing retail and restaurant businesses in the county, and to improve the business climate for new retail and restaurant businesses.

The most immediate way to support existing businesses is to attract more new residents to the county, as new residents will become new customers for existing businesses.

A longer-term strategy to build the customer base is to promote tourism and capture a larger share of non-resident spending. To do this, the county can develop and promote tourism on three fronts: ecotourism, heritage tourism, and agritourism. All three of these tourism subsectors are experiencing substantial growth, and existing resources in the county support these tourism subsectors.

Agritourism

Agritourism generates nearly a billion dollars in annual revenue in the US and is expected to grow by more than 10 percent in next 5 years. This type of tourism invites visitors to farms, ranches, and other agricultural business to experience rural lifestyles.

Several stables and equestrian training facilities exist in the county, with the largest and most significant being the Webb Carroll Training Center east of St. Matthews. Economic potential of equestrian facilities and equestrian-based tourism is well illustrated in Aiken and Camden, where horse training and racing is an important element of the local economy.

Tours and visits to agricultural processing facilities can support this sector. Golden Kernel Pecan Company in Cameron is an example of an existing business in the agritourism sector, as a destination retailer. Other large agricultural processing operations in the county can support this sector by developing and offering tours of farms and facilities.

While prior efforts to develop a weekly farmers market have not been successful, South Carolina Certified Roadside Markets, a program of the SC Department of Agriculture, offers a way to promote local agricultural retailers. Calhoun Country Market on Bridge Street in St. Matthews is an excellent example of the benefits of growing this type of small business. To realize the potential that these businesses have, one need only click on the business name in Google Maps and read the reviews of

motorcyclists, bicyclists, and automobile tourists who discovered the business during the course of a ride in the countryside.

Some existing farmers in the county have reported strong success with “farm-and-breakfast” business, with overnight guests experiencing life on a working farm. This type of short-term rental enterprise can provide good supplemental income to local farmers and diversify the agricultural economy, while also bringing potential customers to other businesses. Taking this concept a step farther, “farm-to-table” dinners could attract more interest and attention to the agricultural resources and heritage of the county.

Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a tourism sector focused on supporting conservation, sustainability and protection of special natural areas. Currently generating \$250 million in annual revenue in the US, ecotourism is predicted to more than double in next 10 years.

Congaree National Park – the only National Park in South Carolina – is a half-hour drive from St. Matthews and offers great opportunity to generate tourism business in Calhoun County. The park attracts over 200,000 visitors per year, but currently has almost no impact on the economy in Calhoun County. Efforts as simple as providing a tourist brochure at the park visitor center, highlighting business and other tourism destinations in the county, would help begin to gain more economic benefit for the county and local businesses.

Congaree Bluffs Heritage Preserve is another resource that should be promoted as part of the county’s ecotourism opportunities, offering hiking and access to the Congaree River. Collaboration with SCDNR to improve river access at Congaree Bluffs could help promote kayaking and canoeing on the Congaree, which currently is difficult due to the lack of public access between Cayce and the US 601 bridge, which in turn brings customers to local restaurants, retailers, and could support expansion of existing outdoor outfitters like Sandy Run Outdoors.

The Purple Martin Festival is an existing event that can support ecotourism, and should continue to be developed and improved to attract more visitors. Promotion of bird watching is a natural connection with the festival, and coordination with National Audubon Society to develop birding tours on Audubon’s properties in the county in conjunction with the festival could attract additional interest in the festival.

Heritage Tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.” Studies show that a high percentage of travelers visit cultural and historic sites and activities while traveling, and those that do stay longer, spend more, and travel more often. Heritage tourism creates jobs and business opportunities, helps protect and support cultural and historic resources, and improves the quality of life for local residents.

Calhoun County’s resources to support heritage tourism include historic homes in St. Matthews, several National Register listed plantations around the county, Fort Motte, Lone Star, the historic County Courthouse, a number of historic churches, and a long list of historic markers in the county.

A strategy to promote heritage tourism should include developing a self-guided driving tour of the county's historic resources and promoting this through the Calhoun County Museum and the SC Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. The county can also develop and install wayfinding signs that guide visitors to all of the important tourism related sites in the county; such signs must be coordinated with and approved by SCDOT, but wayfinding sign programs are a low-cost and very effective way to boost tourism and to improve the overall image of the county in the mind of residents and visitors.

An additional way to promote and celebrate the history and the culture of the county is through public art, which typically includes sculptures by local artists in small parks or incorporated into the streetscape in business districts, and murals on blank sidewalls of downtown buildings.

Investment Strategies

Four areas are most important for Calhoun County officials to focus on to promote a stronger economy: Infrastructure Development, Workforce Development and Retention, Entrepreneurship and Business Start-Ups, and Quality of Life Improvements.

Infrastructure Development

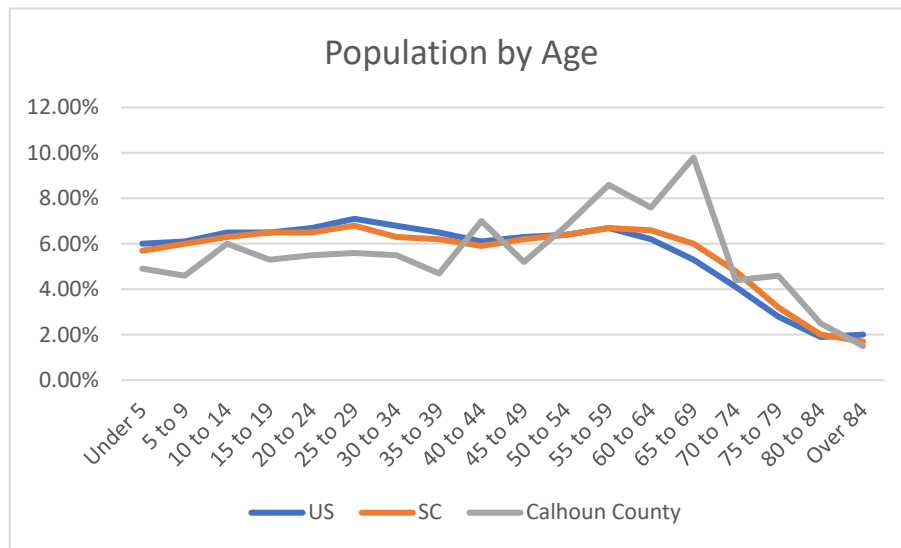
Sufficient water and sewer infrastructure is a critical element for continued success of industry recruitment in the county, and also requires substantial investment of scarce capital resources. The county will need to continue to work with its' economic development partners, legislative delegation, and federal agencies to pursue infrastructure funding.

Good highway access also is important, but SCDOT's investment in Interstate 26 widening and interchange improvements will largely ensure good long-term transportation access to the areas that are most attractive for development. With few or no needs for widened highways, Calhoun should focus on maintenance of the highway system, minor improvements in higher-traffic areas, and quality of life improvements that will foster and support local economic development efforts, tourism, and revitalization of town centers and commercial areas.

The final chapter of this plan will identify focused geographic areas where infrastructure investments should be most cost-effective and have the greatest potential to advance the county's economic development goals.

Workforce Development and Retention

A shrinking labor force, discussed above, is a challenging trend to manage for Calhoun County. The most immediate and effective means to address this issue is to focus more effort and resources on building the skills and productivity of the existing labor force, which is most easily accomplished before individuals enter the workforce: while they are in school. Calhoun County Public Schools has a good model in place for giving students opportunity to earn college credit at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College (OCTC) while still in high school, and some students now leave high school with an associates degree. Working with OCTC to further expand convenient access to technical education, with a goal of offering satellite classes in St. Matthews, may be the most promising way to develop a more productive workforce.



A second challenge is the under-supply of young workers from the county. Compared to the statewide and national population age distribution, Calhoun County has a pronounced drop in the percentage of residents between 20 and 40, as discussed above and illustrated at left. Contributing factors are the limited job

opportunities for young workers in the county, combined with a mismatch between younger workers’ skills and the manufacturing jobs that are being recruited to the county. This may also be contributing to the decline in the percentage of workers who both live and work in Calhoun. Again, a focus on training for young workers and students can best address workforce retention in the county.

Entrepreneurship and Business Start Ups

Access to capital is a major barrier to new business start-ups, particularly for minorities and women. The county should collaborate with LSCOG to identify and pursue CDBG funds, private sector resources, and other federal and state programs to develop resources to assist new businesses. Small business start ups are a key to building a stronger retail, hospitality and tourism economy, and better access to capital will have a strong influence on the number of small business start ups and particularly the number of new businesses that succeed for the long term.

Quality of Life Improvements

Businesses and industries do not choose new locations based only on water, sewer, and road access. Increasingly, “quality of life” factors play a significant and often a deciding role in location choices of business and industry. Recreational opportunities, cultural and entertainment options, community appearance, inviting commercial areas, good schools, and a hard to define but easy to recognize “sense of community” or “community spirit” are now generally believed by most economic development

professionals to be as important or more important than traditional “business friendly” strategies of low taxes, low wages and cheap land.

Celebrating the County’s unique historic sites, natural resources and agricultural heritage is an important part of an overall economic development strategy. LIST THE STUFF TO DO here.

Recreation

The county has recently made significant investments in recreation, with development of a new sports complex in St. Matthews and the lease of Heyward Park near Sandy Run. Development of recreational trails has spurred economic development and community revitalization in several cities and towns around South Carolina, and the county should seek opportunities to begin development of a recreational trails program.

Culture and Entertainment

Public art, murals, street festivals, craft markets, farmers markets, and small public outdoor music venues are common strategies to create vibrant communities that support tourism and attract retail trade. Such resources are typically deployed in city and town centers; the county should collaborate with St. Matthews and Cameron to improve of existing cultural and entertainment resources, and to develop a program to install public art and murals by local artists, celebrating the history and culture of the county.



Murals on blank walls, street lights, sidewalk improvements and landscaping would make downtown St. Matthews more inviting

Community Appearance

The changing retail landscape and declining population has left some once-thriving commercial areas in the county careworn and idle. Investment in basic street and sidewalk maintenance, landscape improvements, and attractive streetlighting should be a priority, and funding can be obtained through SCDOT grants and matched with CTC funds.

Schools

The quality of public schools and the connection between schools and the communities they serve is among the most important factors that businesses and families consider when relocating. Opportunities to partner with Calhoun County Public Schools on improvements to support athletics, improve future workforce training and retention, and engage students in internships and community service would be beneficial to the entire community and is one key to continued economic prosperity. County officials should continue to build a stronger partnership with the school system to support existing business and industry, attract new businesses, and ensure that the county continues to be a desirable place to live.

Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Final goals, objectives and strategies related to Economic Development will be developed based on input from the County Planning Commission and from comments received in public meetings that will be held during the development of the comprehensive plan. Below are draft Goals and Objectives based on analysis of the data in this chapter and the input received to date.

Goal ED1. Enable and encourage responsible economic growth while protecting rural lifestyles and landscapes and preserving community values and identity.

Objective ED1.1 Focus public investments in areas that are most suitable for new development and redevelopment, and encourage revitalization and improvement of town centers and existing commercial areas.

Strategy: build partnerships with local governments and state agencies to support and implement an investment strategy that clearly defines the geographic and functional areas that are most suitable for public investment.

Goal ED2. Enable economic prosperity for all of the County's residents.

Objective ED2.1 Build skills and productivity in the existing and emerging labor force in the county.

Strategy: collaborate with O-C Technical College to expand existing technical education access in Calhoun County High School and to develop satellite technical education courses that are more accessible to disadvantaged youth and adults.