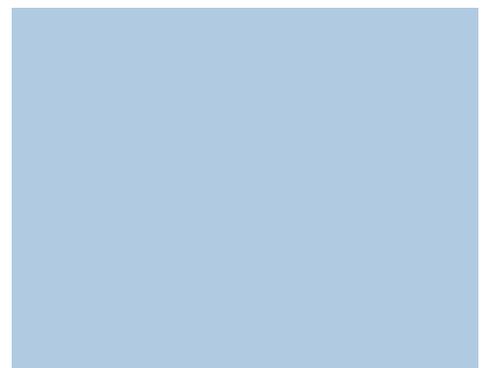




Stronger Economies through Active Communities

The Economic Impact of
Walkable, Bikeable Communities
in South Carolina



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Purpose of this Report

Many communities across South Carolina have had success in creating built environments that promote active lifestyles, and in doing so have seen economic and fiscal benefits. In this report, we highlight 10 communities and their efforts to become more pedestrian and bike friendly. This report is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather is meant to share successes from a variety of communities that range in size, region, and demographics. The projects highlighted also vary in size and scope, and range from creating walking trails, to improving sidewalks and bike lanes, and creating public bike-rental programs. These efforts can serve as models of success for other communities in South Carolina, and are important steps in both promoting healthy, active lifestyles and providing economic benefits to our state.

Introduction

Overweight & Obesity: the Public Health Crisis

Today, one of the most significant public health issues in South Carolina is overweight and obesity. Excessive weight gain is associated with many chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and stroke, which are among the leading causes of preventable death. In 2015, two of every three adults (66 percent) in South Carolina were either overweight or obese.¹ South Carolina ranks 13th in the nation for adult obesity and 2nd in the nation for childhood obesity.^{2,3} In 2015, approximately \$8.5 billion were projected for obesity-related health spending in the state.⁴

Combating overweight and obesity requires lifestyle changes, such as improving diet to include more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables, and increasing physical activity. The *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* recommend 150 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as walking or biking, each week.⁵ However, most South Carolinians do not meet this goal.^{1,6,7}

Making lifestyle changes to prevent overweight and obesity can greatly



improve not only health statistics but medical spending as well. For example, South Carolina could save \$86 million per year if one in 10 adults started a walking program.⁷

The Need for Local Change

Unfortunately, making lifestyle changes required to prevent obesity is often a difficult task. Environmental factors, such as limited access to stores selling affordable fruits and vegetables or a lack of safe places to play or exercise, can frequently impede an individual's ability to adopt healthier behaviors.⁸ This can be

seen in South Carolina, where in 2012, 49 percent of South Carolina residents reported no sidewalks in their neighborhood.¹

Given the increased recognition of the impact that the built environment has on health, many communities in South Carolina have sought to make or should make environmental changes that improve access to affordable, healthy foods and create more safe places to be physically active.

For purposes of this report, we focus on communities' efforts to create more active community environments through investments in pedestrian- and bike-friendly infrastructure.

Creating pedestrian-friendly environments can greatly contribute to efforts to fight obesity and increase physical activity. For example, in a study comparing residents of a high-



Lack of safe places to bike and walk can cause preventable traffic fatalities. **South Carolina has the 5th highest bike and pedestrian fatality rate in the country.**⁹ From 2003 to 2012, 1,020 South Carolinians, including 56 children, died while walking on our roads. That's 12.3 percent of all traffic fatalities in the state during this period.⁹

walkability, urban neighborhood with residents of a low-walkability, urban neighborhood, residents of the high-walkability neighborhood engaged in 52 more minutes of moderate physical activity per week than people in the low-walkability neighborhood.¹⁰ Low-walkability neighborhood residents were also more likely to be overweight than the residents in high-walkability neighborhoods.¹⁰

The Economic Case for Walkable, Bikeable Communities

Indeed, creating active community environments is important for health, and investing in infrastructure that supports walking and biking is often a wise economic investment.⁷

One way in which improved pedestrian- and bike-friendly areas support economic growth is through activity-related spending. Recreational bicyclists in the U.S. are estimated to spend nearly \$47 billion per year on cycling-related equipment, food, lodging, and recreation purchases.¹¹ In addition, people who walk or bike for transportation tend to spend more money at local businesses over time.¹²

Investments in bike-friendly infrastructure have also fostered the development of cycling-related business in South Carolina. Each year, South Carolina invests nearly \$7 million of federal funds into transportation enhancements, Safe Routes to School, and recreational trails. This yields a high return on investment by generating \$52.7 million in annual gross income from bike retail stores and supporting 1,037 jobs across the state.¹³

Job creation is another economic

The Economics of Walking & Biking Infrastructure



Spurs activity-related spending

Creates new jobs & businesses



Raises property values

Encourages private investment



Promotes tourism

Reduces injuries & health care costs



result of pedestrian and bike projects. A 2011 report by the Political Economy Research Institute found that for every \$1 million invested in cycling- and pedestrian-specific projects, 10 to 11 full-time jobs are created. This is compared to fewer than eight jobs created for every \$1 million spent on highway and road projects.¹⁴

Property values also typically increase following pedestrian-friendly investments. One such

study examining a rail trail in Marion County, Indiana, found that homes located within one-half mile of the trail sold for 11.4 percent more than the average home price.¹⁵

Access to Complete Streets in neighborhoods has also been linked to increased property values. In a Smart Growth America survey of 10 Complete Streets projects, eight projects reported experiencing a significant rise in property values (up to 111 percent in one community),



A **Complete Street** is one that is designed to be safely used by all people: pedestrians, motorists, cyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.¹⁶

while the remaining two reported no change.¹⁵ In addition, property values have shown increases of \$700 to \$3,000 for each additional point on WalkScore.com, an online tool used to evaluate a community's walkability.¹⁷

Public investments in pedestrian- and bike-friendly projects can also spur private investments in the same area. A survey of eight communities found that successful Complete Streets projects spurred additional private investments, ranging from \$500,000 in a small community in North Carolina to \$5.8 billion in Cleveland, Ohio.¹⁸

Trails, downtown improvements, and other pedestrian-centered projects can also attract new visitors and tourist dollars. For example, the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville County, South Carolina, has generated more than \$6.7 million in tourism-based revenue.¹⁹

Environmental changes to promote pedestrian and bike safety can also lead to significant economic savings. In



It is important to consider potential ramifications in regards to **economic development and gentrification** when planning bike and pedestrian projects. A study of bike-friendly changes in San Francisco found that while the project did increase the number of cyclists, rents in the area also rose, driving out many minority residents.²¹ To combat these issues, communities should consider incorporating affordable housing strategies into the planning of any such project.²²

a study of 31 Complete Streets communities, 70 percent of participating communities saw a reduction in traffic collisions and 56 percent had reduced injuries, thereby saving \$18.1 million in collision costs in just one year.¹⁷

Safe, walkable streets can also provide cost savings to schools. For example, a Safe Routes to School project in Greenwood County, South Carolina, is expected to save the school district up to \$8,000 a year by increasing the number of students who walk to school and thus shortening bus routes.²⁰





Beaufort

Spanish Moss Trail

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 13,306
- Demographics: 64% white, 26% African American, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 3% other
- Median Household Income: \$46,915¹

Fun Facts

The Port Royal Railroad ran through the City of Beaufort until 2004. There is a large military presence, due to nearby Parris Island and the Marine Corps Air Station. As a coastal town, tourism is a large part of Beaufort's economy.

Overview

Through public-private partnerships, the 6.5-mile Spanish Moss Trail was created along the old Port Royal Railroad line. This \$4.5 million project served 36,500 residents and visitors in 2015 and has become a popular tourist attraction. The city advertises the rail trail in its marketing campaigns, and local hotels lend bikes to guests for use on the trail. The local outfitters store has also seen an increase in sales.

Changes Made

The City of Beaufort planned for the Spanish Moss Trail, a 14-mile concrete walking and biking pathway. Currently, four out of nine planned installments have been completed, totaling 6.5 miles. The 12-foot wide, landscaped trail follows the old rail line, linking Beaufort to Port Royal. The trail runs through residential, retail, commercial, and wooded areas, offering shade and views of the marsh to cyclists and walkers. The trail currently connects to the Technical College of the Lowcountry and, this spring, will be connected to Beaufort Memorial Hospital by a lighted sidewalk. Eventually, the trail will connect to various shopping centers, movie theaters, and the Marine Corps Air Station. The city has installed signage to direct tourists on the trail to local attractions.²

Cost & Funding

\$4.5 million has been spent building the completed 6.5-mile section. Primary investors for the Spanish Moss Trail include: Beaufort Jasper Water & Sewer Authority, James M. Cox Foundation, Beaufort County, BlueCross BlueShield of SC, City of Beaufort, Town of Port Royal, Beaufort Memorial Hospital, and a network of private foundations, businesses, and individuals.³



An aerial view of the Spanish Moss Trail, a rail trail in Beaufort.

Photo courtesy of the Friends of the Spanish Moss Trail



The Spanish Moss Trail passes through Beaufort's marshes, providing scenic views of the coastal area.

Photo courtesy of the Friends of the Spanish Moss Trail

Economic Benefits

The trail has become a popular destination in this tourism-driven town. In 2015, more than 36,500 residents and visitors used the Spanish Moss Trail. On most weekends, there are recreational cycling and running groups who choose the trail as their choice for group activity.³ Beaufort's Chamber Visitor Convention Bureau features the trail prominently in their advertising campaigns to attract tourists. Local hotels have seen many visitors using the trail, and some have started providing bike rentals for guests to use.²

Beaufort hopes that the Spanish Moss Trail will support the growth of other local businesses. Because the trail does not run directly into the historic downtown areas, there are way-finding signs along the trail that direct users off the trail and to nearby attractions, such as City Hall, shopping centers, movie theaters, the community college, and the local hospital. In the future, the city would also like to see the growth of businesses along the trail itself. The city changed zoning laws on the properties surrounding the trail from light industrial to trail-oriented retail to allow for the creation of restaurants, cafes, artists studios, and other small businesses that will be frequented by trail users and spur economic growth in the community.²

"The Spanish Moss Trail has definitely been a plus all the way around. In my opinion, it's the best amenity that Beaufort has created in years and years. The Spanish Moss Trail has done so much to support local cycling."

John Feeser

Owner, Lowcountry Bicycles

Lowcountry Bicycles, Beaufort's only bike shop, has particularly benefited from the trail. The shop sells a range of bikes (from cruisers to racing bikes), provides bicycle rentals, and offers bike repairs. Owner John Feeser reports that the creation of the Spanish Moss Trail increased his business, estimating that about 50 percent of his customers come to Lowcountry Bicycles for trail-related purchases. The trail has especially spurred accessory sales and bike repairs, as people decide to fix up old bikes to ride on the trail and buy new bells, lights, and helmets. In terms of bike sales, Lowcountry Bicycles now sells more cruisers and other recreational bicycles rather than racing or road bicycles, suggesting that the majority of the new bikes purchased are being used on the trail.⁴

Charleston Area

Battery2Beach Route

Changes Made

In 2005, the City and County of Charleston, leaders from nearby municipalities, the SC Department of Transportation, Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission, and Charleston Moves, a local non-profit advocating for safer walking and biking, came together to design and implement a network that provides a safe means of traveling by foot or bike from the historic Charleston Battery Park to nearby beaches. The resulting Battery2Beach (B2B) route covers approximately 32 miles, extending from the City of Folly Beach, through Charleston County, the Town of James Island, the City of Charleston, the Town of Mt. Pleasant, the Town of Sullivan's Island, and ending at the City of Isle of Palms. While sections are still being improved, the entire B2B route will soon be clearly marked and is a mix of sidewalks, on-road bicycle lanes, and off-road multi-use paths.³

In July 2016, the City of Charleston approved a project for a critical link of the B2B, the T. Allen Legare Bridge Bicycle and Pedestrian Path. This 0.4-mile bridge connects West Ashley to Charleston, and the planned bike lane and sidewalk additions will link more than 13,000 West Ashley residents with the downtown Charleston community via a lane conversion project.⁴

Cost & Funding

Areas along the route that already had sidewalks and funded facilities approved or neighborhood streets suitable for bicycling only required signage dedicating it as a B2B route; however, other sections of the B2B required construction.⁵ Research conducted by The Citadel and College of Charleston originally estimated that construction costs could reach \$20 million.⁶ However, the participating jurisdictions have worked to incorporate many of the B2B

At a Glance



County Profile

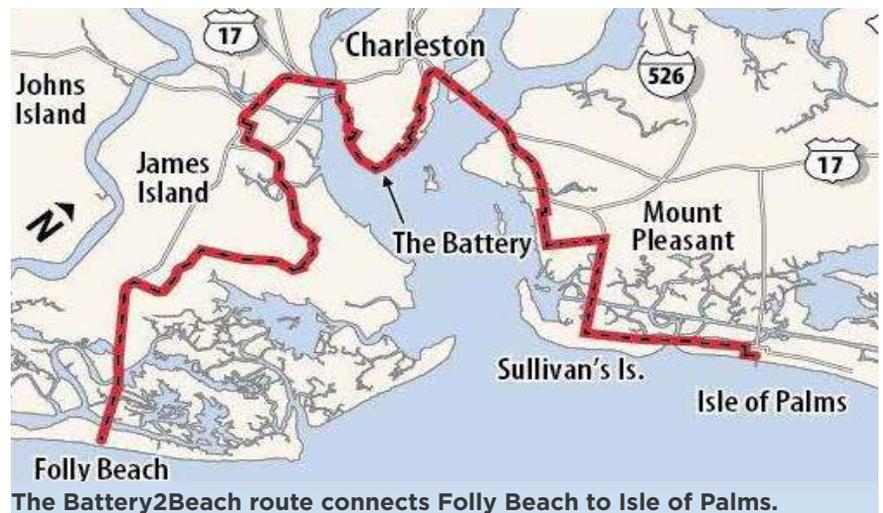
- Population: 389,262
- Demographics: 64% white, 28% African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 3% other
- Median Household Income: \$52,083¹

Fun Facts

Charleston County is renowned for its historic sites and beaches. Also notable is the Arthur Ravenel, Jr. Bridge, a 2.5-mile, cable-stayed bridge that connects Charleston to Mt. Pleasant. The bridge includes a wide multi-use path, famous for its spectacular views and the annual 10K Cooper River Bridge Run, which attracts thousands of visitors.²

Overview

Beginning in 2005, Charleston-area leaders and advocates designed a 32-mile pedestrian and bike route called Battery2Beach (B2B) that connects the Charleston Battery to nearby beaches. Many areas along the route already had sidewalks and paths, and only required B2B route signage. A 2011 cost-benefit analysis determined that the route would generate \$42 million annually by drawing more tourists.



The Battery2Beach route connects Folly Beach to Isle of Palms.

Photo courtesy of the Post & Courier

“Creating the B2B route has raised awareness among municipal leaders about the need for walking and biking infrastructure in their communities, and that helps the decision makers make it a priority.”

Vonie Gilreath

Mobility Manager, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments



The Battery2Beach route provides safe areas for walking and biking.

Photo courtesy of Charleston Moves

upgrades into previously planned and funded road improvements, considerably reducing construction costs from the original estimate.⁵ Funding for new construction comes from a variety of sources, including the city’s capital project budget, federal transportation alternative funds, state and county transportation funds (C Funds) funded with gas tax revenue, county sales tax, and municipal bonds.⁷ Work is still underway along the route, so no final project cost has been calculated. The most recent addition at the T. Allen Legare Bridge (US 17) is estimated to cost the city \$3.3 million.⁸ In addition, Charleston Moves has contributed \$50,000 in signage along the route.⁵

Economic Benefits

A 2011 cost-benefit analysis conducted by College of Charleston and Citadel students determined that the route would generate \$42 million annually by drawing more tourists to the area.⁶ Although it is too soon to determine whether the route has increased tourism,

the City of Charleston reports that local residents often use the route for short trips around the area.⁷ The B2B has increased residents’ access to safe places to walk and bike, with 38,000 residents living within a half-mile and 67,000 residents within one mile of the route.⁶

The renovations to the T. Allen Legare Bridge are also projected to have profound impacts on the West Ashley community. This project will connect downtown Charleston to the West Ashley Greenway, which serves 4,551 residents and 613 businesses, who will now have greater access to downtown Charleston.⁴ The bridge is adjacent to the Medical University of South Carolina, Roper Hospital, and the Veterans Affairs hospital, which employ 30,000 workers who will now have better access to bicycle and pedestrian commuting facilities.⁴ Additionally, other downtown employment centers, such as the City of Charleston, the College of Charleston, and The Citadel, will now be better connected with

bicycle and pedestrian options, providing 5,250 employees and 18,000 students the ability to bike or walk to work and class.⁴

Perhaps one of the greatest, immeasurable benefits of the B2B project is that the official designation of the B2B route has raised awareness among local leaders and planners, helping ensure future expansions and improvements of walking and biking infrastructure throughout the county.^{8,9} For example, in 2016, the City of Folly Beach applied for Charleston County transportation sales tax funds to finance roadwork on Center Street, the city’s main thoroughfare and part of the B2B route. The plans aim to increase walkability of downtown by reducing speed limits, constructing bump outs, improving sidewalks, and reducing travel lanes. In the city’s funding application, planners referenced Center Street’s role in the B2B route, which could have, in part, helped to secure the \$350,000 grant award.⁹

Columbia

Main Street Revitalization

Changes Made

In 1998, the City of Columbia adopted its City Center Master Plan and Design Overlay, which laid the groundwork for building a more walkable and bikeable downtown. At the time, Main Street was not a vibrant place, but the city began plans to revitalize it by attracting new businesses, making road and facade improvements, and becoming more bike- and pedestrian-friendly.³

In 2007, the city adopted the Bailey Bill, which provides a tax incentive for the preservation of historic buildings. Owners must make a minimum investment to freeze city and county property tax levels for 20 years.^{2,3} The city later created the Commercial Facade Loan Program, which provided \$20,000 matching grants to business owners to improve the street value of their properties, paid for with a Community Development Block Grant and city funds.^{3,4} In 2014, the city modified the Zoning Ordinances, which allowed for more privately owned university dorms to be built downtown, such as along Main Street, and required the dorms to provide bicycle parking to encourage more students to bike. The city also created a tax credit to incentivize off-campus student housing.³

Columbia has also increased biking by creating the state's first bike corral parking system, which provides on-street bike racks, where riders can pull directly off the road and into a parking spot. Columbia even created the City Employee Bike Share Program to



Main Street is now an attractive place to walk and bike.

Photo courtesy of ESMMS

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 133,803
- Demographics: 50% white, 42% African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 4% other
- Median Household Income: \$41,454¹

Fun Facts

The City of Columbia was named a Bike Friendly Community in 2008 and was the first Walk Friendly City in South Carolina in 2015.^{2,3} The University of South Carolina became the first Bike Friendly University in the state in 2012.²

Overview

Through a series of tax incentives and private investments, Columbia has revitalized Main Street. Countless new restaurants and businesses have opened, drawing many pedestrians and cyclists. Streetscaping, decorative lighting, and signage make the area an attractive place to walk and bike.

encourage employees to bike in the city.³

To increase walkability, the city financed road improvements, including improving sidewalks and landscaping. The project, spanning five blocks, cost \$3 million per block, paid for with public works funding. The city plans to expand the project four blocks north in the future.³

Another notable component of Columbia's efforts was reducing the parking requirements for new development. Over the years, developers built fewer parking spaces with new buildings, naturally shifting Columbia to a more pedestrian-friendly community.³

Columbia also created a Business Improvement District (BID), called the City Center Partnership, in 2012 to support the area's businesses. Funded by assessments of property values, the partnership employs hospitality guides who patrol the Main Street District, hang



Revitalization efforts have attracted new businesses and more visitors to Columbia's Main Street.

Photo courtesy of ESMMS

decorative banners, landscape streets, and make the area feel safer and more attractive for pedestrians.³

Cost & Funding

Much of Columbia's success required only limited public investments. While the city did invest \$15 million on streetscaping and some funds for the facade program, most of the changes have been accomplished through policy. The tax credits and zoning changes required no direct monetary investments, but have resulted in impressive business growth and private investments.³

Economic Benefits

The revitalization efforts undoubtedly paid off, as business has boomed on Main Street, and once run-down or vacant buildings have been given new life. Many new businesses and restaurants now line Main, including the Hub, Good Life Cafe, Cowboy Brazilian Steakhouse, the Nickelodeon, First Citizens Bank, and more. As the prime real estate on Main Street has filled, businesses are now opening along the side streets to be close to the amenities and atmosphere.³

The BID's revenues have grown substantially, from \$300,000 in 2002 to more than \$900,000 in 2016. In addition, tax revenues for the city, county and Richland School District One have nearly tripled, all done with minimal public investments.⁵

Main Street has become a popular destination for city events. The area is packed on First Thursday, a

monthly event where businesses stay open late and offer specials and entertainment.⁶ The weekly Soda City Farmers' Market also draws huge crowds from across the region. Every Saturday, the market closes off several blocks of Main Street and is filled with vendors of all types, drawing hundreds of shoppers.⁷

As the city's walkability and bikeability grew organically over the years, the City of Columbia decided to capitalize on the momentum by creating an action plan called Public Life Public Space, the final version of which will be unveiled September 2016. The plan is designed to: 1) create new amenities that encourage visitors to stay in downtown instead of passing through, 2) connect Main Street to the Vista, and 3) expand improvements to include the State House grounds.³ This plan will encourage more pedestrian mobility and support local businesses in the future.

"Main Street is a complete 180 from where it was 20 years ago. It has been interesting to watch the public investments start at the south end of Main and continue north, and then see the private investments follow that same path."

Lucinda Statler

Principal Planner, City of Columbia

Easley & Pickens

Doodle Trail

Changes Made

In 2015, the cities of Easley and Pickens installed a 7.5-mile multi-use trail, following the old Pickens Railway. This wide, paved trail is mostly flat and allows walking, running, biking, rollerblading, and pets. The trail connects the two cities, running from downtown Pickens to the edge of Easley. Future expansions will bring the trail fully into the downtown areas of Easley and Pickens and will improve the trailheads and parking areas.^{4,5}

Cost & Funding

Each city contributed about \$1.5 million for trail construction and share continued maintenance costs of the completed project. Funding sources include the City of Easley's annual budget, the City of Pickens' hospitality tax, a \$250,000 matching Appalachian Regional Commission grant, and a \$100,000 Recreational Trails Program grant.^{4,5}

Economic Benefits

The Doodle Trail has been widely praised by the communities it serves. Large numbers of people use the trail, especially during good weather, as it provides a safe place for families to exercise, away from traffic.^{4,5}

At a Glance



City of Easley Profile

- Population: 20,765
- Demographics: 81% white, 11% African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 3% other
- Median Household Income: \$40,453¹

City of Pickens Profile

- Population: 3,149
- Demographics: 79% white, 15% African American, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 2% other
- Median Household Income: \$32,809²

Fun Facts

Until 2013, a rail line ran between the cities of Pickens and Easley; however, the train could not be turned around and therefore ran backwards when returning from Easley to Pickens, earning its nickname the "Doodle Line."³

Overview

Easley and Pickens jointly built a 7.5-mile paved, multi-use rail trail. Completed in 2015, the trail cost \$3 million to build. Future expansions are planned, including improved trail heads, extensions into the downtown areas, and a Doodle Park. Because of the project, both cities have seen business growth due to increased tourism. Pickens' hospitality tax revenues grew 12 percent in 2015, and property values near the trail have also risen.



A view of the Doodle Trail, a rail trail that runs between Easley and Pickens.

Photo courtesy of ESMMS



The trailhead at the start of the Doodle Trail in Easley.

Photo courtesy of ESMMS

Although the Doodle Trail currently ends one mile outside of downtown Easley, the city has experienced some economic growth, including the opening of an ice cream shop and a biking and running outfitters store frequented by trail users. Cindy Maxey, owner of Upcountry Outdoors, said her business owes its existence to the Doodle Trail; without it Easley would not have been able to support this undertaking.⁶ Pickens, too, is home to an outfitters store and a bike rental shop that benefit from the trail's proximity.⁵

Restaurants in downtown Pickens have also seen an increase in trail-related business. As a result, the city installed bike racks downtown where riders coming from the trail can store bikes while they visit local restaurants. Pickens' hospitality tax rose 12 percent in the past year, partially due to increased visitors from the Doodle Trail. Property values and property tax revenues are also on the rise. There is also anecdotal evidence to show that real estate has benefited from numerous and rapid home sales.⁵

"Our bike shop would not have opened if it had not been for the trail. The Doodle Trail in Easley supports our business."

Cindy Maxey
Owner, Upcountry Outdoors LLC

"Our residents needed to be active and healthy, and we also wanted to bring people into Pickens to visit our community. We just needed a place to do all that. Now the Doodle Trail meets all of our needs."

David Owens
Mayor, City of Pickens

Florence

Downtown Revitalization & Trail Improvements

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 38,228
- 49% white, 46% African American, 2% Hispanic/Latino, 3% other
- Median Household Income \$43,007¹

Fun Facts

Florence is the 10th largest city in South Carolina.² Many people are familiar with Florence as a city they drive through on the way to Myrtle Beach; however, the city is working to become a place where people want to stay and visit.

Overview

The City of Florence invested \$3.5 million in street and sidewalk repairs to connect neighborhoods to trails and parks. The city has also invested grant money in revitalizing the downtown area, which improved the walkability and appearance of downtown businesses. The investments have contributed significantly to Florence's rebirth as a vibrant, thriving city.

Changes Made

The City of Florence has worked to improve two trail systems, one on the western side of the city, which includes urban, paved trails, and one on the eastern side, which includes greenways and a natural trail. In total, the trail system spans 25 miles. The city began expanding and improving the trails in the early 2000s, but once completed, the city has transitioned its focus to overall connectivity by improving sidewalks between urban and residential areas to the parks and trails.³

The City of Florence also adopted a master plan for downtown revitalization efforts in the early 2000s. The city invested public funds and received a variety of facade and direct incentive grants to improve storefronts and create new businesses downtown. These efforts, along with sidewalk enhancements, were designed to create a safer, more attractive, and more vibrant place for pedestrians to walk in downtown Florence.³



The Florence Rail Trail provides a safe location for residents to walk and bike.

Photo courtesy of the City of Florence

Cost & Funding

According to City Manager Drew Griffin, the city has invested more than \$3.5 million in street and sidewalk improvements, and in connecting trails and parks throughout Florence. These efforts were paid for through Tax Increment Financing, penny sales tax revenues, and hospitality funds. The city has also been awarded several smaller grants to improve facades and to sustain development downtown. The city's public investments into the revitalization efforts have encouraged significant private investments, totaling \$50-75 million in private development.³

Economic Benefits

Florence has undoubtedly benefited from efforts to become more pedestrian friendly. Due to the revitalization efforts, downtown Florence has become a hot spot for private development and new business growth.

Griffin estimates property values downtown have nearly tripled. In addition, rents have increased downtown, from \$9 per square foot before the improvements began to \$15 per square foot currently. Rents are expected to increase to \$18-21 per square foot in the future. Many new businesses including numerous hotels, boutiques, and seven new restaurants have opened in downtown Florence.³

"Improving walkability transforms the community. Along with the revitalization downtown, the city has a completely different feel to it now. We have had numerous hotels, businesses, and restaurants open downtown all in the span of five years. Those are all new dollars that are very important to the future of our community."

Drew Griffin

Manager, City of Florence



Renovations have attracted many new businesses to the area.

Photo courtesy of the City of Florence



Landscaping and facade improvements revitalized Florence.

Photo courtesy of the City of Florence

Greenville & Travelers Rest

Swamp Rabbit Trail



The GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail is a 21-mile greenway.

Photo courtesy of Greenville County Parks

At a Glance



City of Greenville Profile

- Population: 64,597
- Demographics: 61% white, 30% African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 3% other
- Median Household Income: \$41,147¹

City of Travelers Rest Profile

- Population: 7,968
- Demographics: 80% white, 11% African American, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 4% other
- Median Household Income: \$49,834²

Fun Facts

Greenville is an artsy community, hosting many crafts, music, and theatre festivals throughout the year. Travelers Rest is located 9 miles from Greenville and owes its name to its proximity to the mountains, which forced pioneers to rest there before beginning a journey across the mountains.

Overview

Greenville County constructed a 21-mile rail trail that stretches from Travelers Rest to Greenville, with future expansions planned. The trail has been hugely successful, drawing more than 500,000 visitors each year and generating \$6.7 million in tourism-based revenue. Both Greenville and Travelers Rest have seen many new businesses open, which are supported by trail users.

Changes Made

In 2006, the Greenville County Economic Development Corporation decided to convert a county-owned railway bed into a rail trail. The Greenville County Recreation District and the City of Greenville partnered to build and maintain what is now the Greenville Health System (GHS) Swamp Rabbit Trail.³ The trail, named for the indigenous swamp rabbit, first opened in April 2009 and was 13-miles in length. It has since been extended to 21-miles and now connects Travelers Rest to downtown Greenville before continuing south through Falls Park and Greenville Technical College. The paved trail, which follows the Reedy River, offers restrooms, benches, picnic areas, water fountains, and signage.⁴

Construction of the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Travelers Rest coincided with major downtown renovations, including reducing the number of traveling lanes on Main Street, widening sidewalks, and building new community parks. The newly built Trailblazer Park, which borders the trail, is now home to the Travelers Rest Farmers' Market.⁵

Cost & Funding

The construction budget for the original 13-mile trail was \$2.7 million. Most of the funding was provided by Greenville County with help from two Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grants, each for \$250,000.^{4,6,7} Annual operation costs are estimated at \$60,000.⁴ In addition, GHS is an instrumental partner, having donated \$1 million, distributed over 10 years, for trail promotion.⁸

The downtown improvements in Travelers Rest cost \$4.2 million, paid for by hospitality and accommodations tax revenues and C Funds from South Carolina's gas tax. Funds for the \$1.2 million Trailblazer Park also came from hospitality and accommodation tax revenues, and an ARC grant.⁵

Economic Benefits

The GHS Swamp Rabbit Trail has had dramatic impacts in Greenville and Travelers Rest. Furman University found that the number of trail users increased from 359,000 to

501,000 between 2010 and 2013.^{9,10} Half of the trail users are local, 30 percent travel from nearby municipalities (e.g., Spartanburg), and 20 percent visit from outside areas (e.g., Atlanta).⁹ As of 2011, the trail generated an estimated \$6.7 million in tourism-based revenue in Greenville County.¹⁰

Furman researchers also interviewed 19 managers and owners of retail businesses, including five retail bicycle shops, directly abutting and/or within close proximity to a trail access point. Two of the five bike shops reported that an average of 75 percent of their customers purchased bikes to use on the trail in Year 3 (2013), with revenue from trail users ranging from \$300,000 to \$400,000. The majority of the businesses surveyed in Year 3 reported increases in sales/revenue ranging from 10 percent to 85 percent. Annual revenue from trail users at non-bike shops was as high as \$400,000.¹⁰

In Travelers Rest alone, the trail's creation, along with revitalization efforts downtown, resulted in nearly 50 new businesses opening on Main Street, many of which are restaurants, sporting good shops, and boutiques that cater to trail users.⁵ In addition, numerous residential developments are underway, all of which advertise their proximity to the trail. This development has caused a spike in Travelers Rest's hospitality tax revenues from \$300,000 in 2007 (when the tax was first enacted, prior to

the trail's creation) to \$650,000 in 2016.⁵

Another beneficiary is the Travelers Rest Farmers' Market, which relocated to Trailblazer Park when it was built in 2014. According to the market's Executive Director Adrienne Hawkins, both the park and market have capitalized on their proximity to the Swamp Rabbit Trail to draw more visitors to the area.

"Before we relocated, we had five to 10 vendors selling at our market," Hawkins said. "Now we have 90 vendors, and we are the largest non-profit, independently run farmers' market in the state."¹¹

"The Swamp Rabbit Trail has transformed Travelers Rest and made this town a destination. It makes our community healthier, it helps the environment, it supports local businesses like our farmers' market. It's like a partnership for this town, and it has become part of the culture."

Adrienne Hawkins

Executive Director,
Travelers Rest Farmers' Market



The Swamp Rabbit Trail is a major attraction in Travelers Rest and home to the farmers' market.

Photo courtesy of the City of Travelers Rest

Hartsville

College Avenue & Mantissa Alley

Changes Made

The City of Hartsville has undertaken a major downtown revitalization project in recent years. The city has been working to repair public parking lots, install sidewalks, improve business facades, and landscape streets.²

As part of these efforts, the city is renovating College Avenue, a side street in downtown that is home to many shops, restaurants, and two public parking lots. College Avenue connects Coker College and the Governor's School for Science and Mathematics to downtown Hartsville; however, sidewalks are limited and in disrepair and street conditions are poor. Improvements underway include repaving the road, installing sidewalks, and landscaping the area to make it safer and more appealing for pedestrians. When the renovations are completed in early 2017, College Avenue will better connect the nearby campuses to downtown and draw more pedestrians to Hartsville's shops and restaurants.³

The city has also transformed Mantissa Alley, a former service alley for delivery trucks, located one block from College Avenue. In 2015, the city closed the alley to vehicles and created a pocket park for pedestrians, complete with picnic tables and decorative lighting.³

Cost & Funding

The city has invested \$2.8 million in the College Avenue repairs and construction of Mantissa Alley. Funding for the project was paid for by a city bond.³

Economic Benefits

Past revitalization efforts, including improved storefronts, streetscaping, and business start-up competitions, encouraged new businesses to open

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 7,826
- Demographics: 50% white, 46% African American, 2% Hispanic/Latino, 2% other
- Median Household Income: \$29,276¹

Fun Facts

Hartsville is the largest city in Darlington County. It is home to Coker College and the South Carolina Governor's School for Science and Mathematics.

Overview

The City of Hartsville invested \$2.8 million to repair sidewalks along College Avenue, an important corridor that connects Coker College to downtown. The city hopes the new infrastructure will encourage more students to frequent shops and restaurants downtown. The city also installed a pocket park at Mantissa Alley. This park is popular with pedestrians, and neighboring shops benefit from the increased foot traffic.

shop downtown and generally made the area a more attractive place to visit and walk. As more visitors began walking downtown and shopping in local boutiques, business increased, resulting in the creation of 41 new restaurants and shops, as well as several upscale hotels in Hartsville.² These past successes indicate that the current College Avenue renovations will continue to support Hartsville's economic growth. By improving sidewalks and adding streetscaping, the city anticipates seeing increased foot traffic and shopping along College Avenue, which will foster new business growth.³



The pocket park at Mantissa Alley is a popular destination for visitors to downtown Hartsville.

Photo courtesy of the City of Hartsville

The Mantissa Alley project also created new retail space by transforming what was previously only a shipping and delivery alley into prime real estate. The two new shops that opened along Mantissa Alley, a fine art and custom framing shop and Retrofit Sip-n-Seat, a furniture boutique with wine bar, have greatly benefited from the increased foot traffic and visitors attracted by the park.³

According to Brandy Blumrich-Sellingworth, owner of Retrofit Sip-n-Seat, the area was once a dark alley where no one wanted to walk, but it is now a bright and beautiful spot that draws visitors and businesses. Blumrich-Stellingworth now sees many pedestrians eating lunch and passing through the Mantissa Alley pocket park, who then see her shop and decide to stop in.

“Being near the pocket park and benefiting from the people walking by and seeing my shop has helped my business, and the other changes the city is making to improve sidewalks and roads downtown will continue to help business in the future,” Blumrich-Stellingworth said.⁴

“I think it’s important for people to visit and support downtown because it will cause the whole area to thrive. With all the changes, Hartsville now has that feeling about it, the feeling that it’s a great town that’s making changes and is proud, and that feeling makes people want to come here.”

Suzy Moyd

Executive Director,
Main Street Hartsville

Rock Hill

Outdoor Center & Riverwalk

Changes Made

Riverwalk is a very unique community. In 2005, an experienced real estate development company bought a former industrial plant site with visions of building a community focused on river views, walkable spaces, outdoor recreation opportunities, and a live/work/play atmosphere. The 1,008-acre mixed-use development along the Catawba River includes residential, hospitality, retail, and office space. A highlight of the development is a collection of recreation facilities known as the Rock Hill Outdoor Center, owned, operated, and maintained by the City of Rock Hill.²

The Giordana Velodrome, a 250-meter Olympic-standard cycling track, which opened in 2012, hosts national cycling events as well as local rider outreach and development programs. The Novant Health BMX Supercross Track, opened in 2014, is the first Olympic-caliber BMX facility open to the public in the Southeast. It serves everyone from amateurs to elite riders, has hosted multiple international races, and provides rider development as well.²

Another popular attraction is the Piedmont Medical Center Trail, a 2.5-mile, 10-foot-wide trail that follows the Catawba River and connects to another city park, River Park, at its southern end. From the trail, cyclists can access the city's three marked mountain bike trails, spanning approximately 8 miles. A kayak and canoe launch and open green space are also part of the Outdoor Center, soon to be joined by a criterium course and a future cyclocross course.²

Rock Hill has also adopted a Bike and Pedestrian Plan to ensure that there are safe and accessible transportation options for everyone.

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 71,548
- Demographics: 52% white, 38% African American, 6% Hispanic/Latino, 4% other
- Median Household Income: \$40,718¹

Fun Facts

Rock Hill is the 5th largest city in South Carolina. It is situated along the banks of the Catawba River and is home to Winthrop University.

Overview

Through a public-private partnership, Rock Hill has created several public recreation venues at a mixed-use development along the Catawba River. Among them, a BMX track and velodrome attract thousands of visitors annually to events hosted at these venues.



Cyclists race in competition at the Giordana Velodrome.

Photo courtesy of the City of Rock Hill

In addition, the city conducts bike safety lessons in elementary schools to teach students about biking rules and safety to promote safe cycling for children.³

Cost & Funding

The public recreation facilities that make up the Rock Hill Outdoor Center occupy approximately 250 acres of the Riverwalk development. The Assured Group, developer of Riverwalk, deeded the acreage to the City of Rock Hill, creating a public-private partnership. Construction of the facilities was financed by the local food and beverage tax and facility sponsors. Initial construction costs for the Trail were \$1.8 million with additional sponsorship funding from Piedmont Medical Center. The Velodrome construction costs were \$4 million with additional sponsorship funding from Giordana Sporting Goods and other sponsors. The BMX track construction costs were \$7.9 million with additional sponsorship funding from Novant Health.^{2,3}

The education program in elementary schools was a low-cost project developed with help from Winthrop

University. Funding from a Healthy SC Initiative grant assisted with curriculum development, supplies, and the purchase of bike helmets to be used by students. The lessons are delivered by City of Rock Hill Parks, Recreation and Tourism staff.³

Economic Benefits

The Piedmont Medical Center Trail draws an average of 12,000 visitors each month. Recent development at Riverwalk's River District, located near the trailhead, includes a restaurant, retail stores, offices and apartments. Additional development projects in the River District are planned.^{2,3}

The Olympic-caliber cycling facilities are also huge economic drivers. One BMX event in 2016 drew thousands of cyclists and spectators, representing 31 states. The 3-day event created approximately \$2.5 million in direct economic impact from hotel stays, restaurant sales, and other purchases. There is also anecdotal evidence that people have moved to Rock Hill from neighboring states in order to live near and train at such a high caliber facility.^{2,3}

We have outstanding biking facilities here in Rock Hill, and we encourage people of all ages to exercise more. If children learn to embrace physical activity at a young age, hopefully they will carry that lesson and be active their whole lives.

Tom Bell

Outdoor Recreation Supervisor, City of Rock Hill



Riders participate in a BMX competition at the Novant Health BMX Supercross Track in Rock Hill.

Photo courtesy of the City of Rock Hill

Spartanburg

Downtown Street Improvements & Bicycle Shares

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 37,867
- Demographics: 49% African American, 44% white, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 4% other
- Median Household Income: \$34,092¹

Fun Facts

Spartanburg is home to numerous colleges and universities, including Wofford College, USC Upstate, and Converse College. It is known as the Hub City from its time as a major rail stop.

Overview

The City of Spartanburg partnered with Partners for Active Living (PAL) to widen sidewalks, install bike lanes, and extend existing trails. PAL also created the state's first bike share systems, Hub Cycle and BCycle. The city has already seen significant economic benefits, including many new downtown businesses. Hub Cycle has provided 1,250 rentals, and BCycle users have made over 11,000 trips around the city.

Changes Made

The City of Spartanburg partnered with Partners for Active Living (PAL) to make improvements across the city, beginning in 2005 with the renovation of Morgan Square. The city removed a large parking area in the heart of downtown along West Main Street and installed a 2.8-acre park, complete with sidewalks, fountains, and green space.²

In 2014, the city approved a collection of eight pedestrian and bike projects. The first project was to create a "festival street" on Wall Street, located downtown. Previously a narrow road spanning one block and lined with stubbornly vacant properties, the city closed the road to traffic and created a pedestrian-only pathway and festival space.²

The city then renovated East Main Street by installing parallel parking, widening sidewalks, and creating bump outs for benches and landscaping. A similar project began in June 2016 along Magnolia Street, a side road that connects the major thoroughfare through Spartanburg to downtown.²

The next planned project is an extension of the Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail into downtown. This 2-mile trail opened in 2006 and is one of the most popular recreation amenities in the city, with 70,000 users per year. The trail connects to the local skate park as well as eight residential communities. Eventually, the trail will join the South Converse Street protected bike lane, the state's first and only protected bike lane.²

PAL also created the state's first bike-sharing programs, Hub Cycle and BCycle. Hub Cycle rents out bikes, helmets, and locks for \$15 for three months. When rentals are returned, users are refunded the rental fee. BCycle offers stations throughout the city, where users can rent bikes for \$3 per 30 minutes and return rentals to any station. Stations are located downtown, at both Wofford and Converse Colleges, and at the Hub City Farmers' Market.³



A bike rack located at the festival corridor on Wall Street.

Photo courtesy of ESMMS

Cost & Funding

The Morgan Square project cost \$3.5 million, paid for by hospitality tax revenues. Although the eight-stage bike and pedestrian improvements are still underway, the total cost is estimated to be \$2.5 million, allocated from Spartanburg's general fund and hospitality tax revenues. The city also received \$250,000 from the Federal Highway Administration and SC Department of Transportation to assist in the rail trail extension project.²

Construction of each BCycle station cost \$45,000, paid for by private contributions. Maintenance costs are covered by user fees. Hub Cycle began with a \$500 gift from a philanthropist and is maintained by an annual \$14,000 United Way grant.³

Economic Benefits

The city's numerous projects have greatly improved Spartanburg's overall feel and walkability. When Morgan Square was first created, local businesses worried that the loss of parking and construction would deter customers. However, the square now hosts festivals, concerts, and other events that draw customers to the neighborhood businesses. The square has been so beneficial for business, that many of the local shop owners have asked the city to expand the park in the future.²

The festival street has transformed the once-vacant properties on Wall Street into new businesses, including three new shops, a law office, and upstairs apartment units. More businesses and townhomes are planned. Wall Street is also home to the Wednesday Downtown Lunch Farmers' Market, which draws many local vendors and visitors.²

The renovations on East Main have also improved pedestrians' ability to visit the businesses there. The economic benefits are still rolling in, as more negotiations are underway to redevelop vacant buildings. According to Will Rothschild, communications manager for the City of Spartanburg, interest in buying properties along East Main has never been higher.² A brewery, several restaurants, and an AC Hotel by Marriot also recently opened new



A BCycle station, the first bike share program in the state.

Photo courtesy of ESMMSC

locations in Spartanburg, near the thriving downtown.³

Hub Cycle was designed to allow new bike riders to try out biking at a low cost; however, the program is now used by many lower-income residents as a main means of transportation. This has undoubtedly helped the local economy by providing residents a safe and reliable form of transportation to work. Since 2007, 1,250 rentals have been provided.³

BCycle has also brought economic benefits. Local hotels and businesses advertise BCycle as a way for tourists to explore the city, while residents and students use the bikes for recreation and transportation. Approximately 6,500 riders have used BCycle to take 11,000 trips since 2011.³

"Our city leaders and residents are in tune to the fact that non-traditional investments are incredibly important to the economic future of our city. We understand that investments like landscaping, expanding sidewalks, and putting in bike lanes will help the downtown economic community thrive."

Will Rothschild

Communications Manager,
City of Spartanburg

Walterboro

I-95 Loop Connector & Great Swamp Sanctuary

Changes Made

The City of Walterboro recently began an expansive I-95 Connector Loop project. Because the city is accessible from I-95 from two exits, but located several miles away from the Interstate, the vision for the project is to entice tourists traveling on I-95 to visit Walterboro and also revitalize its storefronts and overall atmosphere. The project will stretch 6.2 miles and connect the highway to downtown Walterboro with resurfaced roads, landscaping, decorative lighting, sidewalks, and bike lanes. The city has also installed way-finding signage downtown with mileage estimates to nearby attractions to help pedestrians better navigate the area. The first construction phase began in October 2015 with the subsequent phases to be completed over the next several years.²

Another local asset is the Great Swamp Sanctuary, which stretches 600 acres into the Ashepoo Combahee Edisto (ACE) Basin. The Sanctuary offers 4 miles of walking paths, bike trails, and raised boardwalks through the swamp ecosystem. The City of Walterboro has plans to build a Discovery Center, complete with educational areas, an event center, and amphitheater, which will serve as a trailhead. In addition to being used by walkers, cyclists, and canoeists, the Great Swamp Sanctuary has hosted many community events, such as 5k races, and is a popular destination for school groups. The City of Walterboro hopes that the I-95 loop project will also help draw motorists from I-95 to the Sanctuary as a place to stretch their legs or walk dogs while traveling.²

Cost & Funding

Section 1A of the I-95 Loop Project, which is currently under construction, was partially funded by a \$500,000 Community Block Grant. Section

At a Glance



City Profile

- Population: 5,278
- Demographics: 51% African American, 44% white, 3% Hispanic/Latino, 3% other
- Median Household Income: \$24,120¹

Fun Facts

The City of Walterboro is the county seat of Colleton County and functions as its central business hub. It is located in the Lowcountry near the edge of the ACE Basin, one of the largest undeveloped estuaries on the East Coast. Walterboro is an important transportation center along I-95 and draws many visitors to its arts and antiques stores downtown, including the South Carolina Artisans Center.

Overview

The city is in the process of renovating the connector loop to I-95, which will include sidewalks, bike lanes, street lamps, and decorative lighting. The loop is designed to draw tourists from the highway to Walterboro's attractions, including the Great Swamp Sanctuary.



The Great Swamp Sanctuary offers 4 miles of trails.

Photo courtesy of the City of Walterboro



The Great Swamp Sanctuary is located in the ACE Basin, one of the largest undeveloped estuaries on the East Coast.

Photo courtesy of the City of Walterboro

1B, to be completed next, will be funded by a \$400,000 appropriation from the SC Department of Transportation and a \$100,000 appropriation from Colleton County. The final stages of the project will be funded by \$6.6 million from the Colleton County capital projects sales tax. The sales tax was adopted in 2014, and is expected to raise approximately \$30 million over eight years, 30 percent of which will be paid by non-Colleton County residents who visit the area.²

The Great Swamp Sanctuary was funded in part by the City of Walterboro and by grants. Charitable donations of land also supplemented the city's land purchases.²

Economic Benefits

The I-95 loop project is still under construction, but the city has reported an improved overall town atmosphere as a result of the first construction phase. The city anticipates increased tourism from I-95 will improve business and increase revenue in Walterboro. On average, 40,000 motorists use I-95 everyday, with as many as 85,000 on busy days, meaning that the City of Walterboro stands to benefit significantly from increased tourism as a result of the I-95 loop project.²

Walterboro also anticipates that 150,000 people, mostly school groups, will visit the Great Swamp Sanctuary every year once the Discovery Center construction is finished.²

Concurrently, in 2015 the city and county adopted a county-wide Bikeway and Pedestrian Master Plan, which identifies linkages throughout the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods. These connections will further strengthen the walkability of the city with the I-95 loop serving as a major corridor for all modes of movement.³

"A healthier community is a better community. We want to market ourselves through our tourism activities as an active and vibrant community. The more we can provide those facilities to the public, the better off we will be."

Jeff Molinari

Manager, City of Walterboro

Resources

Interested in becoming a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly community? There are many state and national resources available to support this work.

Organizations

- Eat Smart Move More South Carolina (ESMMSC) | www.eatsmartmovemoresc.org
- Palmetto Cycling Coalition (PCC) | www.pccsc.net
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) | www.scdhec.gov
- SScale Down | www.scaledown.org
- South Carolina Safe Routes to School | www.scsaferoutes.org
- National Complete Streets Coalition | www.completestreets.org
- Smart Growth America | www.smartgrowthamerica.org
- League of American Bicyclists | www.bikeleague.org
- ChangeLab Solutions | www.changelabsolutions.org
- America Walks | www.americawalks.org
- Alliance for Walking and Biking | www.bikewalkalliance.org

Tools

- Funding Biking and Walking Infrastructure & Programs in South Carolina: Eligible Sources – PCC | <http://pccsc.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Funding-Biking-and-Walking-Facilities-in-SC.pdf>
- South Carolina Complete Streets Toolbook – ESMMSC, PCC, SCDHEC | <http://bit.ly/sccompletestreetstoolbook>
- (Re)Building Downtown: A Guidebook for Revitalization – Smart Growth America | www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/rebuilding-downtown.pdf
- Let's Go! SC | <http://www.letsgosc.org/category/move-more>

If your community has seen economic benefits as a result of becoming more walkable and/or bikeable, we want to hear from you. Contact us at: admin@eatsmartmovemoresc.org.

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