



# Economic Recovery & Resiliency Plan



ONE REGION  Opportunities  
Roadmap | for All



FINAL | JUNE 2022

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Dear Neighbor,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present to you One Region Roadmap: Opportunities for All. Through an 18-month wide-reaching and collaborative process, our three partner organizations – the Berkeley Charleston Dorchester Council of Governments, the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce, and the Charleston Regional Development Alliance – led the effort to meaningfully engage residents across the tri-county region in the development of this plan.

Today, One Region Roadmap represents the work of the most comprehensive partnership of business, government, academic, nonprofit and community leaders in our region's history. As a result, I firmly believe this community-based economic recovery and resiliency plan will define a healthy greater Charleston while offering real solutions, implementable actions, and measurable results.

I would like to personally thank everyone who spent the time contributing to the plan – nearly 5,000 people in total – by attending one of 16 focus groups or public meetings, answering a survey or attending our virtual public meeting. Your voices were heard and helped influence the strategies that will make this an actionable roadmap to economic prosperity for all people in our region.

Although countless hours have already been invested in the development of this roadmap, it is just the starting point. **What comes next is most important – how we work together as a region to implement it.** There is a tremendous amount of data in here, but we hope you find it useful, accessible and an authentic representation of the challenges we face and the opportunities that lie ahead. I encourage you to spend some time reading through this roadmap and thinking about how you or your organization can participate in moving the region forward.

Warm Regards,



KENDRA STEWART, PH.D.  
PROFESSOR & DIRECTOR  
THE RILEY CENTER FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES  
COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON

*One Region Chair*

# ONE REGION Roadmap | Opportunities for All

## ONE REGION – A REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

One Region is a regional partnership formed to strengthen our economy and produce opportunities for all residents by delivering strategies and actions that make a difference in peoples' lives.

## ONE REGION ROADMAP: OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

One Region Roadmap: Opportunities for All is an economic recovery and resiliency plan for the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region. It is guided by input from residents, and the Roadmap's ultimate success will lie in its ability to create real change.

We are each responsible for moving our community forward. This plan challenges us to ensure the region's economic prosperity is inclusive and that all residents have the opportunity to participate and thrive.

This effort was made possible through a U.S. Economic Development Administration grant secured by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments, with additional support from partner agencies.

Regional prosperity is linked to an area's ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major impacts to its economy. As diverse and dynamic as the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region is, our economy was not immune to the impacts of COVID-19. As our people and businesses continue to recover, our region needs a robust, proactive, and actionable roadmap to economic prosperity, stability, and equitable opportunities for all.

## ECONOMIC RECOVERY VARIES ACROSS THE REGION

The pandemic exposed economic risks few could have predicted at the start of 2020. In the immediate months following March 2020, employment disruptions severely impacted families living paycheck to paycheck. Unemployment spiked as industries closed their doors. Businesses grappled with how to implement new social distancing best practices. And we all got more familiar with our homes.

In the nearly two years following, ongoing questions linger. Labor force participation is at a 10-year low nationally. Global supply chain disruptions and shifting consumer preferences plague manufacturers. And a virus that refuses to wane continues to impact the tourism industry.

One Region Roadmap is an initiative focused on the implementation of tangible strategies to accelerate recovery from the pandemic and safeguard against future economic disruptions. In discussions with regional stakeholders, one thing is clear: the impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt differently across the region. Where some communities describe the economy as 'robust' or 'resilient,' others describe their community as 'on life support.'

## WHO DOES THIS PLAN PRIORITIZE?

**800,000+**  
PEOPLE

**304,000**  
HOUSEHOLDS

**385,100**  
WORKERS

**20,300**  
BUSINESSES

**27**  
MUNICIPALITIES

**THREE**  
COUNTIES

**ONE**  
REGION

## HOW LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS DESCRIBE THE REGION TODAY:

-  **POSITIVELY ADJUSTING.**
-  **RESILIENT.**
-  **MAKING IT HAPPEN.**
-  **VAXXED AND BACK.**
-  **ROBUST.**
-  **VIGILANT.**
-  **CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC.**
-  **HOPEFULLY IMPROVING.**
-  **READY FOR TAKEOFF.**
-  **ON LIFE SUPPORT.**
-  **UNSETTLED.**
-  **WEARY. WARY.**
-  **WATCHFUL.**

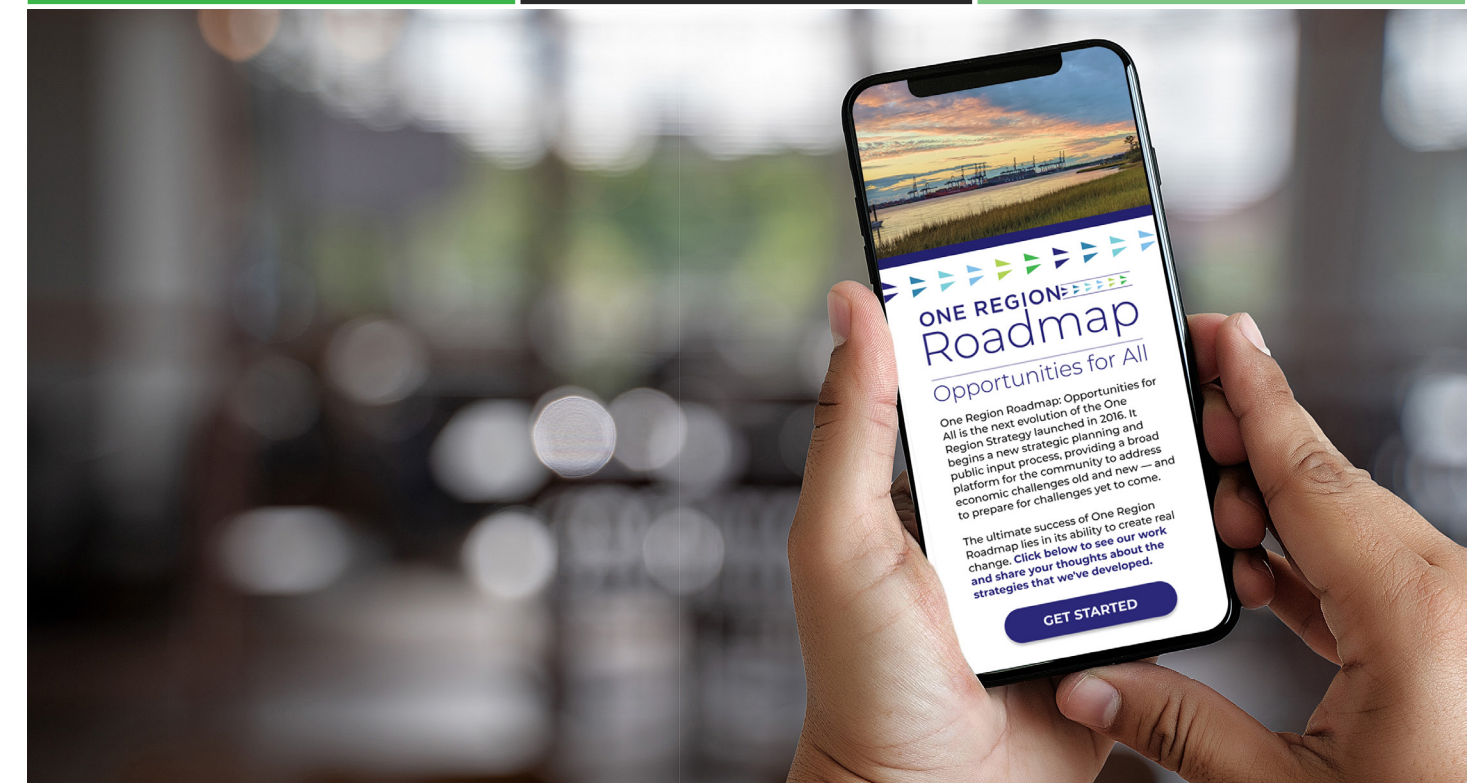
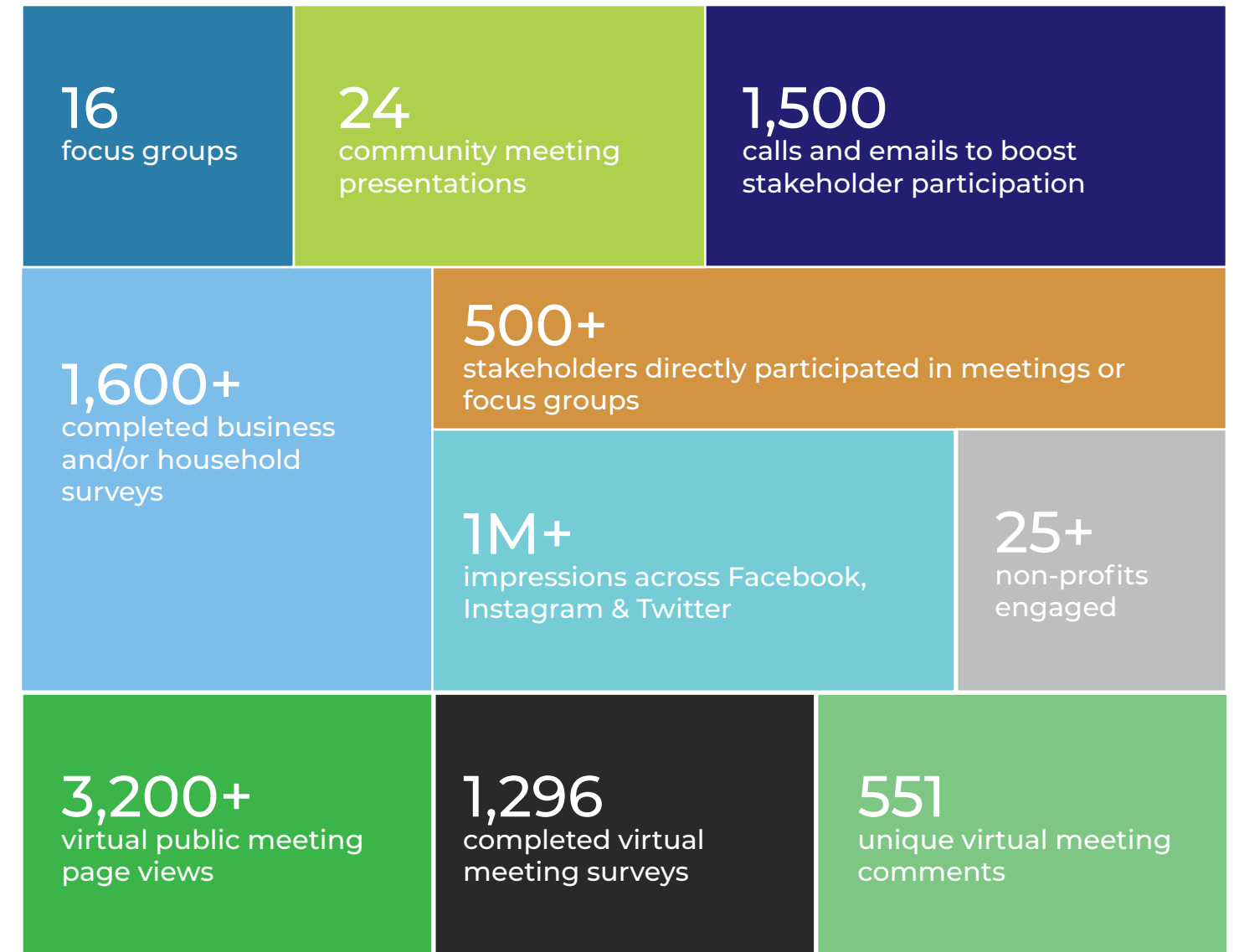
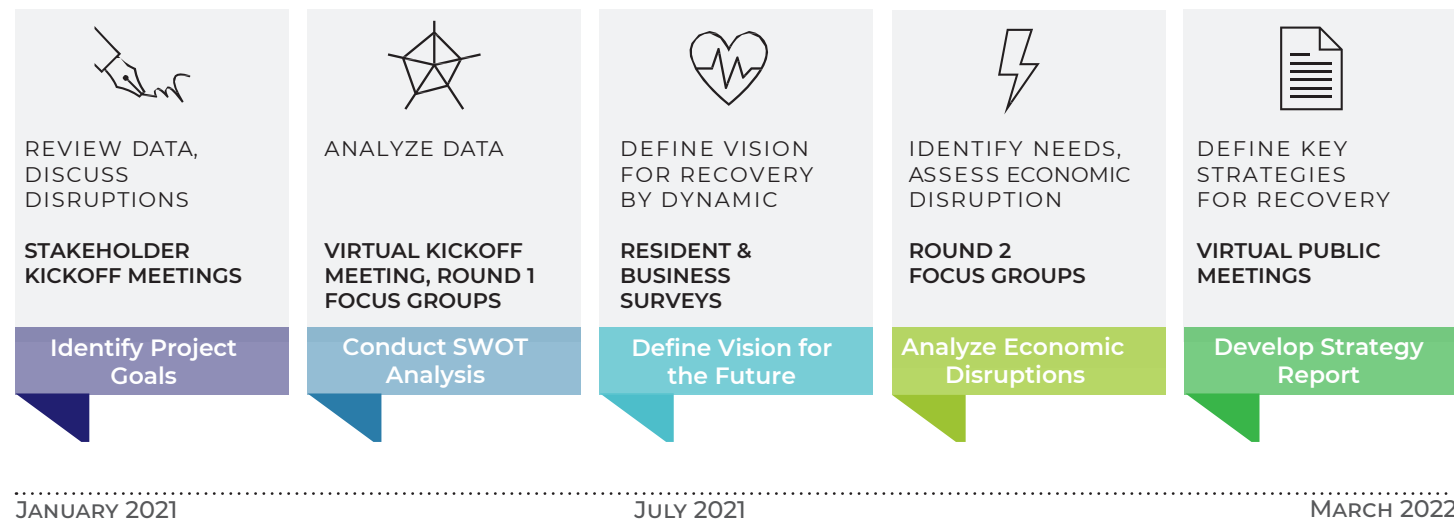
## BUILDING THE ROADMAP

### BALANCING ANALYSIS AND OUTREACH

One Region Roadmap is built on a combination of analysis and engagement. Our approach began with an assessment of the existing conditions and identification of current and future economic disruptions. Quantitative analysis focused on key economic clusters and topics that arose in discussions with stakeholders. Data informing the strategic plan was collected from the U.S. Census, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Household Pulse Survey tables, CoStar, Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS®, and EMSI, among other sources.

### VOICES WITHIN THE PLAN

The process to identify strategic priorities for economic recovery and resiliency included multiple touchpoints with stakeholders and the community. Initial discussions with stakeholder groups – including the Council of Governments, Charleston Metro Chamber, Charleston Regional Development Alliance, and more – were used to identify initial implications of the pandemic on households and businesses. A first round of focus groups followed the initial meetings. Each focus group conducted a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats assessment on a specific topic area. Household and business surveys were then distributed to solicit feedback from a broader audience. Surveys were distributed virtually and in-person at community centers such as libraries and churches. Following a second round of focus groups, One Region Roadmap solicited feedback from the public again through an online public input webpage. The public input webpage included findings from the analysis and requested feedback from participants on preferred strategies for inclusion within the plan. Throughout the entire process, representatives from One Region Roadmap have attended community meetings to raise awareness around the strategic planning process.





**VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Picture a thriving economy with equitable opportunities for all to lead productive, fulfilling lives; a region where all residents, regardless of economic status, have quality housing choices, lifelong education opportunities and access to diverse well-paying careers. That's the vision of a healthy Charleston community.

One Region Roadmap is organized around eight Regional Dynamics from the original One Region Plan. Regional dynamics are split into two categories: **Themes & Action Areas**. Equity and Economic Momentum are overarching themes interwoven throughout the analyses and strategies related to each action area in the plan.

Each regional dynamic along with a vision for the future in Our Region is included below. The following eight chapters present summary information on each of the regional dynamics, followed by a chapter on strategies to address the key challenges identified within each topic.

THEMES



**EQUITY**

A region where all residents have equitable access to high-quality education, jobs and housing



**ECONOMIC MOMENTUM**

A diverse and resilient regional economy that facilitates job growth and delivers opportunities for all

ACTION AREAS



**AFFORDABILITY**

A region with diverse and attainable housing choices for all residents



**GLOBAL FLUENCY**

A globally connected region welcoming to multinational businesses and international residents and visitors



**INFRASTRUCTURE**

A region with modern infrastructure that contributes to a high quality of life and a competitive local economy



**INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

A region propelled by innovation, small business growth and entrepreneurship



**TALENT**

A regional workforce prepared for current and future career opportunities



**QUALITY OF PLACE**

A region with future development that preserves character and natural environments while improving access and transportation







# EQUITY

The Charleston region thrives when all residents regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic characteristics receive a high-quality education, obtain living wage jobs, live in housing they can afford, maintain good health, benefit the region's economy, and enjoy the area's place-based assets. In 2019, the Charleston region was 64% white, 25% Black and 11% other people of color. Currently, the region's Black residents, making up the majority of the minority population, are outpaced by white residents in the areas of educational attainment, household wealth creation, employment levels, and business ownership. Improving equitable opportunities within each metric is a key goal for the Charleston region.



## A region where all residents have equitable access to high-quality education, jobs and housing.

There is both a moral charge and a strong business case for cultivating more equitable opportunities for people living in the Charleston region, particularly for Black residents and other people of color. This is not news to many as there are already regional efforts underway to implement and champion Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies within the private, public and non-profit sectors. Despite these efforts, gaps remain in establishing a shared understanding of key equity issues, tracking and reporting equity metrics, and enhancing coordination across different sectors. Additionally, COVID-related shocks disproportionately impacted socially vulnerable populations across the region, due to underlying levels of poverty, lack of broadband access, employment in service sector jobs, and high housing cost burden.

**A LARGE GAP IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT EXISTS BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK RESIDENTS IN THE REGION.** 44.7% of white residents in the region have a bachelor's degree or higher, versus 20% of Black residents who have obtained a four-

year degree (2019, US Census). This gap challenges efforts to strengthen the regional workforce and puts less-educated job seekers at a disadvantage when competing for the region's well-paying jobs.

**INCOME LEVELS FOR MINORITY HOUSEHOLDS LAG BEHIND NON-MINORITY HOUSEHOLDS.** Even when education levels are held equal, there is a persistent wealth gap between Black and Latinx Americans and white Americans. The COVID pandemic shone a spotlight on this gap as low-income, lower-earning households had less savings to offset pandemic-driven job and income losses.

**LOCAL BUSINESS OWNERSHIP IN THE REGION REMAINS PREDOMINANTLY WHITE.** 82% of business owners identify as white or non-minority (2017 US Census, American Business Survey). Female- and minority-owned businesses were also hit particularly hard by the impacts of COVID, exacerbating existing disparities in business ownership. Many impacted Black- and Latinx-owned enterprises and businesses also reported difficulty accessing federal relief funds, like the Paycheck Protection Program, compounding business losses and closures in Black and Brown communities.



### QUICK FACTS

- 1 28%** minority residents live in census tracts with a high social vulnerability index
- 2 2x** Black residents are twice as likely to live below the Poverty Level
- 3 1.6x** unemployment for Black residents was 1.6x greater than white residents in 2019
- 4 19%** decrease in low wage jobs in Charleston County in August 2021 compared to January 2020

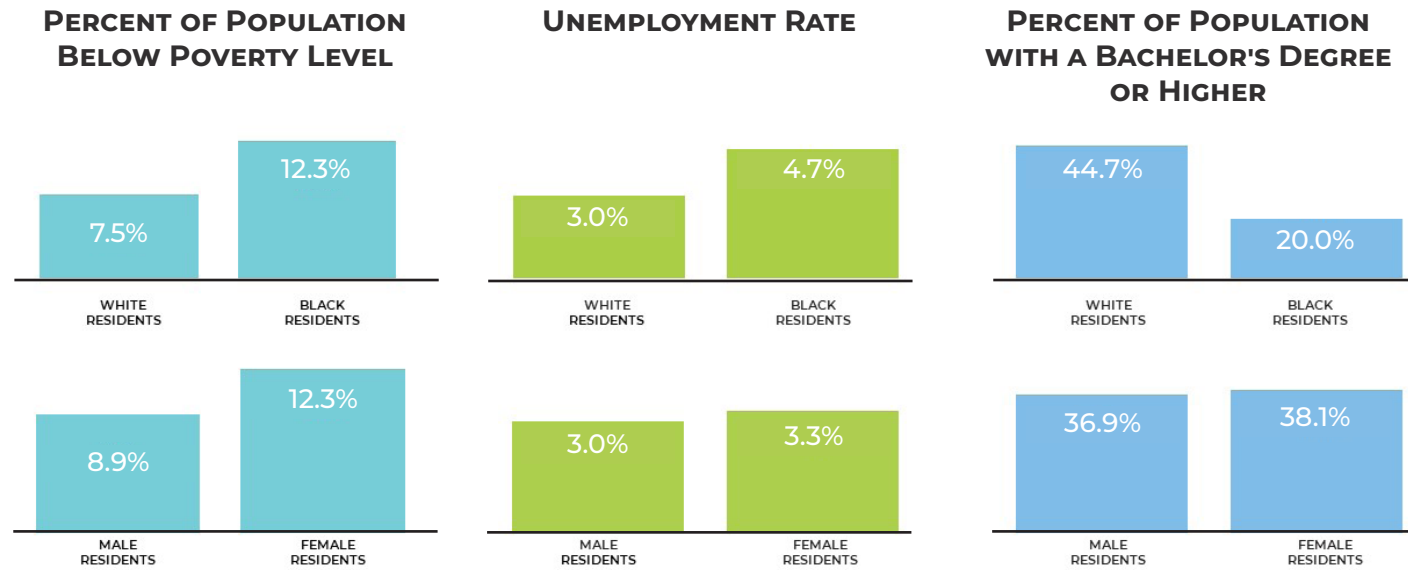


Equity is one of five critical components to achieving a 'Healthy Charleston' region



## CHARLESTON REGION ECONOMIC OUTCOMES BY RACE AND SEX

Economic outcomes vary for different demographic groups in the Charleston region, including between Black and white residents and male and female residents. Both Black residents and women report a higher percentage of the population below the respective white and male counterparts. Unemployment is over 50% higher for Black residents than white.

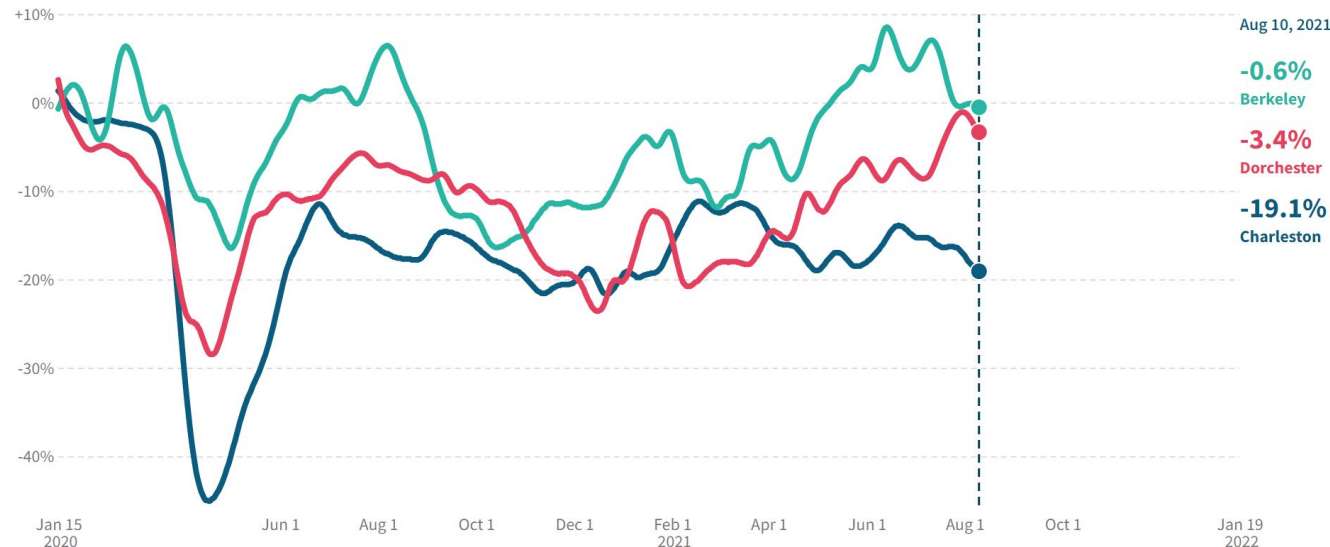


Source: American Community Survey, Census 2019, SB Friedman

## INEQUITABLE JOB AND INCOME LOSSES

Employment disruptions throughout the pandemic have been felt most acutely by workers earning the lowest wages. Lower-wage employment declined by over 40% at the height of the pandemic in Charleston County. Berkeley and Dorchester counties were similarly impacted, with reductions of 12% and 28% respectively in April 2020. Despite overall employment exceeding pre-pandemic levels in all counties in August 2021, low-wage employment data still shows substantial declines. Some of the employment decline is attributable to employees choosing to exit the workforce or opting to pursue higher-paying positions rather than returning to low-wage work.

### PERCENT CHANGE IN REGIONAL LOW WAGE JOBS<sup>(1)</sup> BY COUNTY, COMPARED TO JAN. 2020



<sup>(1)</sup> Low wage jobs defined as <\$27K/Year  
Change in employment not seasonally adjusted, indexed to January 4-31, 2020. Sources: U.S. Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Opportunity Insights, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, SB Friedman

## PANDEMIC IMPACTS MAY BE MORE SEVERE FOR SOCIALLY VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Social vulnerability refers to the potential negative effects on human health and communities caused external stresses. Reducing social vulnerability supports healthier communities and mitigates against economic loss. The Social Vulnerability Index is a composite of metrics within four themes:

- ▶ Socioeconomic status
- ▶ Household composition
- ▶ Race, ethnicity, language
- ▶ Housing and transportation

Within the Charleston Region, census tracts with a low social vulnerability index form a ring around higher-employment centers. High social vulnerability census tracts are generally located along the I-26 corridor and on the periphery of the region in more rural zones with lower access to jobs and transportation.

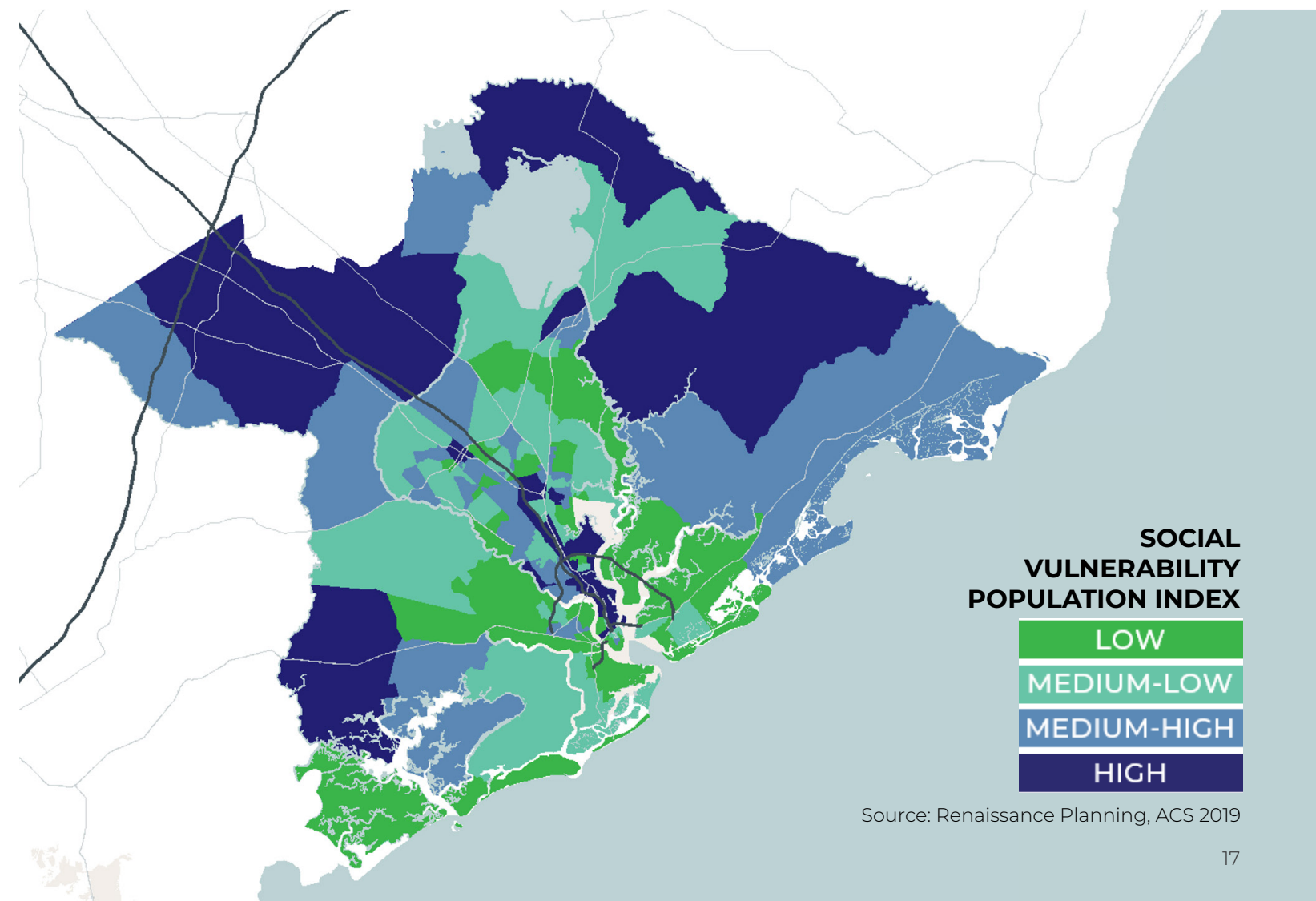
Minority residents are nearly twice as likely to live in high social vulnerability census tracts than non-minority residents. Overall, 19% of residents live in high-vulnerability tracts, 28% of all minority residents.

**19%**

RESIDENTS LIVE IN HIGH-VULNERABILITY TRACTS

**28%**

MINORITY RESIDENTS LIVE IN HIGH-VULNERABILITY TRACTS



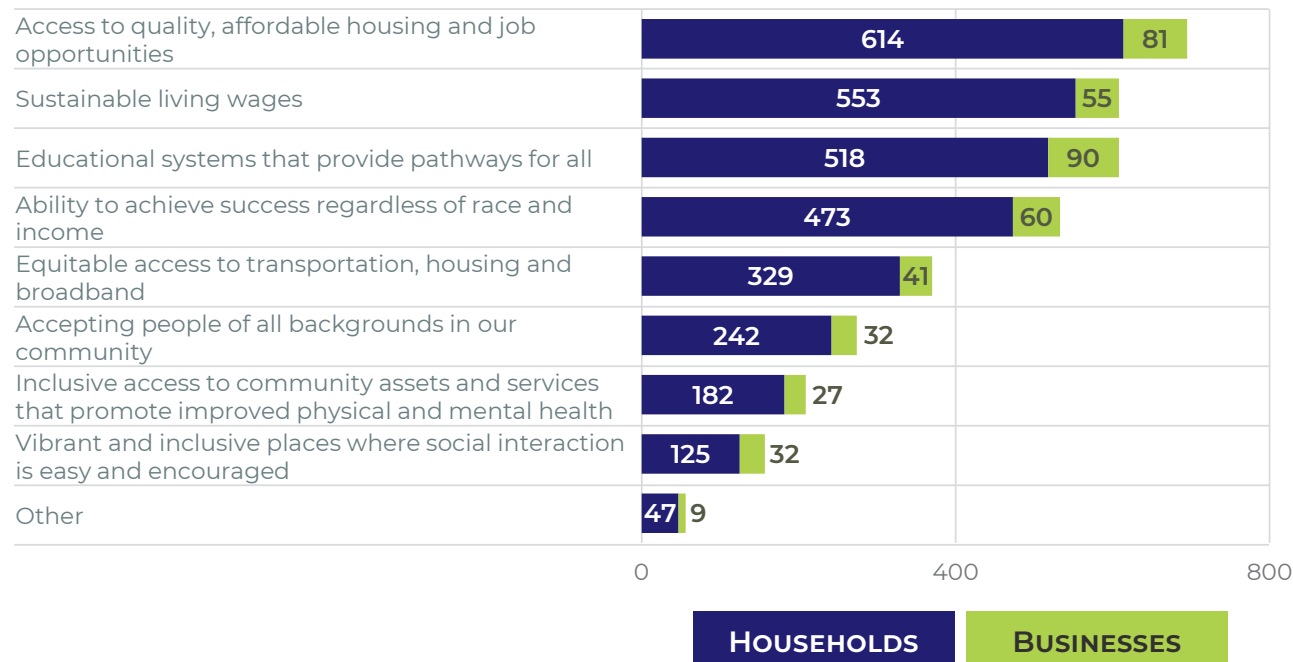
Source: Renaissance Planning, ACS 2019

## WHAT WE HEARD

Survey feedback from both household and business respondents emphasized the desire for an equitable economic recovery. When asked to select essential components for a healthy Charleston from a defined list, respondents prioritized equity, affordable housing, access to jobs, educational systems and sustainable wages. Similar themes rose to the top in write-in responses. The terms 'affordable,' 'housing,' 'education,' and 'inclusive' were in the top five most frequent responses for both households and businesses when asked "what words, concepts or phrases would you use to describe a 'Healthy Charleston?'".

### EQUITY, HOUSING, JOBS, EDUCATION AND WAGES ESSENTIAL TO SURVEY RESPONDENTS.

Which of the following components do you see as essential to achieving a 'Healthy Charleston?' (select your top three)



### BUSINESSES AND HOUSEHOLDS AGREE ON DESCRIPTION OF A HEALTHY CHARLESTON.

What three words, concepts or phrases would you use to describe a "Healthy Charleston" region from your perspective?



## EQUITY SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- Regional economic growth, including growth in women-owned and small businesses
- Collaboration between public entities to increase internet accessibility
- Donor community is supportive of nonprofits
- Training programs available through Trident Technical College
- Local talent and existing organizations

### WEAKNESSES

- Lack of small business resources, especially for startups and minority and women entrepreneurs
- Pandemic presented challenges: small businesses struggled to process PPP Loans, small business owners relied upon personal funds to keep businesses afloat
- Jobs to housing are not in balance in many areas across the region
- Limited resource availability
- Lack of partnerships between institutions and financial organizations
- Pandemic reduced availability of education and technical training opportunities

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Relationship building between businesses, lenders, nonprofits, education/training institutions, government
- Initiatives to expand broadband access; leverage federal programs focused on rural broadband
- Build on collaborations built during the pandemic
- Engage political leadership
- Provide resources to nonprofits offering training services in rural areas

### THREATS

- Displacement and gentrification driven by economic prosperity
- Lack of affordable housing
- Enrollment in education/training programs is declining despite significant job demand
- Uneven economic recovery across region
- Increase in homelessness
- Nonprofits closing their doors
- Lack of capital and access to resources for minority and women-owned businesses
- Stagnant infrastructure
- Decrease in youth programming





# ECONOMIC MOMENTUM

2021 was a year of opportunity and challenge for the Charleston region. Some businesses flourished while others struggled to survive during a year of uncertainty and ongoing disruption driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the decade leading up to 2020, the Charleston region experienced rapid population and job growth. This growth continued through 2020, but felt different. How we work changed. Where we work changed. And for many – priorities changed. These changes will have implications for decades to come and the economy has already begun adapting to meet this new reality.



# A diverse and resilient regional economy that facilitates job growth and delivers opportunities for all

**THE ECONOMY IN THE CHARLESTON METRO IS DEFINED BY ITS RESILIENCY.** Following the 1995 closing of the Charleston Naval Base & Shipyard, the region charted a new course rooted in economic diversity and resiliency to guard against substantial impact from future economic disruptions. Over the past two decades, its economy has seen growth across the economic landscape: from jobs in manufacturing, to tourism and entertainment, to knowledge creation.

**FOUR ECONOMIC CLUSTERS PROPEL GROWTH WITHIN THE REGION.** In a decade of nearly universal job growth, four economic clusters continue to attract increasing attention as high-growth, high-opportunity, high-wage clusters: aerospace, automotive, life sciences, and information technology. Collectively, these four clusters are 'Priority Clusters' for focusing regional economic development efforts. From 2010 to 2021 – a period of widespread growth in the region – the four Priority Clusters increased from accounting for 9% of all traded cluster jobs to 15% of all traded cluster jobs. The outsized employment growth in Priority Clusters is attributable to an attractive business climate,

regional investments in infrastructure and talent development, and corporate partners committed to expanding the presence of each industry.

**THE TALENT SHORTAGE WAS A LIMITING FACTOR FOR GROWTH PRE-COVID.** From 2010-2019, regional employment grew by nearly 30%. At the end of 2019, total employment was at an all-time high of over 400,000 workers while unemployment was at an impressive low of 2.3%. A decade of growth across the economy was pivoting discussions from a focus on economic development to workforce development, attraction and retention. The low unemployment rate combined with frequent corporate expansion and relocation announcements made it increasingly evident the region could only grow as quickly as the workforce could fill awaiting employment opportunities.

**COVID ACCELERATED ECONOMIC PINCH-POINTS BUT DID NOT STOP MOMENTUM.** The long-term economic impact of COVID-19 remains unseen, however initial indicators suggest the Charleston region economy merely slowed – never stopped. Throughout the pandemic, the Charleston region consistently reported lower unemployment than the national average. Regional unemployment averaged 6.0% in 2020; as of September 2021, it had nearly recovered at 2.9%. In responding to One Region Roadmap surveys, 42% of businesses reported they continue to slowly recover from the pandemic, while 56% already recovered, were never affected or reported growth. Companies that indicated ongoing recovery noted that labor shortages, COVID-related behavior changes, supply chain shortages and other factors continued to inhibit a full return to business as normal.



## QUICK FACTS

- 1 **400,000**  
employees across all sectors, a 30% increase from 2010
- 2 **2.9%**  
regional unemployment rate in September 2021, nearly recovered to pre-COVID unemployment
- 3 **\$19**  
median hourly wage in the Charleston Metro in May 2020
- 4 **56%**  
business survey respondents have recovered, grown, or were never affected by the pandemic
- 5 **22%**  
household survey respondents report 2021 income earnings will be lower due to COVID



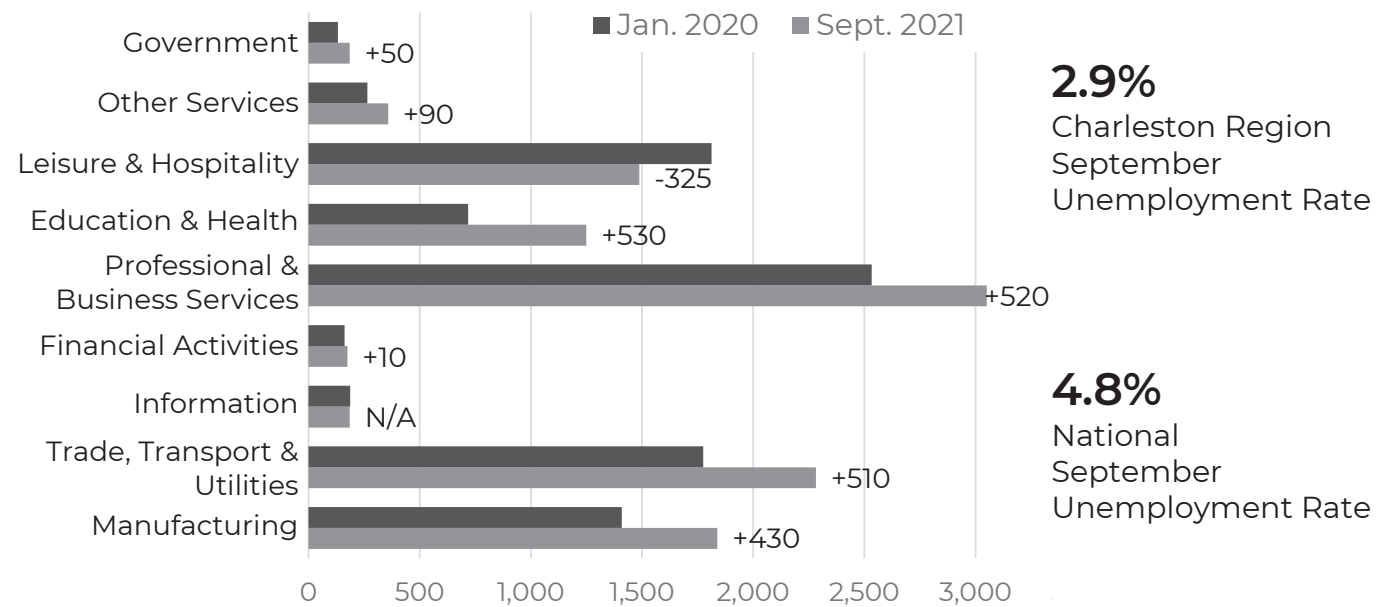
The Charleston region is home to a strong economy and resilient communities



## ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN THE CHARLESTON REGION HAS OUTPACED THE NATION

Unemployment in the Charleston region is regularly below the national average. Throughout the pandemic, the region regularly outperformed the national rate of recovery (e.g., 2.9% September 2021 unemployment rate compared to 4.8% nationally). Workers in Professional & Business Services, Education & Health Services, and Trade, Transportation & Utilities accounted for the greatest increase in unemployment counts from January 2020 to September 2021. Current unemployment is highest in Professional & Business Services sectors.

### UNEMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR RELATIVE TO PRE-PANDEMIC

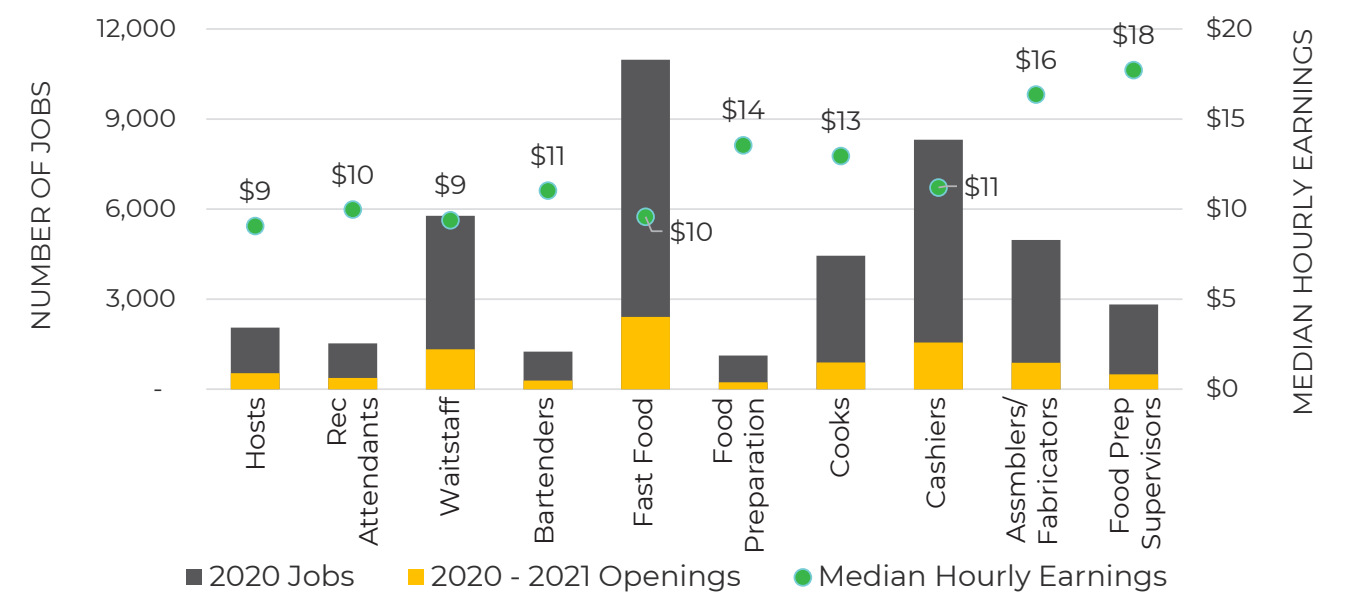


Sources: BLS, EMSI, SB Friedman

## A QUICK RECOVERY HAS LED TO LABOR MARKET SHORTAGES; INCREASING FOCUS ON WAGES

While reported unemployment remains high for workers within retail and service industries, so do the job postings. High employment occupations – those with more than 1,000 jobs in the region – that have the highest number of job openings are all within service and retail sectors. The majority of these high-turnover positions also report earnings below the median hourly wage of \$19 per hour.

### WAGES IN OCCUPATIONS WITH THE MOST JOB POSTINGS



Sources: BLS, EMSI, SB Friedman





## EXISTING ECONOMIC COMPOSITION: TRADED CLUSTERS

The region has a diverse economy. Economic growth is often evaluated through an analysis of Traded Clusters. 'Traded clusters' are groups of related industries that serve markets beyond the region within which they are located. Within the Charleston region, four clusters have been identified as 'high impact' clusters: Aerospace, Automotive, Life Sciences and Information Technology. Each of the four High Impact Clusters were selected as regional

priorities due to the higher-wage jobs offered, a multiplier impact on the economy, an existing locational advantage, or potential for tremendous growth.

Beyond the High Impact Clusters, all segments of the economy continued to excel over the past 10-years. Manufacturing clusters had the strongest performance. However knowledge creation, business services, and tourism also reported growth.

### CLUSTER CATEGORIES

**TRANSITIONING:** Clusters that are downsizing. Jobs are declining and there is a low location quotient\*

**MATURE:** Strong and stable clusters. There is a high location quotient but limited job growth.

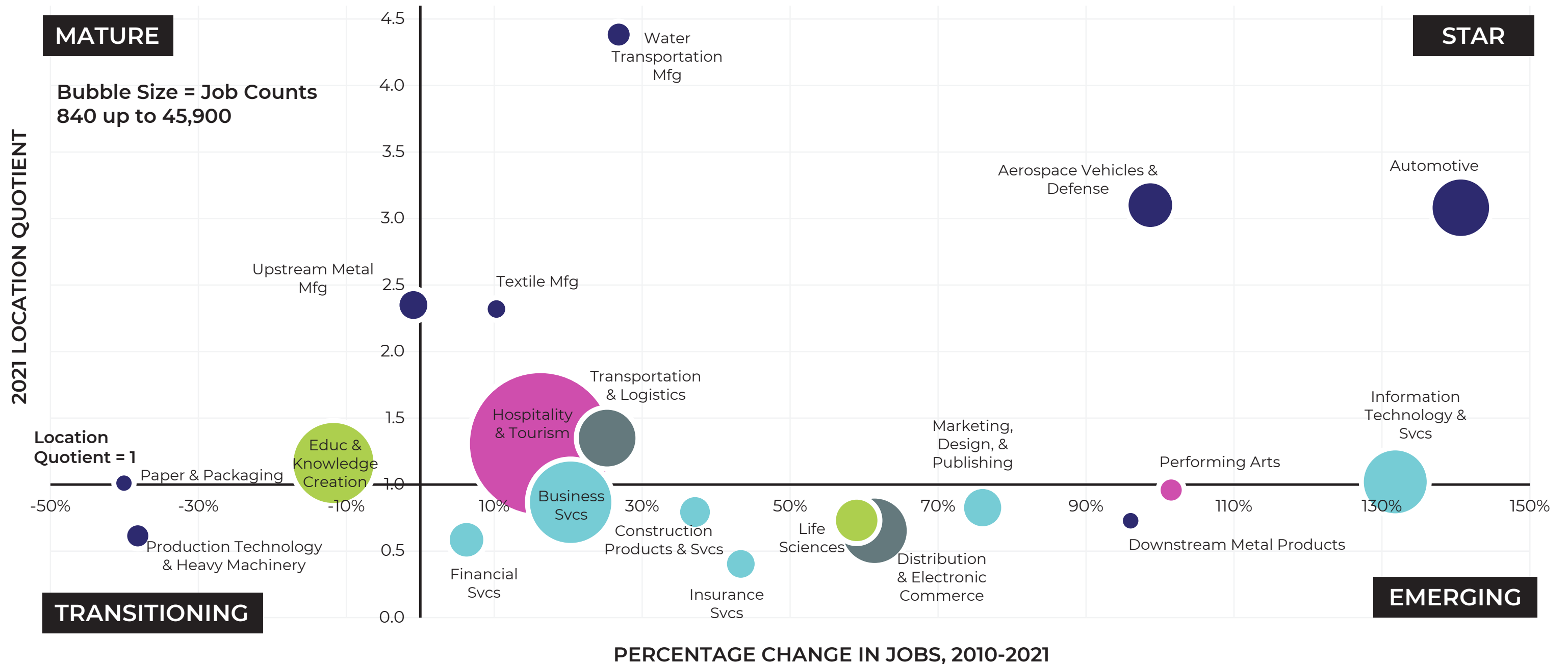
**EMERGING:** Clusters with strong growth but no locational advantage. These sectors could become 'Star' sectors.

**STAR:** Clusters with high growth and a high location quotient.

\* Location quotient is a measure of a region's specialization in an industry. It measures a region's share of jobs in an industry relative to the share of jobs in that industry nationwide.

- KNOWLEDGE CREATION
- BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
- MANUFACTURING
- TOURISM & ENTERTAINMENT
- LOGISTICS

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMPOSITION





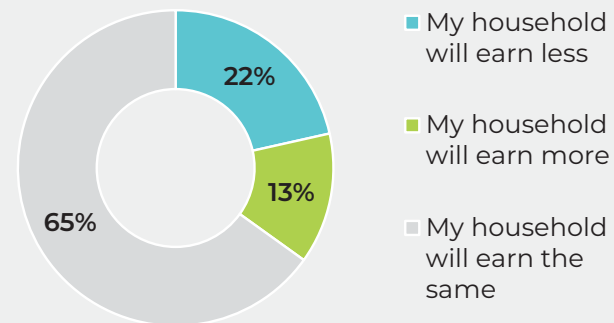
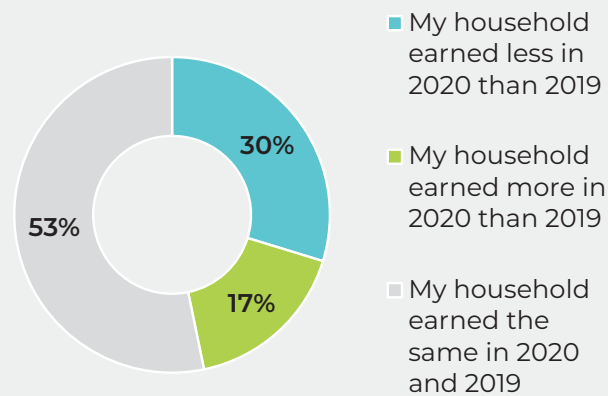
## WHAT WE HEARD

Survey responses indicate that households and businesses experienced a wide range of pandemic-driven impacts. Initially, over 30% of households reported earning less in 2020 than in 2019. As of 2021, 22% of households still expected a continued decline in earnings as a result of the pandemic; however, a growing share of survey respondents indicated their incomes had returned to normal. Businesses reported similar variation. The majority of survey respondents reported their business was either continuing to slowly recover (42%) or had already recovered (32%).

How did COVID impact your 2020 household earnings? (Excluding federal stimulus payments)

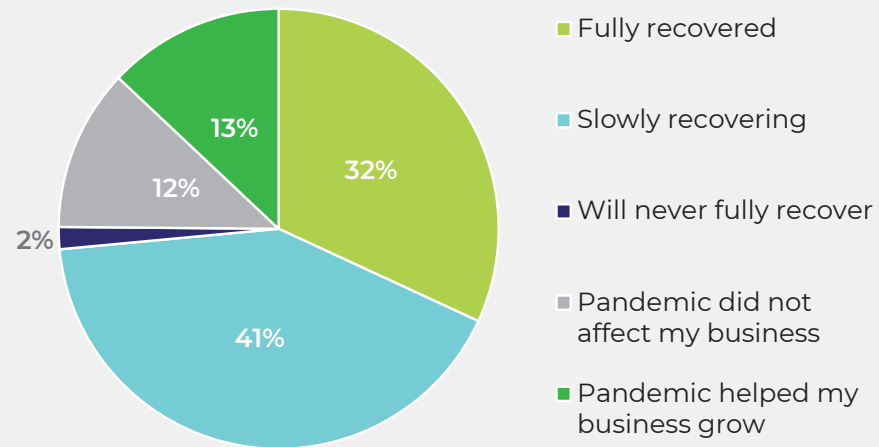
How do you expect COVID to impact your 2021 household earnings?

HOUSEHOLDS



Which statement best describes your business:

BUSINESSES



**41%**  
OF BUSINESSES REPORTED THEY ARE SLOWLY RECOVERING

**2%**  
OF BUSINESSES STATED THEY WILL NEVER FULLY RECOVER

**57%**  
OF BUSINESSES REPORTED HAVING RECOVERED, NEVER BEEN AFFECTED, OR GROWN

### SURVEY WRITE-IN RESPONSES FOCUSED ON AN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR ALL

Example survey responses:

“ Increased wages Affordable housing  
Competitive, innovative, inclusive ”

## ECONOMIC MOMENTUM SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Diverse business clusters
- ▶ Rich network of organizations focus on economic development
- ▶ Rich history
- ▶ Quality of place, natural beauty
- ▶ Workforce training programs through the Metro Chamber, Council of Governments and Technical College
- ▶ Growth in manufacturing
- ▶ Major infrastructure - including recent port improvements
- ▶ Quality of life

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Stress on region's infrastructure from high growth, including traffic congestion and strain on natural environment
- ▶ Housing affordability - lack of coordinated effort to develop enough housing for all residents
- ▶ Negative attitudes towards growth, transportation, and affordable housing
- ▶ Community engagement on shared problems

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Lead the state in public transit
- ▶ Vehicle electrification and supportive infrastructure
- ▶ Disruption to global manufacturing could bolster demand for local manufacturing
- ▶ Treating broadband as a utility
- ▶ Develop traditional office-oriented areas into more balanced live-work area
- ▶ Rebrand as a remote work hub

### THREATS

- ▶ Flooding, natural disasters, and rising sea levels
- ▶ Remote work leading to a higher rate of population growth, unsustainable for local governments
- ▶ NIMBY (not in my backyard) attitude to development
- ▶ Potential lack of balance between growth with conservation and retaining what makes the Charleston region unique
- ▶ Retention of talent across all demographics
- ▶ Inequitable growth across the region
- ▶ Lack of affordable housing for service





# AFFORDABILITY

Especially in the past 18-months, our homes are where we spend the majority of time and where we feel most safe. Housing attainability is indisputably a top priority in the region – housing is the single greatest expenditure for nearly all households. Housing is particularly critical because of the ripple effects housing choice has on so many other facets of life: where our children go to school, where we work, where we shop, how much we shop. A decade of population growth in the region has strained the housing market and was driving up housing prices pre-pandemic. Over the past year, the ongoing surge in new households combined with individual income losses and financial uncertainty renewed the sense of urgency around the need to meaningfully address housing attainability.



## A region with diverse and attainable housing choices for all residents.

Housing attainability is a critical component to quality of life for our residents and economic competitiveness for our businesses.

### **AFFORDABILITY WAS A TOP PRIORITY IN THE TRI-COUNTY PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC AND CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION.**

From 2010 to 2020, the overall population in the Charleston region increased by over 130,000 people, and now exceeds 800,000. This period of population growth was paired with a decade of declining affordability, particularly for renters. Housing cost burden is a useful metric to understand housing affordability, indicative of a household who spends more than 30% of their income on housing. From 2010 to 2019, the number of renters who reported being cost burdened increased by about 7,000 households, an 18% increase. Lower-income households have a substantially higher likelihood to be housing cost burdened: seven out of every 10 households earning less than \$35k annually report being housing cost burdened.

### **THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC COMPOUNDED THE EXISTING HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CRISIS.**

For households living paycheck-to-paycheck and already housing

cost burdened, COVID-19 employment disruptions continue to be a tremendous challenge. Preliminary data on deployment of emergency rental assistance funds available to Charleston and Berkeley county residents indicate that over 2,500 households received assistance to cover late rent payments resulting from the pandemic, collectively receiving over \$13 million in assistance. Despite the assistance, 30% of South Carolina residents late on rental payments indicated they are at least 'somewhat likely' to be evicted on an October 2021 Census Pulse Survey. Due to rental assistance and eviction moratoriums, evictions still remain below pre-pandemic monthly averages. However, temporary federal COVID relief programs are beginning to lapse, and housing affordability is a lingering concern.

**HOUSING ATTAINABILITY HAS REPERCUSSIONS ON THE BROADER ECONOMY.** Housing affordability is a constraining factor for both existing residents and potential newcomers. Over 30% of existing resident respondents indicated they disagree with the notion they 'can afford to live in the type of home and location' they prefer on surveys. Countless previously affordable neighborhoods throughout the region have experienced substantial price changes in recent years as the influx of residents continues. Businesses also echo concerns over housing affordability – over 60% indicating on surveys that housing prices negatively affect their ability to attract new hires. A fundamental aspect to daily life, it is evident that declining housing attainability is top-of-mind for all.



## QUICK FACTS

- 89,600**  
1 estimated households experiencing housing cost burden in 2019 (30% of Charleston region)
- \$13.0 MILLION**  
2 emergency rental assistance granted to 2,500 households within Charleston and Berkeley counties
- +17%**  
3 Increase in median home sale price from January to September 2021
- 32%**  
4 household survey respondents report they cannot afford to live in their preferred housing
- 62%**  
5 business survey respondents report affordability negatively impacts their ability to attract new hires

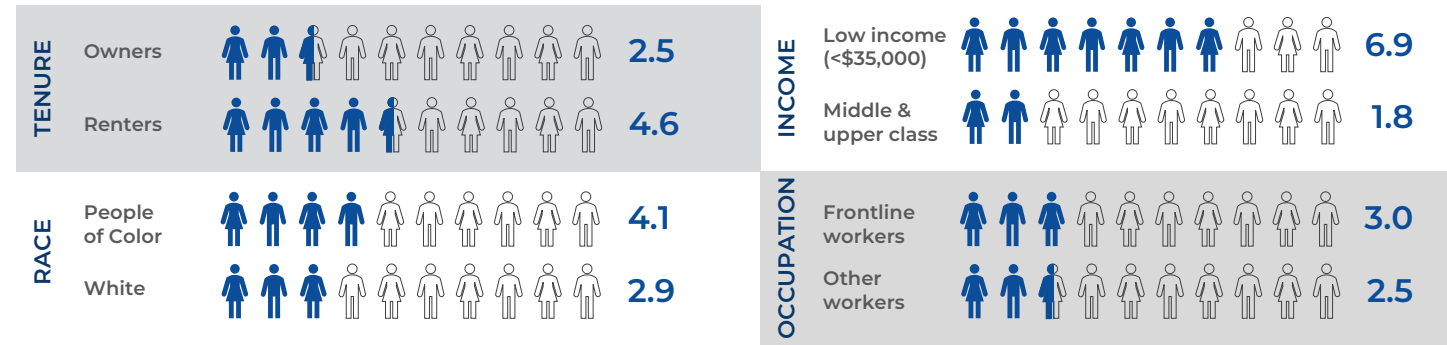




## HOUSING COSTS IMPACT SOME RESIDENTS MORE THAN OTHERS

Overall, the number of cost burdened households in the Charleston region increased by 10,000 households in the past 10-years. Households experience housing affordability differently. Renters, low income, people of color, and frontline workers are disproportionately likely to experience housing cost burden.

### COST-BURDENED HOUSEHOLDS FOR EVERY 10 HOUSEHOLDS IN THE CHARLESTON REGION (2019)



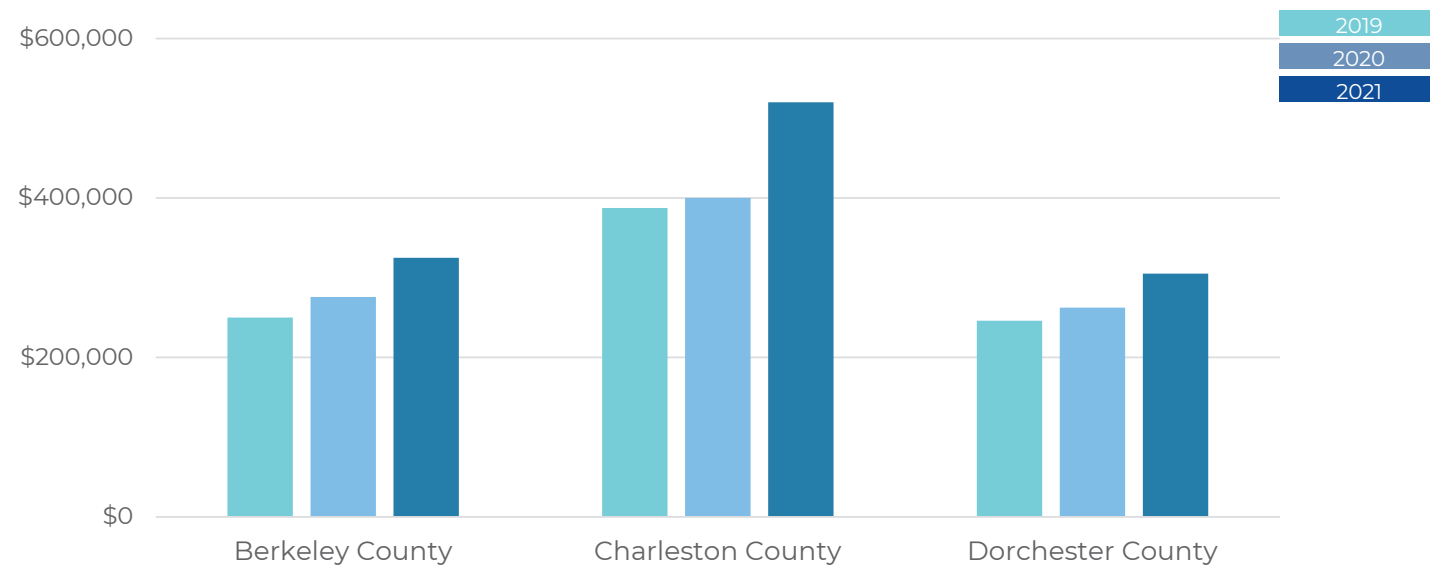
Sources: US Census ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates, SB Friedman

## SINGLE-FAMILY HOME PRICES HAVE INCREASED SHARPLY

Single family home prices have increased across the region. In a year-over-year comparison of sales in August 2019, 2020, and 2021 all three counties reported over a 25% increase in the median sale price.

In 2021 alone, the median sale price increased 17% from January through September. The Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS® reported a 52% year-to-date decline in homes listed as active for sale. Limited supply during a period of rapid population growth continues to impact pricing regionwide.

### MEDIAN SINGLE-FAMILY HOME SALE PRICE

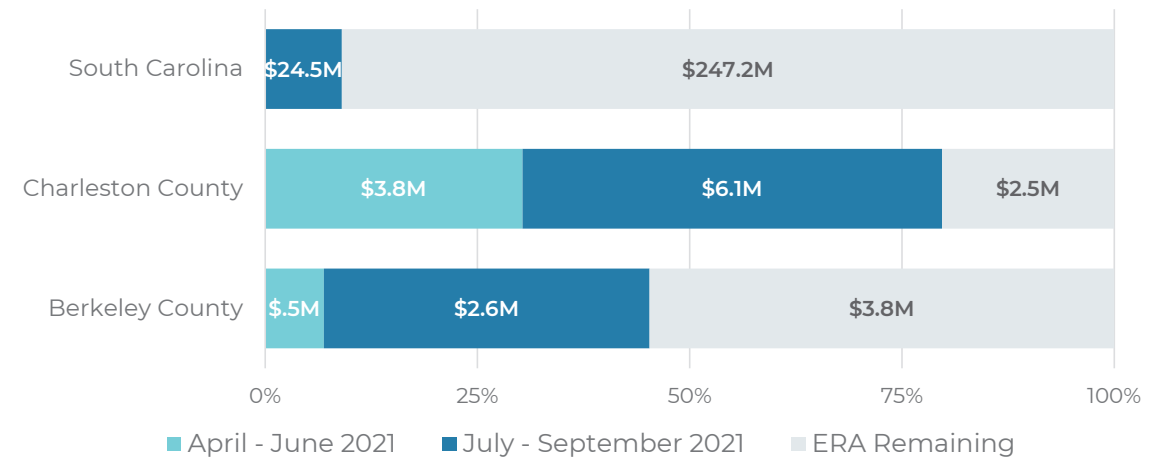


Sources: Charleston Trident Association of REALTORS®, SB Friedman

## EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS VITAL TO HOUSEHOLDS HARD-HIT BY THE PANDEMIC

Charleston and Berkeley counties received a collective \$19.3M in direct emergency rental assistance funds through the Department of Treasury. Through September 30, 2021, \$13.0M were distributed to over 2,500 households across the region. Dorchester County did not receive a direct allocation of ERA funds, however residents are eligible for state funding through SC Housing.

### HOUSEHOLD EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE (ERA) THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2021

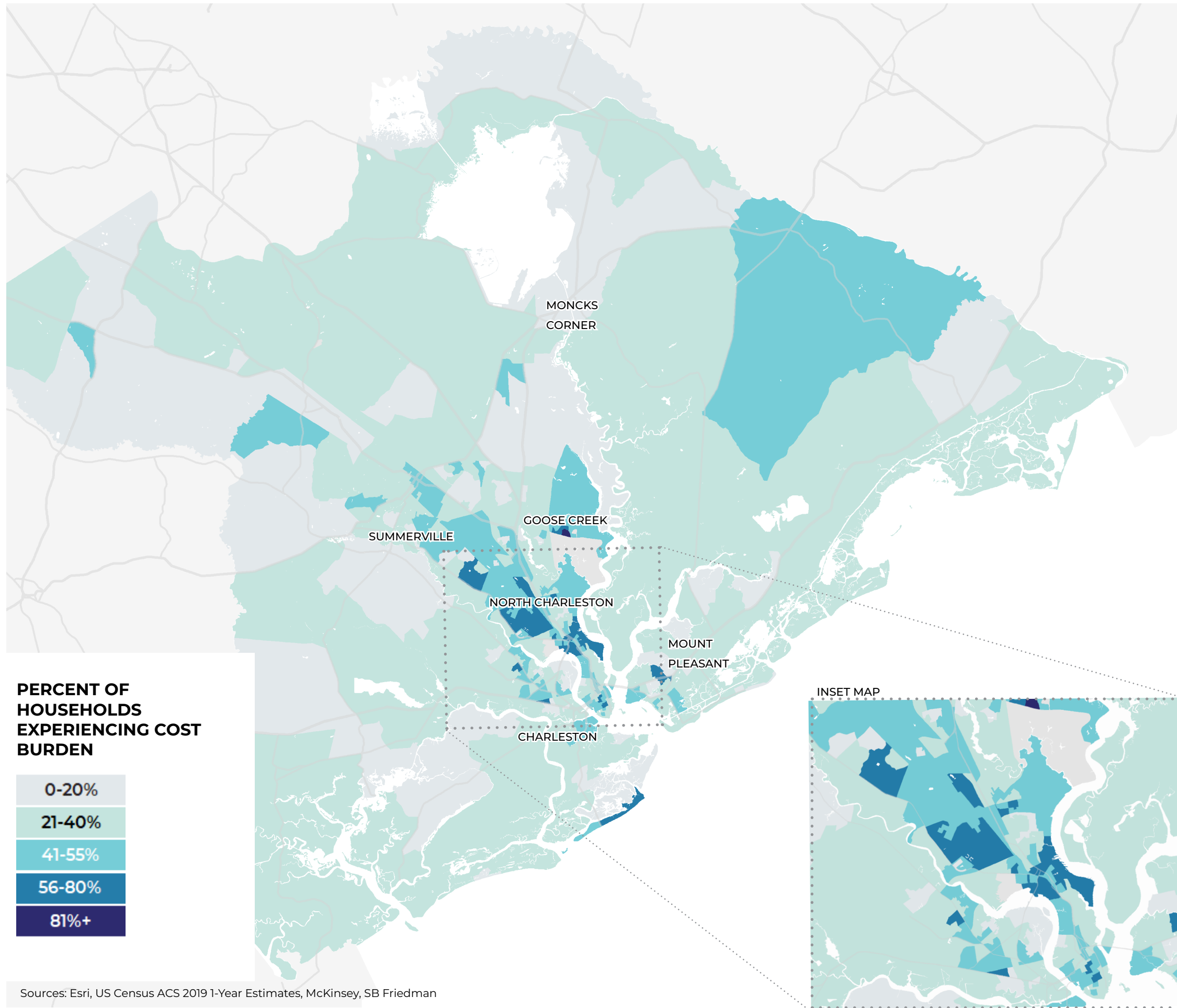


Note: Dorchester County did not receive a direct allocation of Emergency Rental Assistance funds. Dorchester County residents are eligible to request assistance through the state.

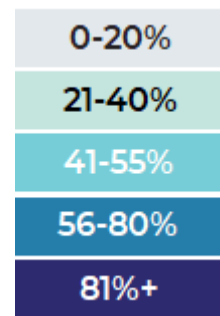
Sources: Department of Treasury, SB Friedman







**PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS EXPERIENCING COST BURDEN**



**HOUSEHOLDS ACROSS THE REGION GRAPPLE WITH HOUSING COST BURDEN**

Housing cost burden is a product of both high costs and economic marginalization. Housing cost burden is highest near the urban core where demand for housing has driven up prices for long-standing residents and newcomers alike. Very few communities across the region don't report a high percentage (20%+) of households reporting cost burden. In certain neighborhoods, there has been a substantial increase in housing cost over the past decade as traffic worsened and there became an increased desire to live closer to job centers in highly walkable neighborhoods.

**89,600**  
REGIONAL HOUSEHOLDS HOUSING COST-BURDENED IN 2019

**21%**  
REGIONAL OWNER HOUSEHOLDS HOUSING COST-BURDENED

**46%**  
REGIONAL RENTER HOUSEHOLDS HOUSING COST-BURDENED

Sources: Esri, US Census ACS 2019 1-Year Estimates, McKinsey, SB Friedman

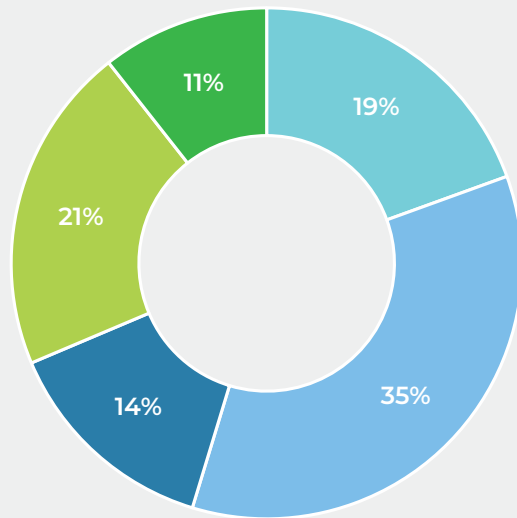


## WHAT WE HEARD

Both household and business surveys indicated housing attainable for all income groups continues to be a challenge within the Tri-County. Nearly one in three household respondents indicated they cannot afford to live in their preferred housing. The housing crisis was reflected in business responses, with over 60% of respondents indicating that housing prices negatively impact their ability to attract new hires.

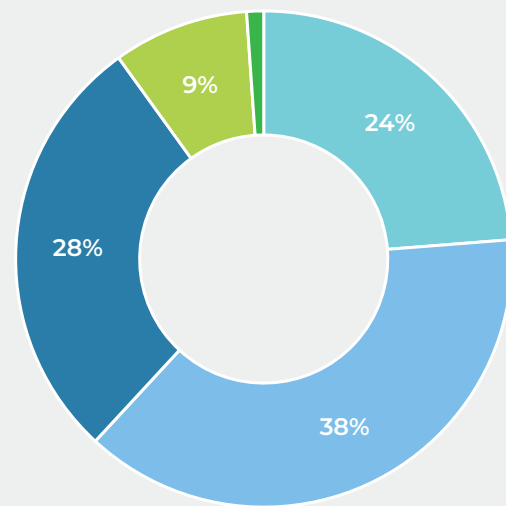
### HOUSEHOLDS

How do you feel about the following statement: **"I can afford to live in the type of home and location I prefer."**



### BUSINESSES

How do you feel about the following statement: **"Housing prices negatively affect my ability to attract new hires."**



STRONGLY DISAGREE
DISAGREE
NEUTRAL
AGREE
STRONGLY AGREE

## SURVEY WRITE-IN RESPONSES EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Example survey responses:

We need a regional approach to affordable housing.

Much more affordable housing—and not just for the middle class.

Housing is out of control.

Affordable housing please, there is low income housing or housing that is expensive. I'm a teacher, it's hard to find a place I'd like to live that I can afford.

## AFFORDABILITY SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Regional collaboration and unity around the urgent need for housing
- ▶ Existing homeownership programs available through local and state providers
- ▶ Active community loan funds
- ▶ Nonprofit initiatives
- ▶ Emergency rental assistance programs

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Lack of diverse housing options, including those which allow seniors to age in place
- ▶ Increasing land prices
- ▶ Negative public perception of affordable housing; lack of public consensus around affordable housing priorities
- ▶ Construction cost increases
- ▶ Limited local affordable housing developer expertise
- ▶ Lack of public funding sources available

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Educational programs to increase awareness of affordable housing solutions
- ▶ Preserve existing naturally occurring affordable housing
- ▶ Streamline development regulations to increase overall housing inventory
- ▶ Better communication of existing affordable housing programs available to increase community awareness
- ▶ Explore use of local tax incentives (e.g., TIF, tax abatements) to build affordable housing
- ▶ Develop a shared regional approach to attainable housing

### THREATS

- ▶ Rapidly growing population is far outpacing affordable housing development and decreasing affordability of existing units
- ▶ Continued supply chain disruptions and increasing inflation, rising land prices and construction costs
- ▶ Limited land for new construction housing
- ▶ Lateral housing moves due to lack of inventory increases demand for lower-cost housing





# GLOBAL FLUENCY

International trade inherently connects the Charleston region to the global marketplace. As a region known for southern hospitality and small-town charm, global fluency is not only a focus around international trade. It is also about being an inclusive community well-prepared to welcome international visitors and foreign-born residents who make the region their home. The region is home to over 180 foreign-owned businesses and nearly 42,000 foreign-born residents.

Global business necessitates that high-skill international workers at these companies periodically spend time working here in the Charleston region. Additional international visitors are driven by the historic charm and educational institutions. 2020 was a year with unprecedented disruption to the global economy and travel patterns. The need to welcome global travelers, new residents and visitors alike is ever prevalent. On both an individual and economic basis, the region will always benefit from being an inclusive and welcoming place attractive to a diverse international community.



## A globally connected region welcoming to multinational businesses and international residents and visitors

The Charleston region is globally connected through the businesses and residents who call the region home. Global fluency is about ensuring there are resources and support for our multinational businesses, neighbors and visitors.

**THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN CHARLESTON CONTINUES TO GROW.** The Charleston region is home to more than 180 international companies and 41,600 residents born abroad. Businesses with foreign-owned parent companies come from 25 different countries and represent over 10% of the total business count (excluding retail). The top five countries with businesses in the region are Germany, United Kingdom, France, Japan and the Netherlands. The majority of residents born abroad were born in Latin America (46%), followed by Asia (27%) and Europe (19%). From 2010 to 2019, the regional population born abroad grew by nearly 10,000 residents. During this period, the Charleston region had the fastest growing foreign-born population of all metro areas nationally.

**RISK AND REWARD IN THE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE.** Global trade became increasingly complex in 2020

due to labor shortages, plant closures, supply chain disruptions, price increases and more. 18 months of continued disruptions have led to discussions around shifting the supply chain priority from designing 'just-in-time' to resilient trade networks. Focus group participants described a collaborative effort between private companies, SC Ports, SC Commerce, the CRDA and others to identify creative solutions to ongoing production delays over the past year. Stakeholders also discussed two key mechanisms to prevent future disruptions of such a scale: (1) expand port capacity to prevent logjams and (2) onshore essential components of the supply chain to limit exposure to global risks. Given the 2021 opening of the Hugh K Leatherman Terminal, the focus regionally is on the former.

**BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.** The Charleston region is rich in history and a vibrant place for young families and retirees alike. In global fluency focus groups conducted in 2018 by CRDA stakeholders international residents described their choice to move to the region, in part, as a result of Google searches revealing beautiful ocean views and charming historic neighborhoods. Despite existing initiatives to welcome new residents, stakeholders described gaps in the support system for acclimating new residents – particularly after the initial weeks. The past year has been especially isolating for international residents. International travel to the United States fell by 91% from March onward in 2020 compared to 2019. Providing more opportunities for international residents to build a community and local support system are especially critical in a time with limited international travel.



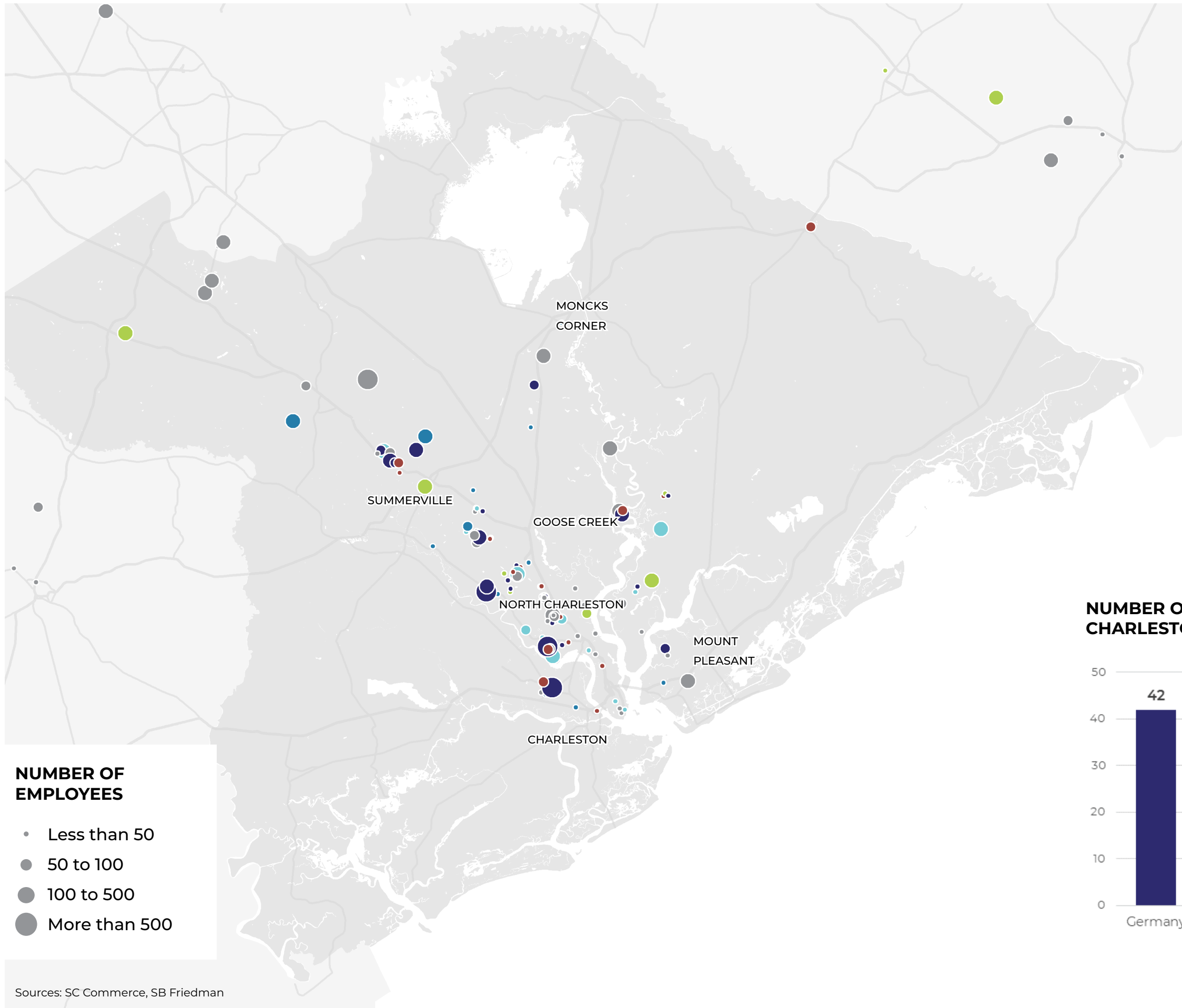
### QUICK FACTS

- 1 180+** foreign-owned businesses operating in the region
- 2 42,000** regional residents born abroad, the largest share from Latin America or Central America
- 3 70%** Port of Charleston imports and exports carry cargo between the region and Asian markets
- 4 25%** foreign-born residents entered the US in 2010 or later
- 5 91%** decline in international travel to the US in 2020

## The Charleston region is a global gateway





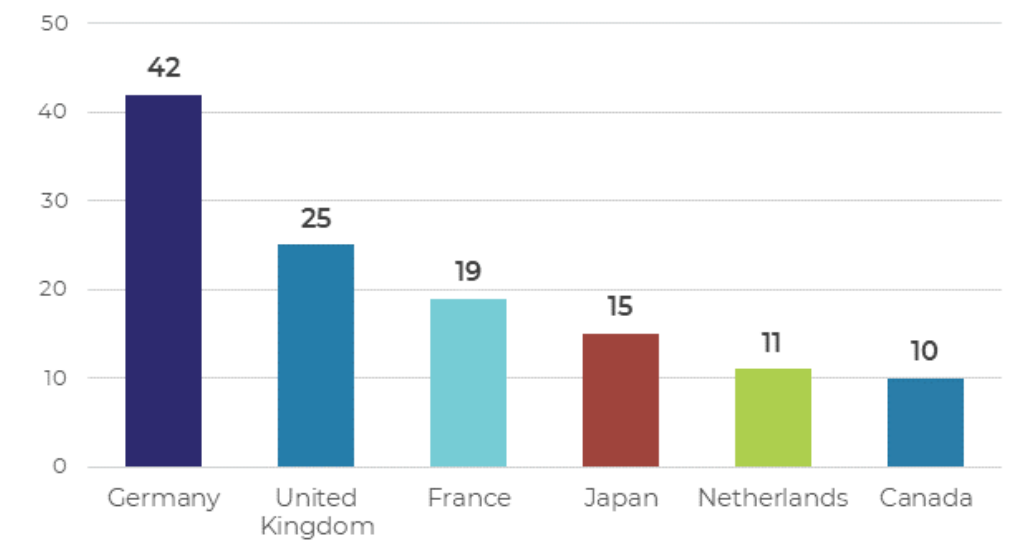


### FOREIGN-OWNED COMPANIES ARE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

South Carolina is home to over 1,200 foreign-owned businesses, over 180 operating in the Charleston region. Companies with a foreign parent company of origin account for over 10% of non-retail businesses in the region. The top five countries with companies represented include Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Japan and the Netherlands. Nearly half of the region's international companies are located within North Charleston.

The majority of international companies are performing manufacturing (39%) or warehousing and distribution operations (27%). Manufacturing entities work within a wide variety of industries, but predominately automotive. The majority of warehousing and distribution companies specialize in logistics.

**NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL FIRMS IN CHARLESTON REGION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**



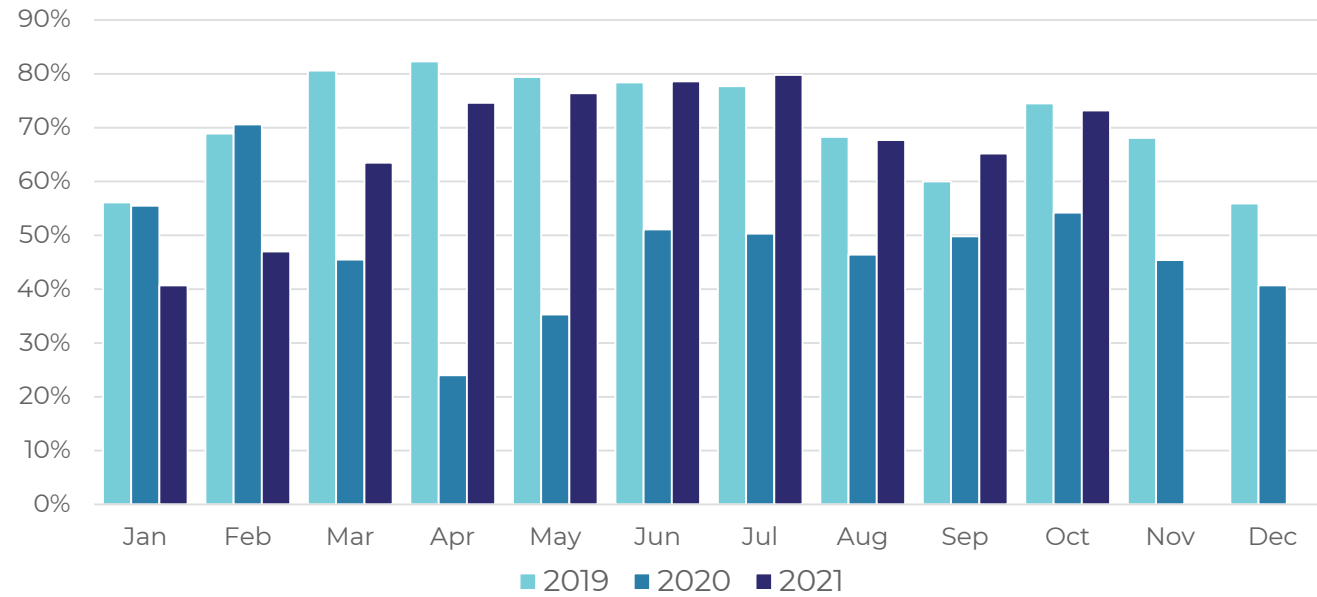
Sources: SC Commerce, SB Friedman



## HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY REACHING PRE-COVID LEVELS

International travelers account for a significant share of Charleston's annual visitors. Prior to the pandemic, annual hotel occupancy in the Charleston region regularly ranged from 70-75% on average. The pandemic disrupted travel, resulting in unprecedented occupancy rates. In 2020, the annual average occupancy dropped below 50%. However, every month in 2021 from March onward substantially outperformed 2020 performance. In the fourth quarter of 2021, the hospitality industry recovered to pre-pandemic levels, reporting occupancy rates and revenues per room that nearly met or exceeded 2019 monthly averages.

### HOTEL OCCUPANCY BY MONTH

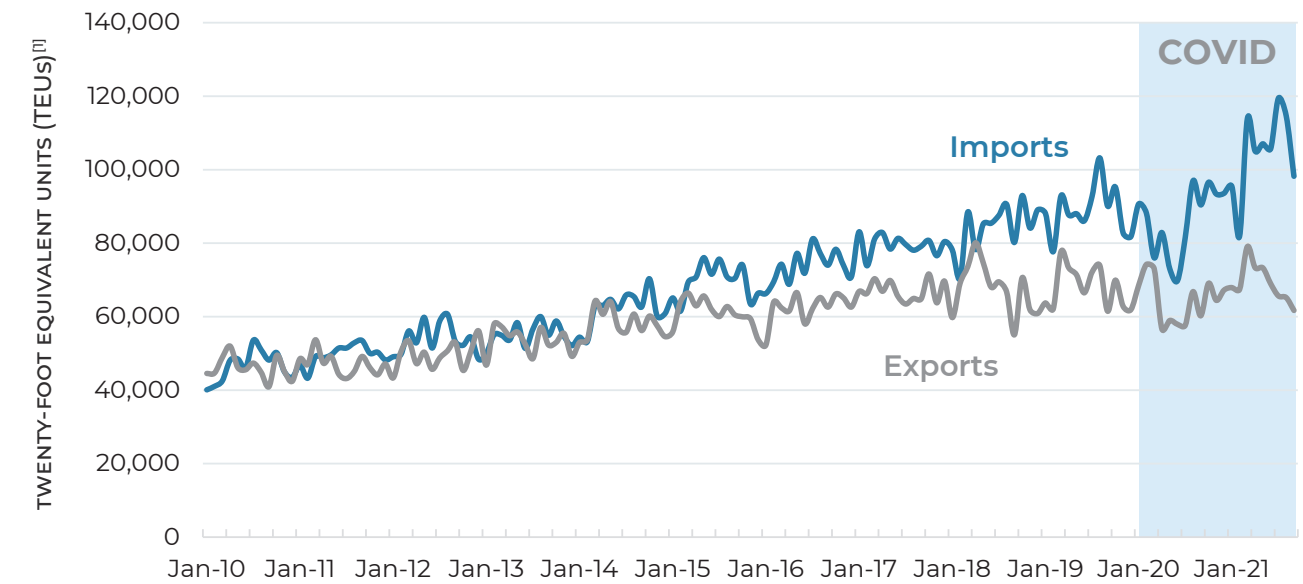


Sources: CoStar, SB Friedman

## THE PANDEMIC'S EFFECT ON TRADE HAS ALTERED PORT TRAFFIC

The Port of Charleston supports a substantial share of the economic activity within the region. According to SC Ports, the fastest growing business sectors include automotive manufacturing, customer goods distribution, refrigerated/frozen exports, transloading resin & grain, and tire manufacturing & distribution. Top trade destinations for carriers at the port include northeast Asia, northern Europe, and southeast Asia. Global disruptions in the supply chain resulted in nearly six months of lower-than average port throughput. However, increased demand for products and the recent port expansion resulted in record throughput for imports in 2021.

### IMPORT AND EXPORT TEU VOLUME THROUGH THE PORT OF CHARLESTON



Sources: South Carolina Ports, SB Friedman

[1] TEUs are an exact unit of measurement used to determine cargo capacity for container ships and terminals





## GLOBAL FLUENCY SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Diversity of economy
- ▶ International/cosmopolitan feel
- ▶ Unique urban and southern environment that is attractive to all
- ▶ Hospitable, welcoming community
- ▶ Regional focus on resiliency and global fluency

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Limited mass transit - majority of existing transit routes provide infrequent service
- ▶ Education system performance; equity gap in education based on zip codes
- ▶ Housing affordability; the housing cost to income ratio exceeds peer communities overseas
- ▶ Limited affordable housing close to urban centers
- ▶ Lack of international community
- ▶ Foreign language education
- ▶ High turnover in overseas employees

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Build on past survey of international residents and better understand needs post-COVID.
- ▶ Using apps and other technologies to connect people
- ▶ Provide resources to local firms to grow their businesses internationally
- ▶ Assist international students and employees in navigating different life stages as new Americans
- ▶ Advocacy around immigration reform
- ▶ Create welcome teams for international companies visiting the region
- ▶ Amplify existing programs through technology & social media

### THREATS

- ▶ High cost of transportation
- ▶ Volatile immigration process/environment
- ▶ Increasing cost of living limits ability to attract global residents and businesses
- ▶ Need to create a more welcoming environment where people want to stay
- ▶ Climate change; sea level rise & flooding which could negatively impact natural and cultural assets that draw tourism

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# INFRASTRUCTURE

A growing Charleston region has increased the burden on regional infrastructure over the past two decades. In the middle of a national push to modernize the nation's infrastructure—including broadband, interstates, bridges and rapid transit—COVID-19 substantially changed infrastructure demand. More people than ever before are working and learning from home. Many are, at least temporarily, more apprehensive of transit alternatives. The supply chain continues to feel ripple effects from global product shortages and high demand. Shifting infrastructure needs resulting from COVID-19 are only the beginning of other changes to come – which will include vehicle electrification, automation, smart cities and more. Without the luxury of time to see how these disruptions unfold, the region must focus its energy on regional cohesion and creativity to stay one step ahead of economic trends.



## A region with modern infrastructure that contributes to a high quality of life and a competitive local economy

### A DECADE OF GROWTH IN TRAFFIC CONGESTION.

Sustained population growth in the Charleston region from 2000-onward is in part responsible for rising congestion. In 2019, over 80% of regional workers reported driving alone to work. Less than 5% of the workforce commuted via walking, biking or public transportation. In the absence of adopting transit and multimodal alternatives, the region's highly auto-oriented workforce saw a 7% increase in the share of commuters traveling more than 30 minutes to work daily from 2010 to 2019. To address this regional auto-dependence, the region is advancing the Lowcountry Rapid Transit (LCRT).

### REMOTE WORK ALLEVIATES SOME INFRASTRUCTURE PRESSURE.

At the start of the pandemic, only 6% of the workforce indicated they work from home according to 2019 Census Estimates. However, households' and businesses' work from home patterns are likely to change long-term: over 35% of both household and business survey respondents indicated their workforce could continue to work remotely at least two days a week post-pandemic.

## QUICK FACTS

- 1 80%** regional workers primarily commute to work by car alone
- 2 7%** increase in the share of commuters traveling more than 30 minutes to work between 2010 and 2019
- 3 6%** regional workforce worked from home prior to the pandemic
- 4 50%** business survey respondents plan to allow some degree of remote work long-term
- 5 18%** regional households did not have paid access to broadband in 2019

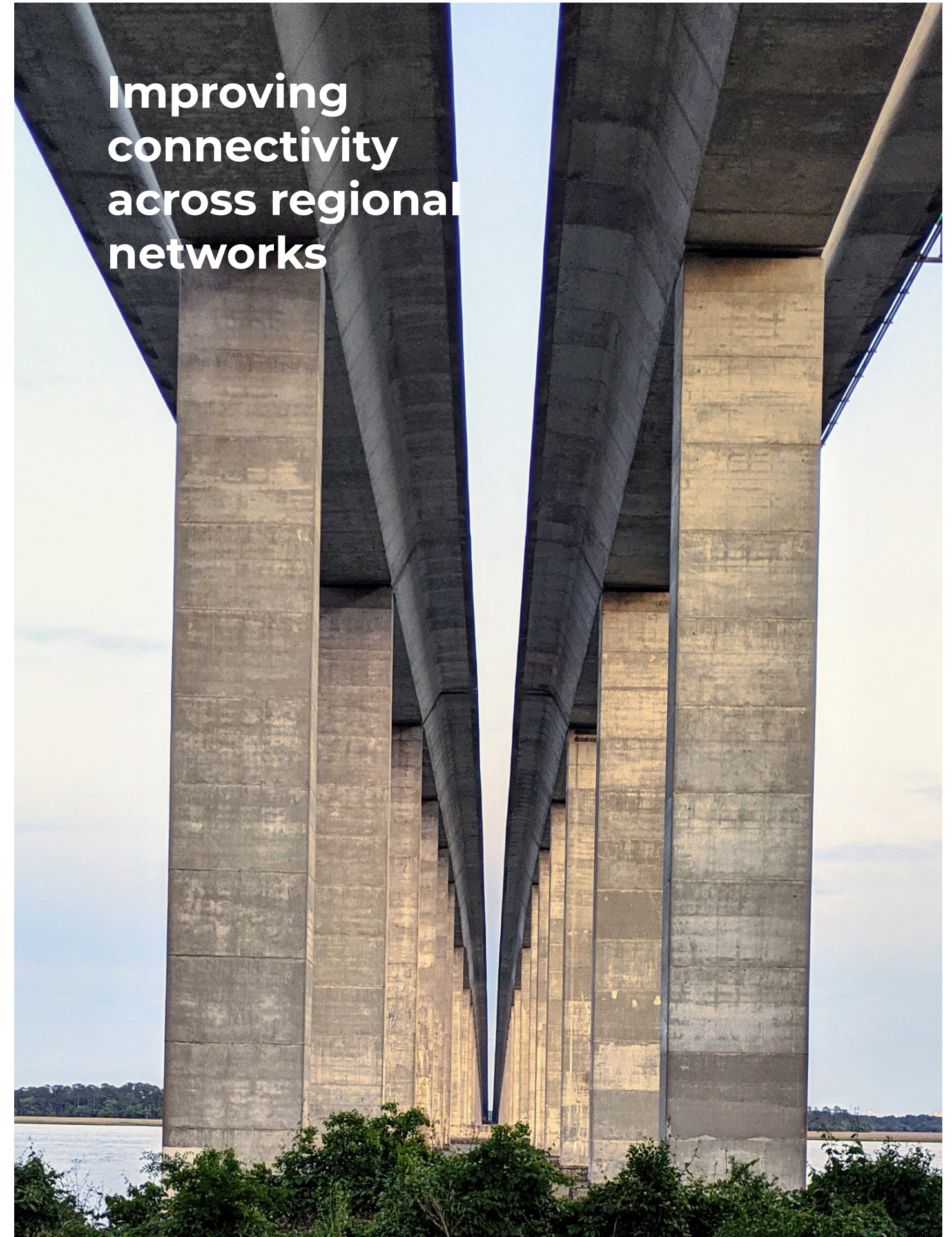
### BROADBAND A LIMITING FACTOR TO CONNECTIVITY

**REGIONWIDE.** The pandemic placed a spotlight on the need for in-home connectivity across the region. In 2019, 82% of regional households reported a paid subscription to broadband internet. The likelihood a household has access to high-speed internet increases as income increases: only 3% of households earning more than \$75,000 reported no internet subscription, while 34% of households earning less than \$35,000 per year reported no access. Household surveys indicated broadband affordability is also a pressing challenge, with nearly 50% of respondents indicating they have internet access but it is difficult to afford. In-home connectivity is also limited by access to computing devices. In 2019, over 8% of households reported no computing devices (desktop, tablet, smartphone) within their home. Access to reliable, affordable broadband is not only important for personal use, but for businesses. The majority of business survey respondents indicated access to broadband is a limiting factor for continuing work-from-home policies long-term, particularly for employees living in the region's rural areas.

### INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS TO CONTINUE TO EVOLVE.

Technology advancements will continue to evolve the demands for infrastructure. In the past five years, micro-mobility transportation alternatives (e.g., electric scooters and e-bikes) have been widely adopted across the nation. These micro-mobility devices are already resulting in pinch points on infrastructure networks unprepared for multimodal use. On top of micro-mobility solutions, the automotive industry is on the brink of substantial changes to how we interface with vehicles. Vehicle electrification alone is anticipated to result in substantial new infrastructure needs: requiring both electric grid enhancements and universal charging stations.

## Improving connectivity across regional networks

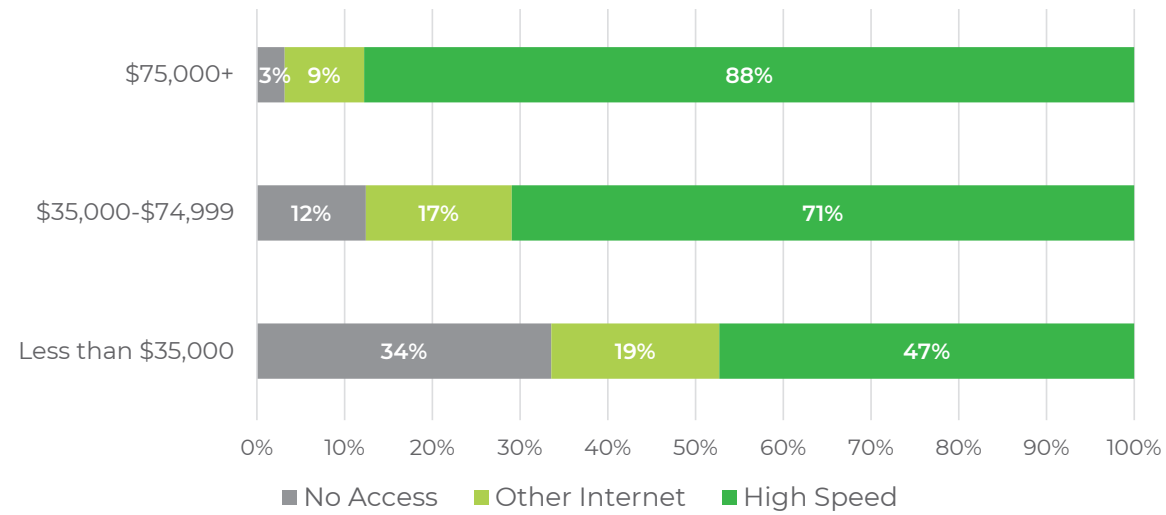




## LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS HAVE GREATER DIFFICULTY ACCESSING HOME INTERNET

Regionwide, approximately 18% of households did not have access to paid broadband in their homes in 2019. Access to the internet varies greatly by income. One third of lower-income households (<\$35,000) lack access to paid internet compared to just 3% of higher-income households (>\$75,000). In-home access to education and work opportunities also requires expensive devices. In 2019, 8% of households did not have computing devices within their home.

### PAID ACCESS TO THE INTERNET BY INCOME

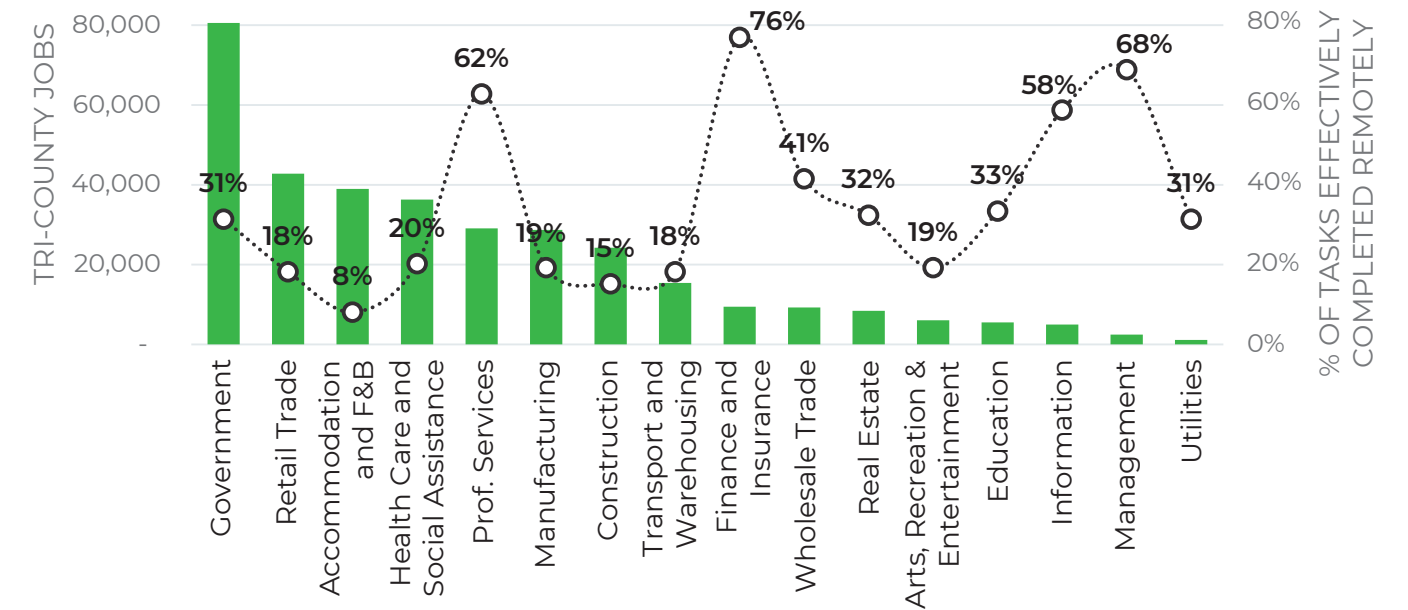


Sources: US Census Public Use Microdata 2015-2019, SB Friedman

## REMOTE WORK COULD DRAMATICALLY ALTER EMPLOYMENT IN CERTAIN SECTORS

In lieu of major infrastructure improvements, increasing remote workers in the region has the potential to slow rising congestion. McKinsey, a global management consulting firm, conducted an analysis estimating the percentage of tasks by sector that could be completed in a remote location. Higher-employment sectors within the region that have a relatively high share of remote-friendly work include government, professional services, and finance and insurance.

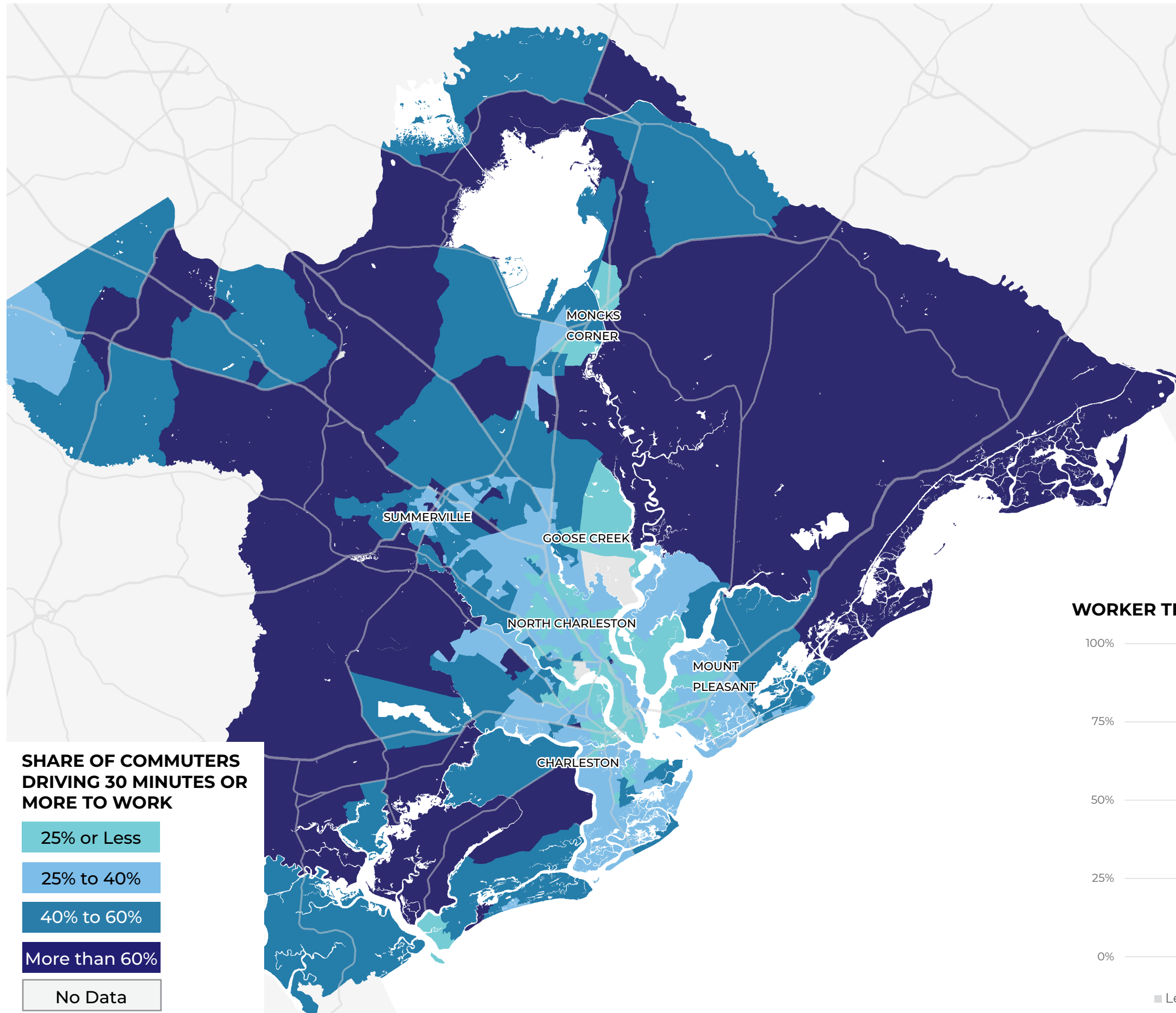
### REMOTE WORK POTENTIAL



Sources: EMSI, McKinsey, SB Friedman







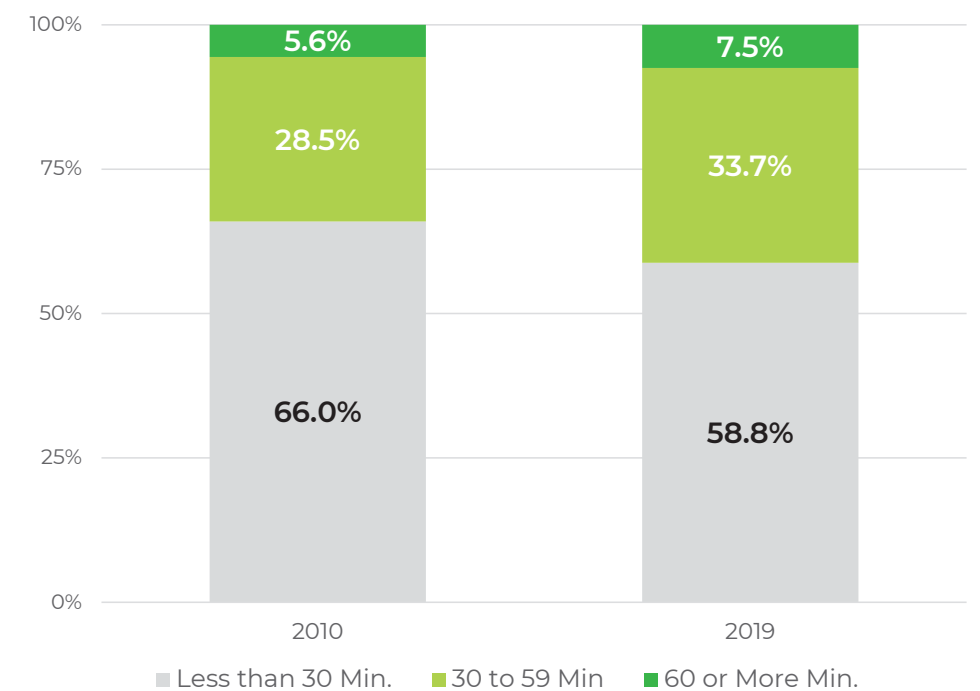
Sources: Esri, US Census ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates, McKinsey, SB Friedman

## ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT IS BEST IN URBAN CENTERS AND ALONG THE I-26 CORRIDOR

Commute times have been increasing within the region due to the rising population and new development farther from job centers. Since 2010, the share of commuters spending more than 30 minutes commuting to work increased by 7%. Congestion is especially challenging to mitigate given the region's natural geography which places constraints on road building and expansion. There are few bridges available to workers traveling from their homes to work across various bodies of water. Very few employees live and work in the same community. In Charleston County alone, over a hundred thousand workers commute in daily from Berkeley and Dorchester counties.

Residents on the peninsula and near I-26 spend the least amount of time commuting daily. These areas have stronger access to jobs but also tend to be more expensive than communities on the region's periphery. Improving mobility and working to provide affordable housing in areas with existing infrastructure are important steps in maintaining the region's quality of life.

## WORKER TRAVEL TIME TO WORK



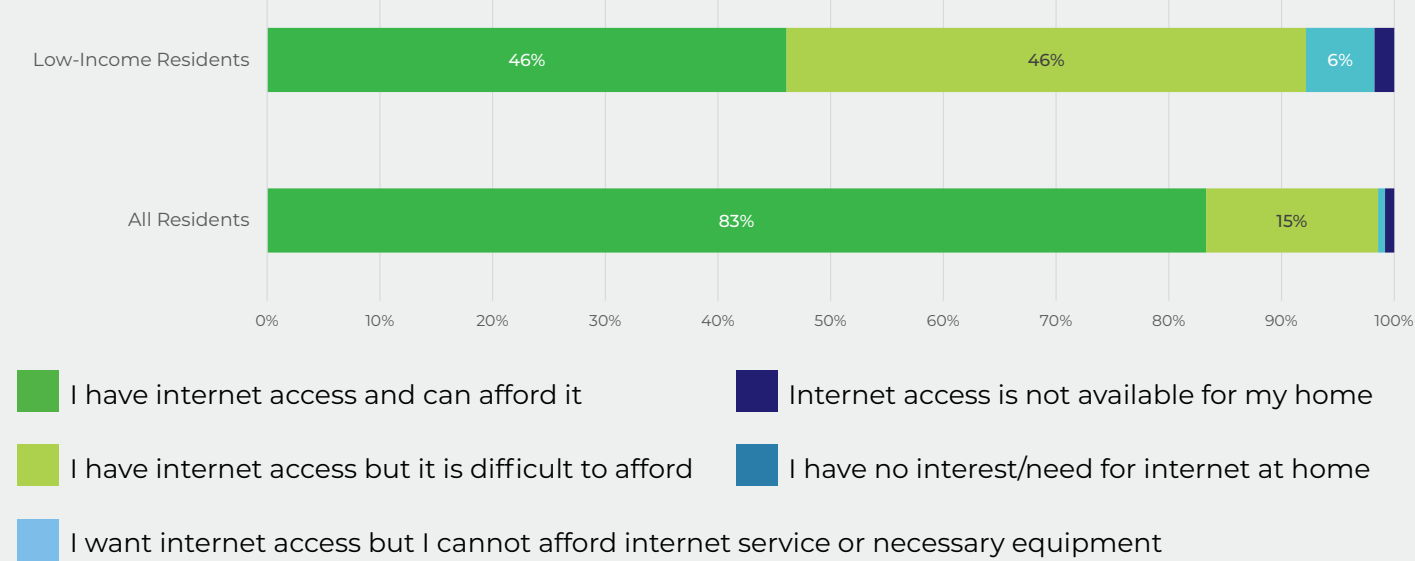
Sources: US Census American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, SB Friedman



## WHAT WE HEARD

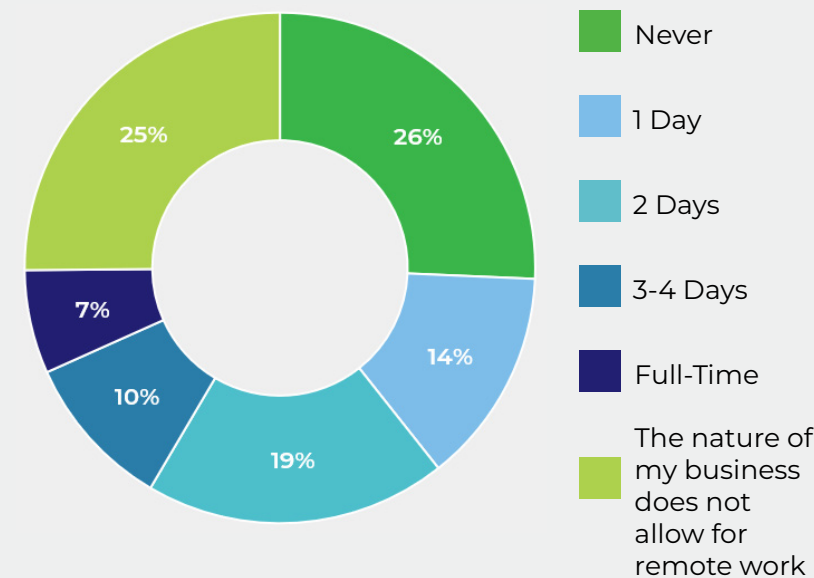
Household surveys further validated Census data indicating internet access and affordability is an ongoing challenge for low-income residents. Approximately 6% of lower-income respondents indicated they want internet access but cannot afford the service or necessary equipment. Another 46% of lower-income respondents reported they currently have access, but it is difficult to afford. Business survey respondents opposed to providing work-from-home policies indicated concerns over access to reliable employee internet at home is a key consideration.

### REGIONAL RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO REPORT VARIED ACCESS TO INTERNET BY INCOME



### MAJORITY OF BUSINESSES PLAN TO INCORPORATE REMOTE-WORK LONG-TERM

As COVID precautions are eased, how many days a week do you anticipate employees will work remotely?



### SURVEY WRITE-IN RESPONSES CALLED FOR MULTIMODAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES

Example survey responses:

- “ Build bike lanes, enable higher degrees of walkability
- Rapid transit service
- Less traffic
- Improved infrastructure, responsible development

## INFRASTRUCTURE SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Availability of resources for infrastructure projects
- ▶ Presence of firms and supply chains connected to vehicle electrification
- ▶ Nonprofits and initiatives working on bridging digital divide
- ▶ Port of Charleston, including recent expansions
- ▶ High quality airport attractive to logistics companies and Department of Defense

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Lack of electric vehicle charging stations
- ▶ Lack of coordination among organizations working on digital divide
- ▶ Challenging geography (bridges/rivers) complicated by increased flooding
- ▶ Limited broadband access in outlying communities
- ▶ Increasing housing costs in areas well-served by infrastructure pushes development outward

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Emergency broadband resources
- ▶ Federal funding for broadband expansion
- ▶ Investments in the Port have a direct impact on the economy
- ▶ Federal fleet adopting electric vehicles
- ▶ Uptick in remote work temporarily slowed congestion
- ▶ Leverage incentives to accelerate adoption of clean-energy alternatives
- ▶ Diversify supply chain network; focus on equitable hiring, infrastructure investments and workforce development
- ▶ Desire to nearshore supply chains may lead to additional infrastructure funding

### THREATS

- ▶ Supply chain delays
- ▶ Reliability of power grid during severe weather events
- ▶ Flooding
- ▶ Use of gas tax to fund road and construction projects; gas usage likely to decline following electric vehicle adoption
- ▶ Base closure
- ▶ Transit investments need to be widely adopted to show evidence for further need
- ▶ Absence of coordinated effort between organizations
- ▶ Rapidly changing technologies





# INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Innovation has never been more important than it is today. While there is little certainty in what the future will bring, one thing we can know for certain is that we cannot rely on actions of the past to bring us success long-term. Innovators and entrepreneurs in the Charleston region are the drivers of change and long-term prosperity. While abrupt, the disruption of COVID-19 necessitated innovation in industries the region was prepared to excel in: life sciences, advanced manufacturing and information technology. Up for the challenge presented, the region recorded a year of unprecedented patent activity and business applications in 2020. Historically known globally for being a predominately production-based economy, innovation activity in the region is on the brink of reshaping the narrative to both a production and a knowledge-based economy.



## A region propelled by innovation, small business growth and entrepreneurship

**ECONOMIC GROWTH IS PREDOMINATELY DRIVEN BY INNOVATION.** Knowledge-based economies leverage existing intellectual property – processes, products or otherwise – to evolve ideas, attract other innovators, and grow the economy. Innovation rarely occurs in a vacuum; therefore, innovative economies tend to prosper in highly collaborative regions where there is an understanding that creative spaces and sharing of ideas ultimately benefits all.

**COLLABORATION AS A SHARED PRINCIPLE.** During initial stakeholder meetings, when asked why the Charleston region is a good place to do business, the second most popular response was due to the collaborative community, only topped by an attractive climate. The mid-sized nature of the metro region allows for more connectivity amongst the innovation and entrepreneurship community than typical – there is relatively strong awareness of existing accelerator programs, investors, testing facilities and other resources essential to idea generation and commercialization. However, the limited size also exposes a weakness or disadvantage to larger markets with greater access to capital and larger universities attractive to talent.

**INNOVATION ON THE RISE.** Historic strengths within the region – port access, a low-cost workforce, low cost

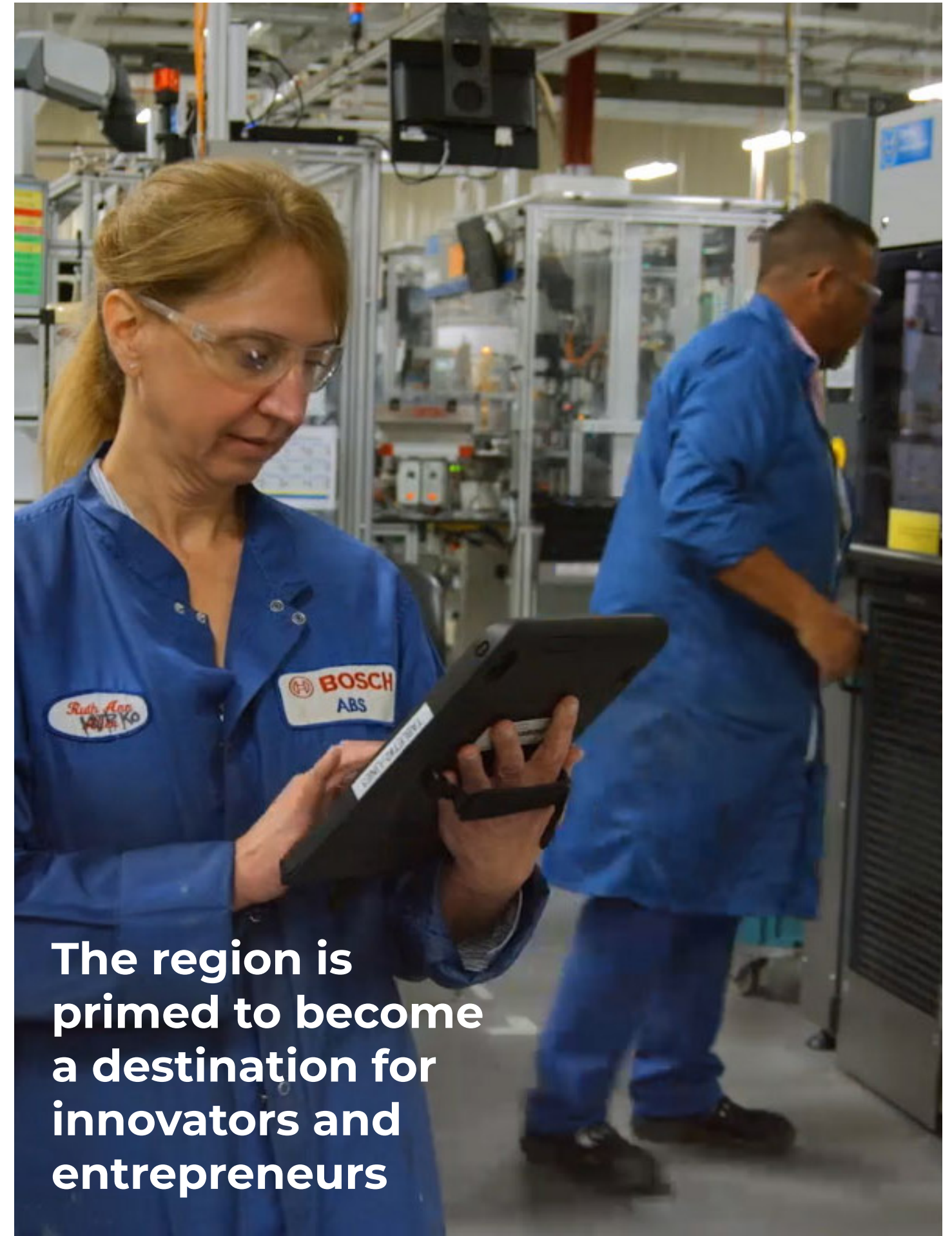
of living, high quality of life, and more – have resulted in substantial economic growth in the past decade. While a share of the growth can be directly attributed to production center expansions and announcements (e.g., Boeing, Volvo, Mercedes), the growing population and accompanying talent pool driven by decades of strategic economic development have opened the door to additional opportunities. Major manufacturers and institutional anchors fuel innovation within the regional supplier network, particularly those seeking to benefit from contracting opportunities specific to future technologies such as autonomous transport, vehicle electrification, drones, neurological research, etc. Institutional strongholds (e.g., Joint Base Charleston and the Medical University of South Carolina) continue to advance technologies in their respective fields. With innovation resources and partnerships on the rise, the region saw unprecedented patent activity in the past five years, particularly within the Priority Clusters where the region is strongest suited.

**FROM ECONOMIC DISRUPTION TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY.** As COVID-19 spiked in 2020, so too did business applications in the Charleston region. The number of business applications within the region increased by nearly 40% from 2019 to 2020 despite a year full of uncertainty. While it is not uncommon for economic recessions to result in additional entrepreneurship activity, the spike in business formation activity within the region also exceeded the national increase. Stakeholders indicated a critical element to innovation and entrepreneurship activity growth moving forward will be maintaining the entrepreneurship spirit driven by the pandemic while bringing back the financial and networking support systems absent in the past year.



### QUICK FACTS

- 52%**  
increase in knowledge based employment from 2010 to 2021
- 36%**  
regional patent production occurred within priority clusters
- 50%**  
existing jobs at risk of automation using presently available technologies
- 2,000**  
life sciences and IT entrepreneurs within the region, over a 35% increase from 2010
- 40%**  
increase in business applications from 2019 to 2020



The region is primed to become a destination for innovators and entrepreneurs

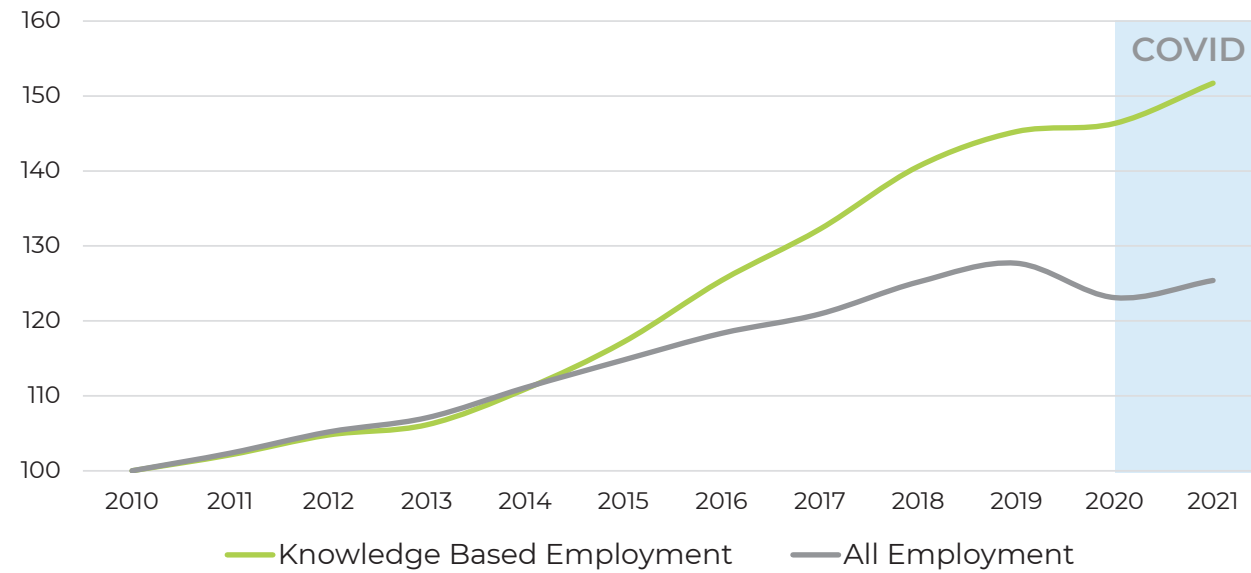




## GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE JOBS OUTPACING OVERALL EMPLOYMENT

Knowledge-based workers are a rapidly growing segment of the regional employment base. Knowledge workers are those who generate value through using or generating knowledge, historically referred to as 'white collar' workers. The number of knowledge-based workers in the region grew by 50% from 2010 to 2021, double the growth rate of overall regional employment. Knowledge workers were also less likely to be impacted by the pandemic, as work is more easily transferrable to a remote environment.

### KNOWLEDGE BASED JOBS<sup>[1]</sup> VS. TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, INDEXED TO 2010



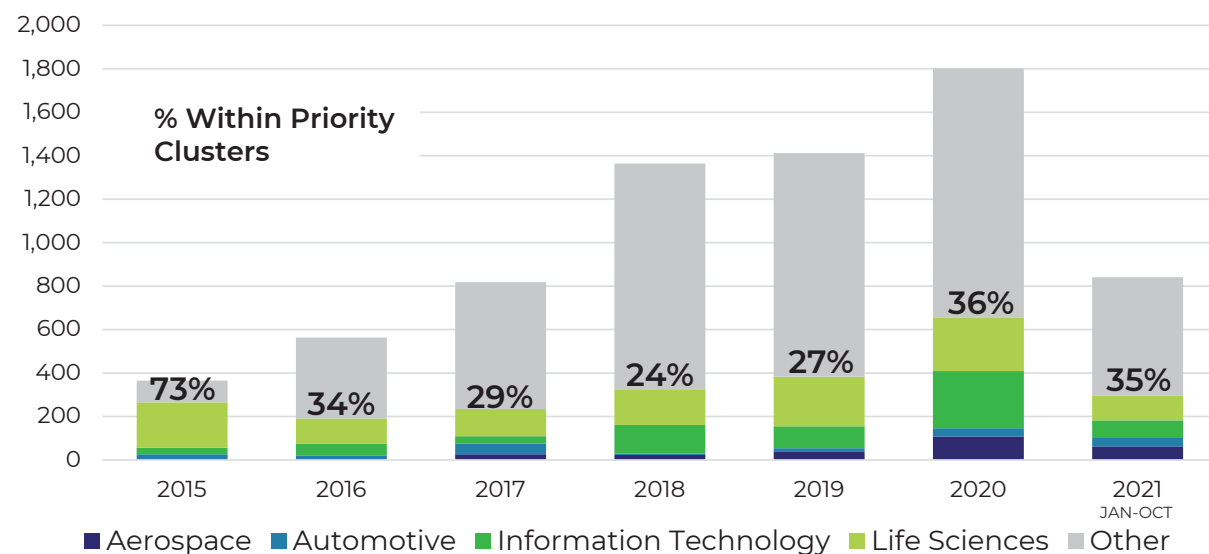
Sources: EMSI, SB Friedman

[1] Majority of Knowledge-Based Jobs are within Professional, Scientific & Technical Services Sector

## INCREASING SHARE OF PATENT ACTIVITY IN PRIORITY CLUSTERS

The number of patents recorded in the region increased annually between 2015 and 2020, from under 400 to over 1,800. Each year, the share of patents that are classified under one of the four Priority Clusters increases – up to 36% of the total patent count in 2020. Life sciences and IT account for the greatest share of patents within the priority clusters.

### TOTAL PATENTS BY CLUSTER

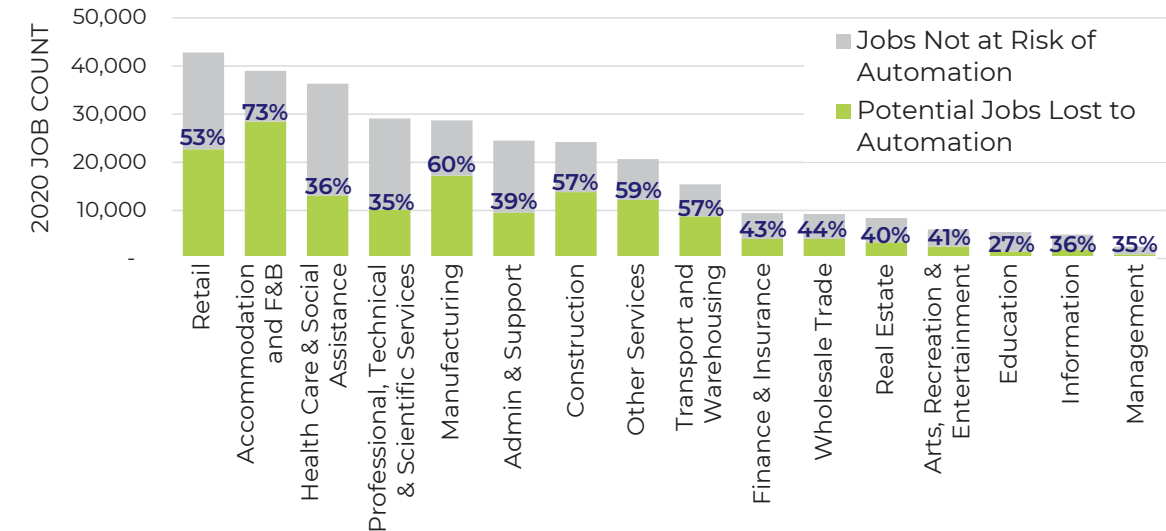


Sources: USPTO PatentsView, SB Friedman

## AUTOMATION AND AI THREATEN JOBS IN MANY SECTORS

Studies indicate automation and AI technology currently exists to replace up to 50% of jobs within the region. Corporate adoption of technologies has historically lagged behind capability due to the cost of equipment. However, companies increasingly turned to automation in 2020 in order to address ongoing labor shortages. This acceleration of automation is anticipated to have the greatest impact on lower-wage jobs in the retail, accommodation & food services, and manufacturing workers.

### 2020 JOB COUNTS AND POTENTIAL JOB LOSS TO AUTOMATION

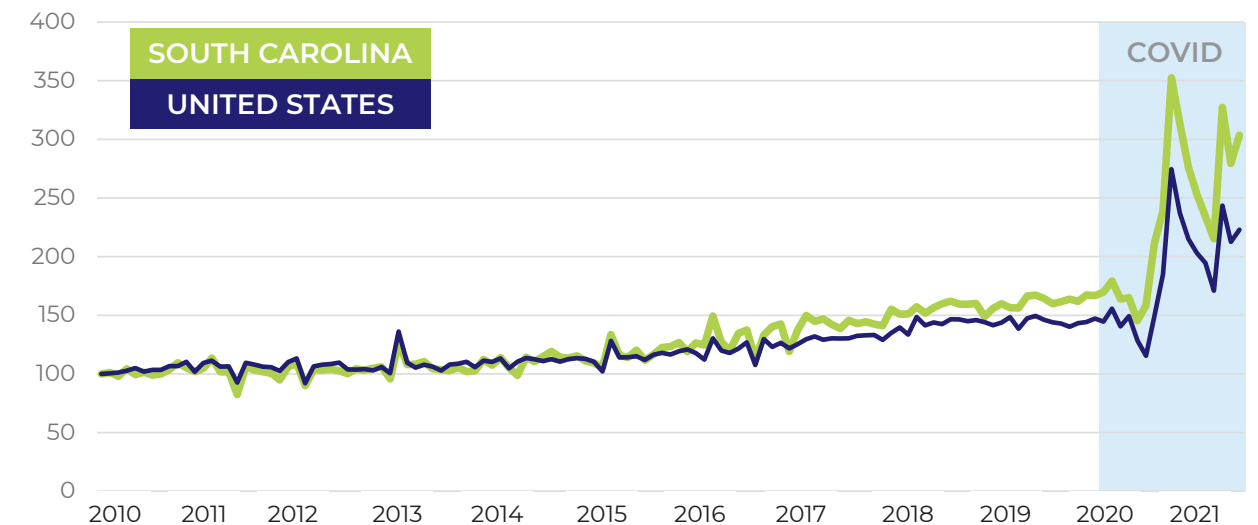


Sources: EMSI, McKinsey, SB Friedman

## COVID SPIKED ENTREPRENEURSHIP NATIONALLY

The rate of business application growth in South Carolina exceeded the national average from 2015 onward. Business applications typically spike during periods of high unemployment as people identify sole-proprietorship alternatives to traditional employment. Within the Charleston region, entrepreneurs submitted for over 14,000 business permits in 2020. The 2020 business applications were 36% greater than the 2019 total of 10,500 applications.

### MONTHLY BUSINESS APPLICATIONS INDEXED TO JANUARY 2010, SEASONALLY ADJUSTED



Sources: US Census - US Business Formation Statistics, SB Friedman



## INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Existing incubators and accelerators including Charleston Digital Corridor and Harbor Entrepreneurship Center
- ▶ Public private partnerships to develop entrepreneurship spaces (e.g., Charleston Tech Center, West Edge)
- ▶ Small business development centers
- ▶ Nonprofit support network
- ▶ Vibrant tech ecosystem that leverages social media to stay engaged
- ▶ Strong university and medical system
- ▶ Resolve of community
- ▶ Collaborative community

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Limited corporate headquarters, R&D centers, and wet labs in region
- ▶ Insufficient venture capital in the state
- ▶ Not enough resources focused on minority owned businesses; systemic economic challenges facing minority entrepreneurs
- ▶ A capital-first versus people-first approach to the economy
- ▶ Low wages which are not attractive to national talent base

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Onshoring; especially for pharmaceuticals
- ▶ Connect small business vendors to major manufacturers
- ▶ Invest in technologies to support electric vehicle adoption
- ▶ Federal funding for broadband improvements
- ▶ Cross sector collaboration
- ▶ Increase awareness of existing opportunities to the emerging workforce

### THREATS

- ▶ Limited connectivity between small businesses and investor community
- ▶ Competition from other regions
- ▶ Research network in region relatively small compared to institutions in larger cities
- ▶ Limited access for companies outside of university system to access university research centers
- ▶ Delay in funding for pandemic recovery
- ▶ Economic disruptions disproportionately impact minority entrepreneurs

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# TALENT

In a region rich with opportunity, developing, attracting and retaining talent are critical elements to sustaining growth long-term. Local talent development is realized in our public schools, workforce development programs, technical colleges and universities. Educational providers have been working overtime to adapt to health constraints on the classroom, technology advancements unlocking learning opportunities, and employer in-demand skills. More than ever, there is an increased opportunity to attract national talent. The region has catapulted onto the national stage as a lower cost, high quality of place, high opportunity market. The Charleston region has the opportunity to harness energy within the economy to both provide exciting opportunities attractive to the workforce and leverage that workforce to spur continued growth.



# A regional workforce prepared for current and future career opportunities

**THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE IS GETTING SMARTER AND OLDER.** Mirroring national trends, the Charleston region is seeing the fastest growth rates in young-senior and senior age cohorts – those most likely to retire in the near term. Despite population growth in all age segments, the share of the workforce under the age of 54 decreased by nearly 6% from 2010 to 2019. Over the same period, the percentage of adults without a high school diploma reduced by 3% and the percent of adults with an associate degree or greater increased by nearly 7%. While educational attainment in the region is steadily increasing, near-term Baby Boomer retirements from the workforce is a looming concern that increases the urgency to prepare a talented, diverse workforce.

**LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION IS AT A 10-YEAR LOW.** Labor force participation is a metric used to measure the share of the working age population who choose to be within the workforce. The labor force participation rate has declined in the region every year since 2010, from a high of 67.2% in 2010 to a 65.2% in 2019. COVID accelerated the labor

force exit for many. In 2021, the monthly average labor force participation rate was down to a low of 60.6%. Household survey respondents who indicated they are no longer in the workforce attributed the change to a wide array of reasons: retirement, health concerns, new childcare responsibilities and lifestyle changes.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WAGES AND LABOR AVAILABILITY.** In 2020, employers in traditionally lower-wage occupations (e.g., retail salespersons, waiters, cooks) sought the highest number of employees. Lower-wage service occupations also reported the highest job posting ratio – the number of job postings relative to total employment within the occupation. A high ratio is indicative of high turnover and ongoing employee demand. Occupations in Priority Clusters have relatively lower job posting ratios and higher reported hourly earnings. Focus group participants attributed the absence of workers to fill service jobs to shifts in worker's preferences – for more flexible jobs that allow for more social distance and opportunity to increase earnings over time. Many of these higher-paying, flexible jobs are within Priority Clusters.

Across all interviews, focus groups and survey responses, participants indicated a desire to identify collaborative solutions to better develop, attract and retain talent to address current and future shortages in the region.



## QUICK FACTS

- 1 **36%** regional population over the age of 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher
- 2 **8,400** college graduates in 2020 across the region
- 3 **7%** decline in the labor force participation rate from 2010 to 2020
- 4 **236,800** people over the age of 55 within the regional workforce at risk of retirement
- 5 **29%** business survey respondents interested in working with technical colleges to improve hiring



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA



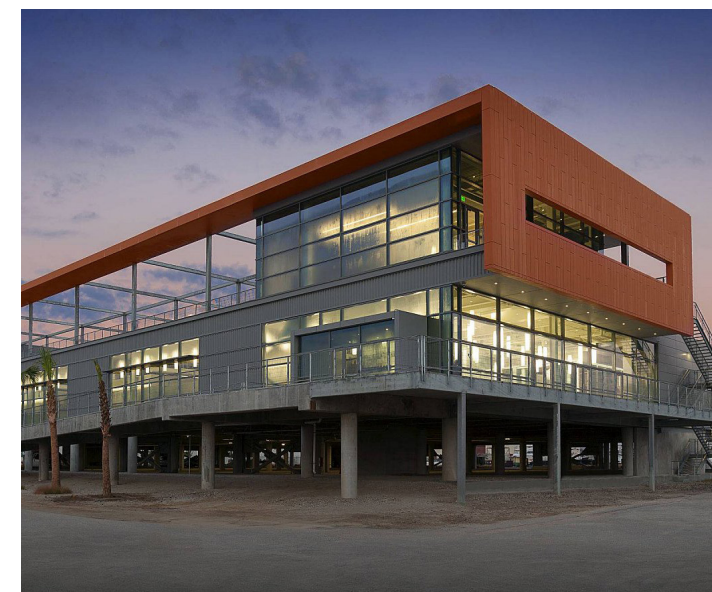
CITADEL MILITARY COLLEGE OF SOUTH CAROLINA



COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON



TRIDENT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

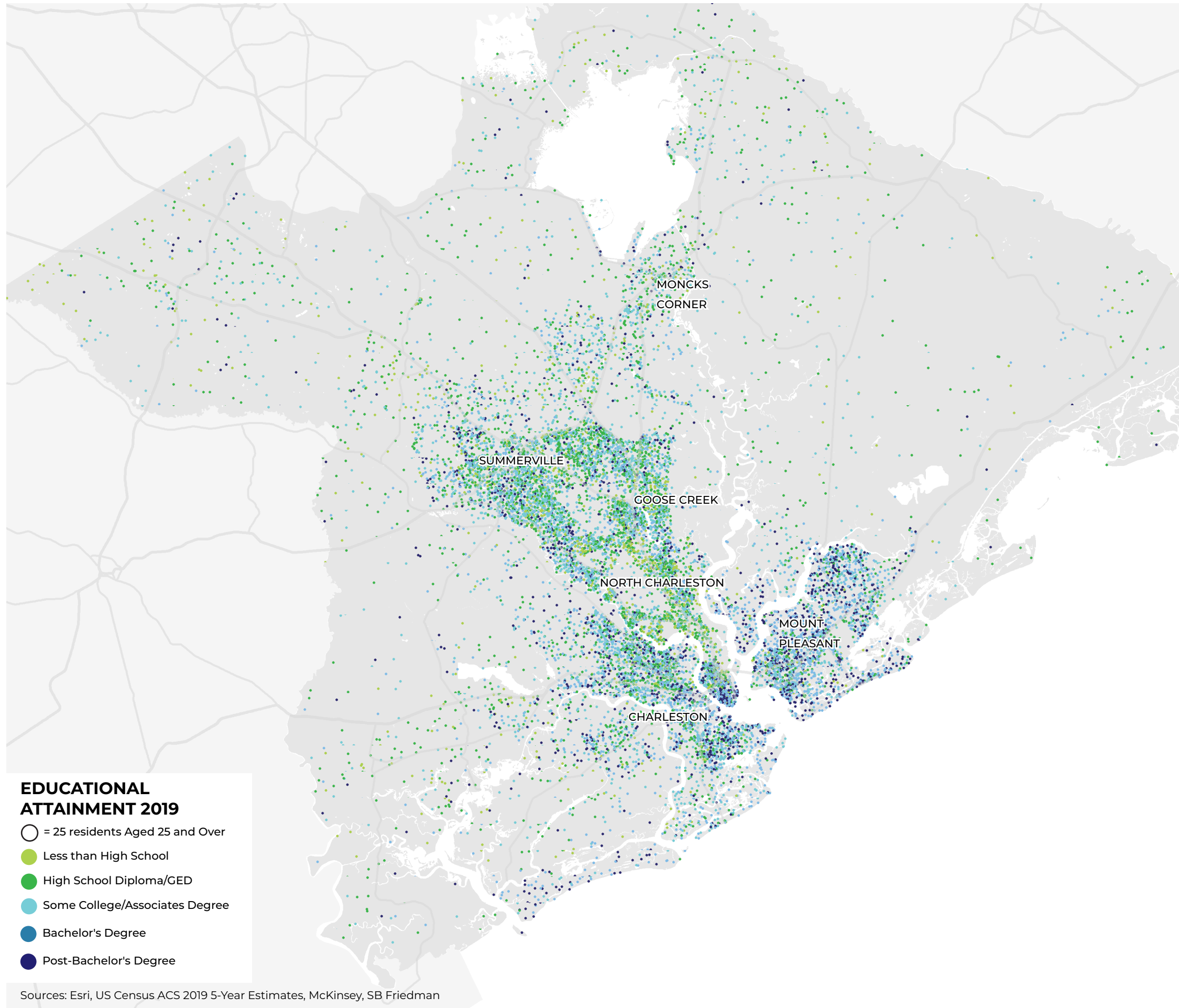


CLEMSON IN NORTH CHARLESTON



CHARLESTON SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

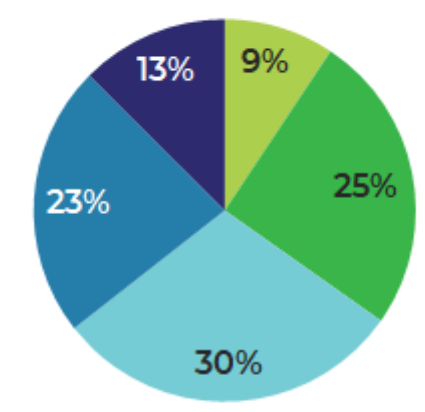




## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT VARIES ACROSS THE REGION

Expanding access to educational opportunities is essential in a region so full of economic opportunity, particularly given the threat of automation to lower-skill jobs. In 2019, 36% of the population over the age of 25 had a bachelor's degree. While recent graduates are not guaranteed to work within the region, existing universities are an invaluable tool for talent attraction and retention. The number of degree conferrals from institutions in the region (including technical colleges and universities alike) has declined annually since 2015, from a high of nearly 10,000 graduates in 2015 to 8,300 in 2020. The majority of college graduates are within health professions, business management, biological & biomedical sciences, and culinary, entertainment, and personal services programs.

### REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



**EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2019**

- = 25 residents Aged 25 and Over
- Less than High School
- High School Diploma/GED
- Some College/Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Post-Bachelor's Degree

- Less than High school
- High School Diploma/GED
- Some College/Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree and Higher

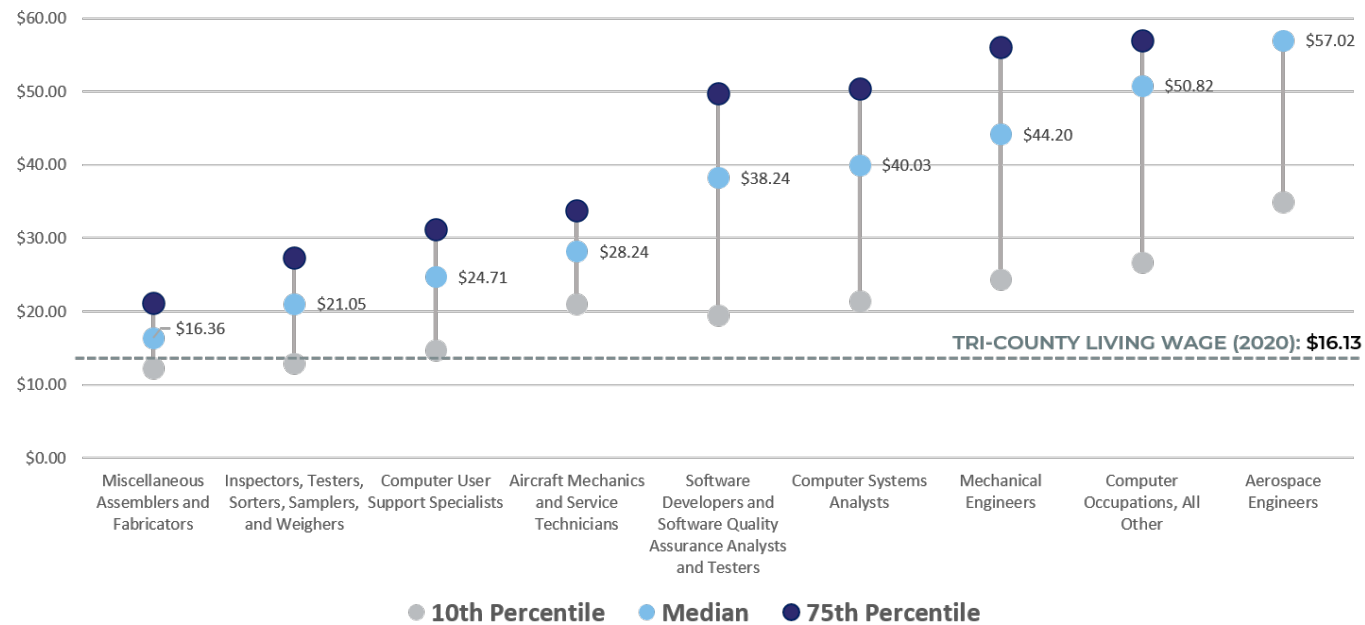
Sources: Esri, US Census ACS 2019 5-Year Estimates, McKinsey, SB Friedman



## WAGES WITHIN PRIORITY CLUSTERS OVER THE 'LIVING WAGE'

Median hourly wages for jobs in High Impact clusters are generally well above the estimated 'living wage' of \$16 per hour for the metro region. Fast growing, higher-wage occupations are attractive to both a local and national workforce. While many occupations require advanced degrees, the top earners in some occupations do not require college degrees and also provide wages in excess of \$20 per hour.

### REGIONAL HOURLY WAGE RANGE BY OCCUPATION

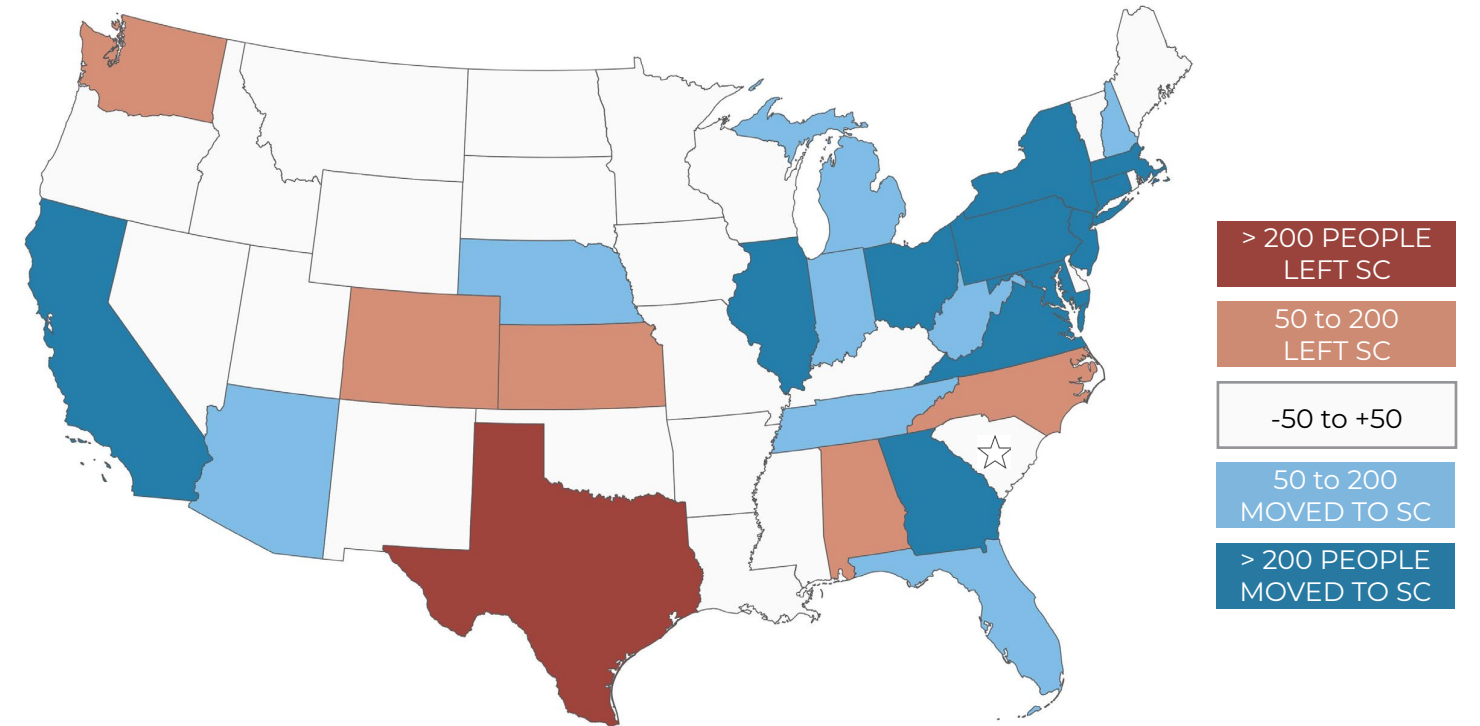


Sources: BLS, MIT Living Wage Calculator, SB Friedman

## TALENT SHORTAGES REQUIRE NATIONAL ATTRACTION APPROACH

Much of the population growth over the past 10-years is attributable to the high quality of life, low cost of living and economic opportunities within the region. Migration data on new taxpayers to the region indicates the majority of new residents are moving from northeast states including New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Newer residents to the region account for an increasing share of the workforce in highly technical occupations such as mechanical engineering and software development. At the same time, the region is leaking talent to emerging markets and those with similar job opportunities such as Texas, Kansas, and Alabama.

### 2019 NET WORKFORCE MIGRATION TO SOUTH CAROLINA BY STATE



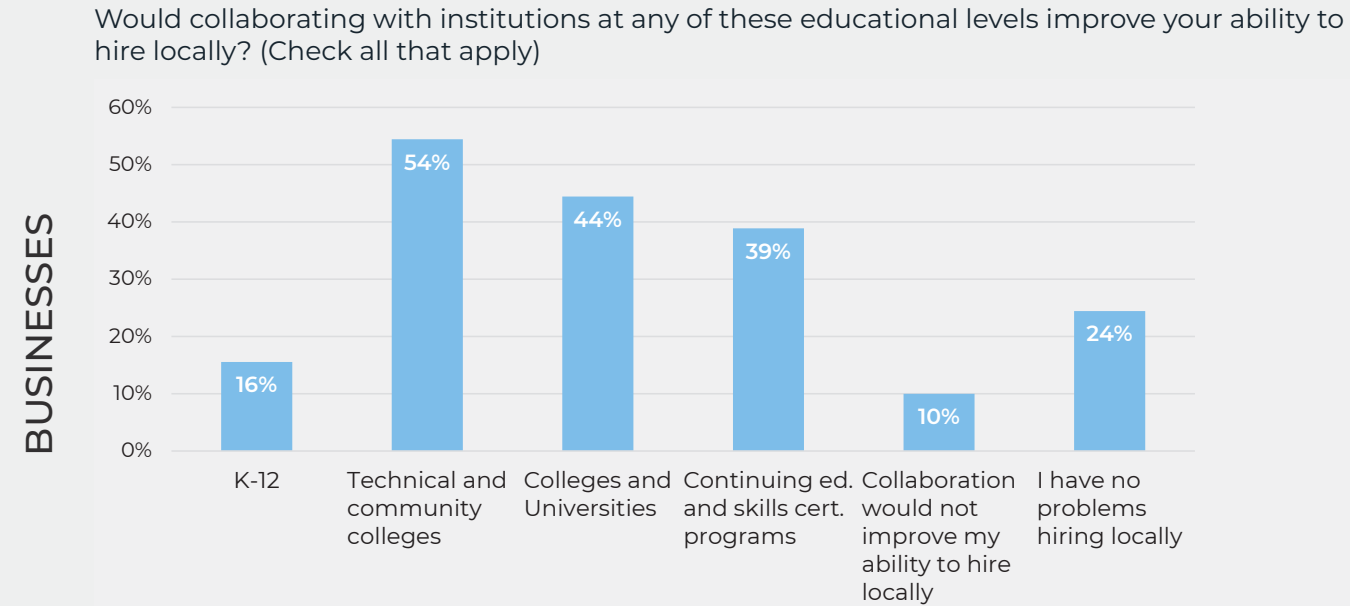
Sources: EMSI, SB Friedman



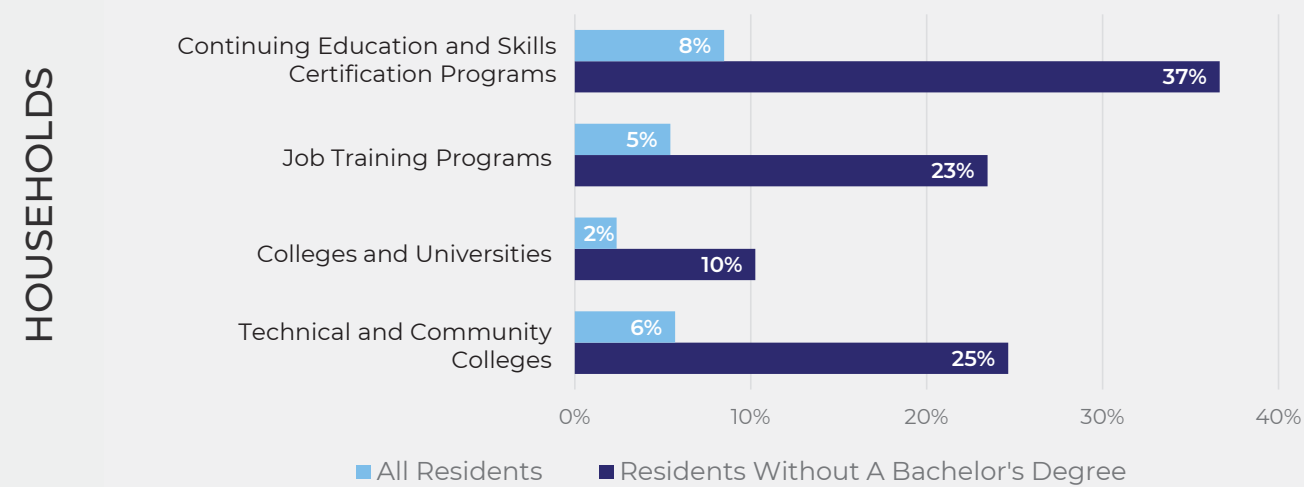


## WHAT WE HEARD

Both businesses and residents believe technical colleges, universities, and continuing education and certification programs provide affordable opportunities to access more gainful employment. Residents without a Bachelor's degree indicated a much higher willingness to engage in new continuing education programs made available.



What kinds of schooling and training are you most likely to enroll in? (Select all that apply)



### SURVEY WRITE-IN RESPONSES WANT A CHARLESTON REGION WHERE EVERYBODY HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE

EXAMPLE SURVEY RESPONSES:

- “ Accessibility, never feeling you lack the resources to progress
- Every person having the opportunity to do what they were born to do
- We no longer see disparities by race, everyone has a job that supports their quality of life ”

## TALENT SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Universities and advanced degree programs
- ▶ Technical college system
- ▶ Public libraries
- ▶ Creative programming for job seekers
- ▶ Apprenticeship programs
- ▶ STEM opportunities within K-12 schools
- ▶ Grow with Google

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Rise in non-career ready graduates
- ▶ Lack of K-12 student exposure to local job opportunities
- ▶ Limited public interest in low cost technical college and continuing education programs
- ▶ Low degree completion
- ▶ Lack of Tier 1 Research University

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Build skills and connections for the region's youth
- ▶ Provide opportunities to residents to build leadership and other soft skills
- ▶ Expose youth and young adults to in-demand skills and professions
- ▶ Implement strategies to close equity gap on college campuses
- ▶ Additional diversity, equity and inclusion training for employers
- ▶ Facilitate joint conversations between students and employers

### THREATS

- ▶ Poor K-12 student outcomes; ongoing segregation of public school districts
- ▶ Lack of collaboration, especially in nonprofit sector
- ▶ Isolated actions rather than programmatic approaches to systemic issues





# QUALITY OF PLACE

The Charleston region is known for its distinctive sense of place. Historic walkable centers, newer suburban areas and rural communities combine with water-related natural and cultural resources of international recognition. This attracts tourists year-round and remains a strong selling point to new businesses, residents and retirees who continue to flock to the region. However, these place-based assets are at risk. Growth is bringing with it increasing congestion, housing affordability challenges, loss of open space, and new development that lacks a uniquely Charleston identity. Therefore, the challenge for the region is to continue growing without losing the very assets fueling that growth.



# A region with future development that preserves character and natural environments while improving access and transportation

**ENCOURAGING GROWTH THAT REINFORCES A STRONG SENSE OF PLACE, RETAINS NATURAL RESOURCES, AND PROVIDES FOR A WIDE RANGE OF TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING CHOICES IS A KEY GOAL FOR THE REGION.** The One Region Roadmap envisions future development and land use strategies which preserve the character of the region and its natural environments while improving transportation options.

In 2012, the region created Our Region, Our Plan, which presented a framework for sustainable growth. This plan encourages new homes and jobs to locate in areas already served by infrastructure through redevelopment and infill. It also calls for the creation of great new communities with more compact, mixed-use centers that make it easier for people to use transit, walk or bike instead of using a car for every trip. While elements of this regional vision have been realized, the area is suffering from increases in congestion, a worsening housing

affordability crisis, and a loss of open space. New greenfield development is consuming land at a rapid pace, and the region is remaining auto-dependent.

**COMMUTE TIMES ARE INCREASING.** Between 2010 and 2019, commuters traveling 30-59 minutes to work each day increased from 28.5% to 33.7%. Commuters traveling 60 minutes or more to work each day increased from 5.6% in 2010 to 7.5% in 2019. Meanwhile, households with commute times less than 30 minutes declined 7% since 2010.

**DESIRE FOR MORE TRANSIT OPTIONS AND WALKABLE COMMUNITIES.** Median home values in the region's most walkable and transit-accessible locations (downtown Charleston; Daniel Island) continue to increase year-over-year. 32% of all household survey respondents reported not being able to afford to live in the type of home and location they prefer; this increases to 70% for lower-income households (earning <\$35,000 or less, annually).

**DESIRE FOR A RANGE OF COMMUNITY TYPES.** Over half of survey respondents want to be able to walk to shopping, commercial centers, social activities, and entertainment. However, 58% of respondents also prefer a suburban location and 73% want to be close to a park, green, or open space.



## QUICK FACTS

- 1** **27%** increase in population within the Charleston region from 2010 to 2021
- 2** **65** million square feet of commercial development since 2010
- 3** **17** million square feet of commercial development currently proposed or under construction
- 4** **73%** survey respondents want to live near a park, green space or natural area
- 5** **20%** total home sales in 2021 classified as new construction



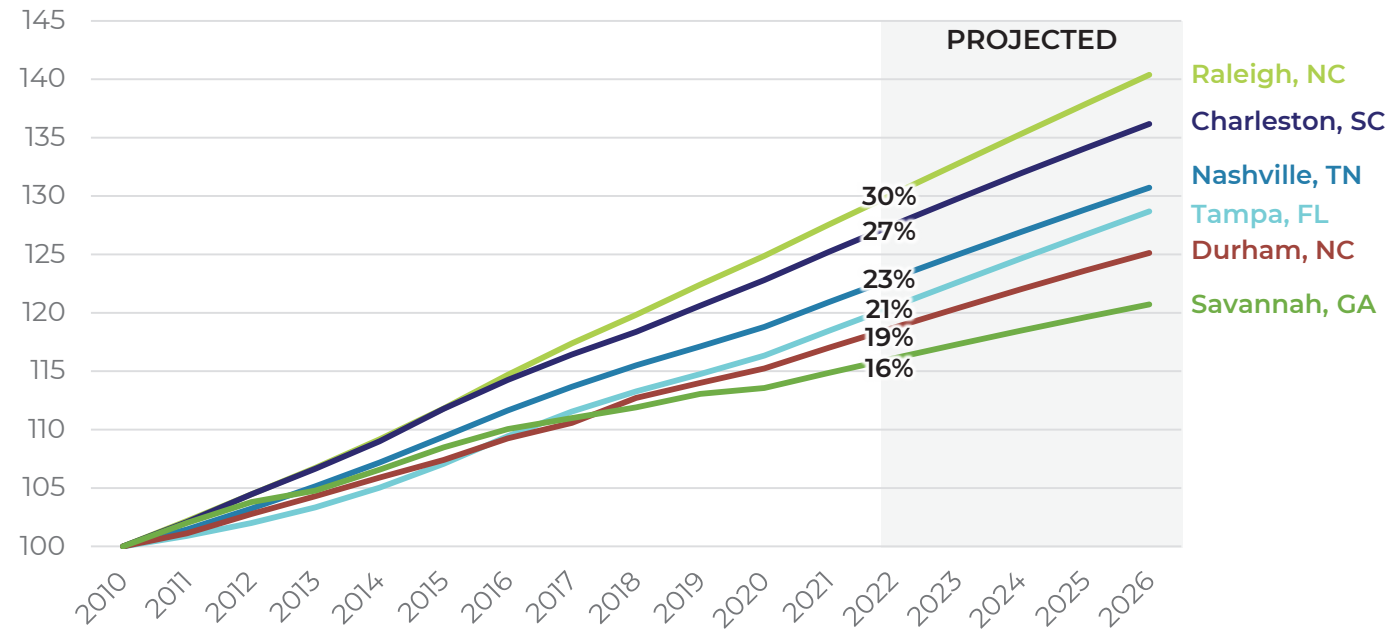
The region's challenge is to continue growing without losing the very assets fueling growth



## MID-SIZE SOUTHEAST METROS GROWING RAPIDLY

Mid-size metropolitan areas across the southeast grew rapidly from 2010-onward. Even among peer communities, the Charleston region experienced a faster growth rate than typical. The Charleston region grew by 27% from 2010 to 2021, a pace faster than peer communities including Tampa (FL), Nashville (TN), Durham-Chapel Hill (NC) and Savannah (GA). Population growth has occurred alongside employment growth. Over the same period, employment in the Charleston region increased by 26% - comparable to employment change in peer communities.

POPULATION GROWTH (2010 = 100) BY METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA

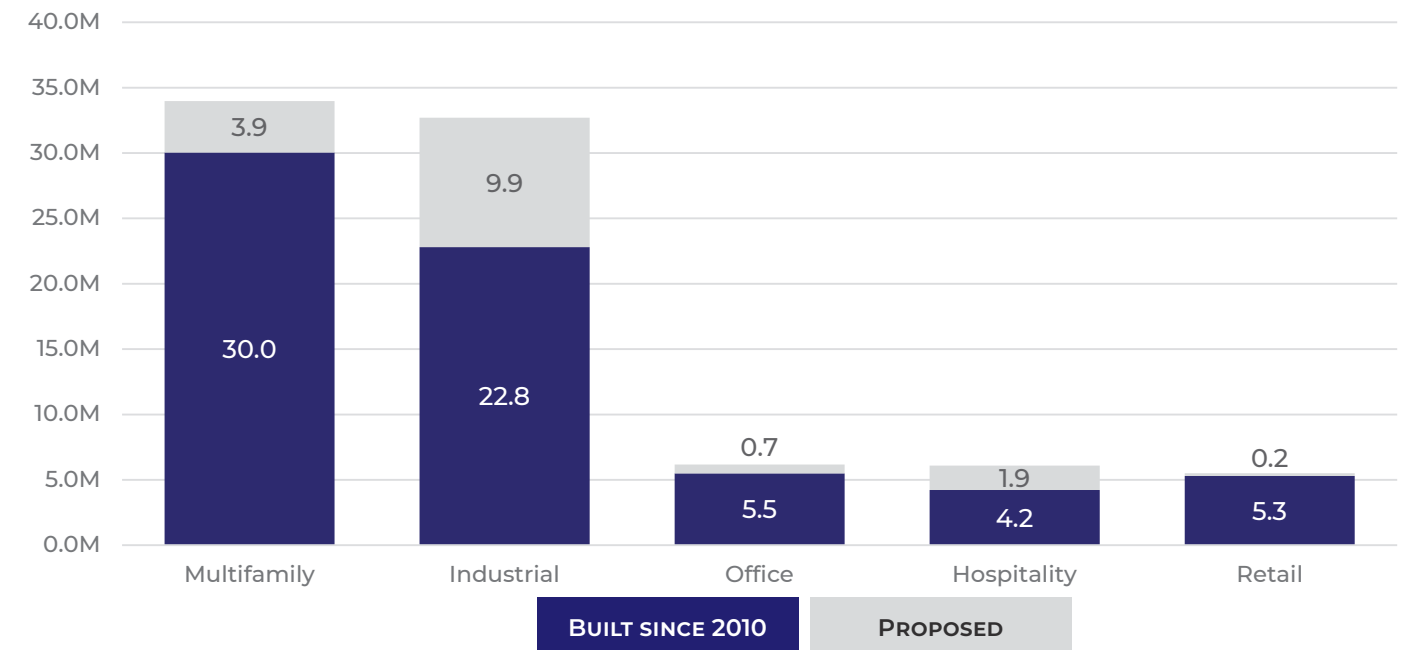


Source: EMSI, SB Friedman

## AN ACTIVE COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE MARKET

The Charleston region added over 65 million square feet of commercial real estate since 2010 and another 17 million square feet is currently proposed or under construction. Commercial multifamily development was the fastest growing property type, adding 30 million square feet in the last 11-years. Nearly two-thirds of the development currently proposed or under construction is industrial property. Commercial development across all asset classes is indicative of an active jobs, housing and tourism market. Maintaining quality of place is challenging in a region with the quick pace of development presently underway.

COMMERCIAL SQUARE FEET DEVELOPED OR PROPOSED SINCE 2010



Source: CoStar, SB Friedman



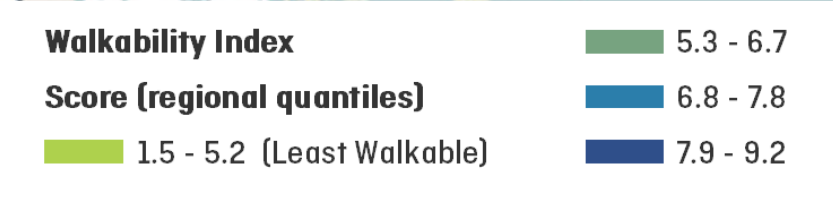
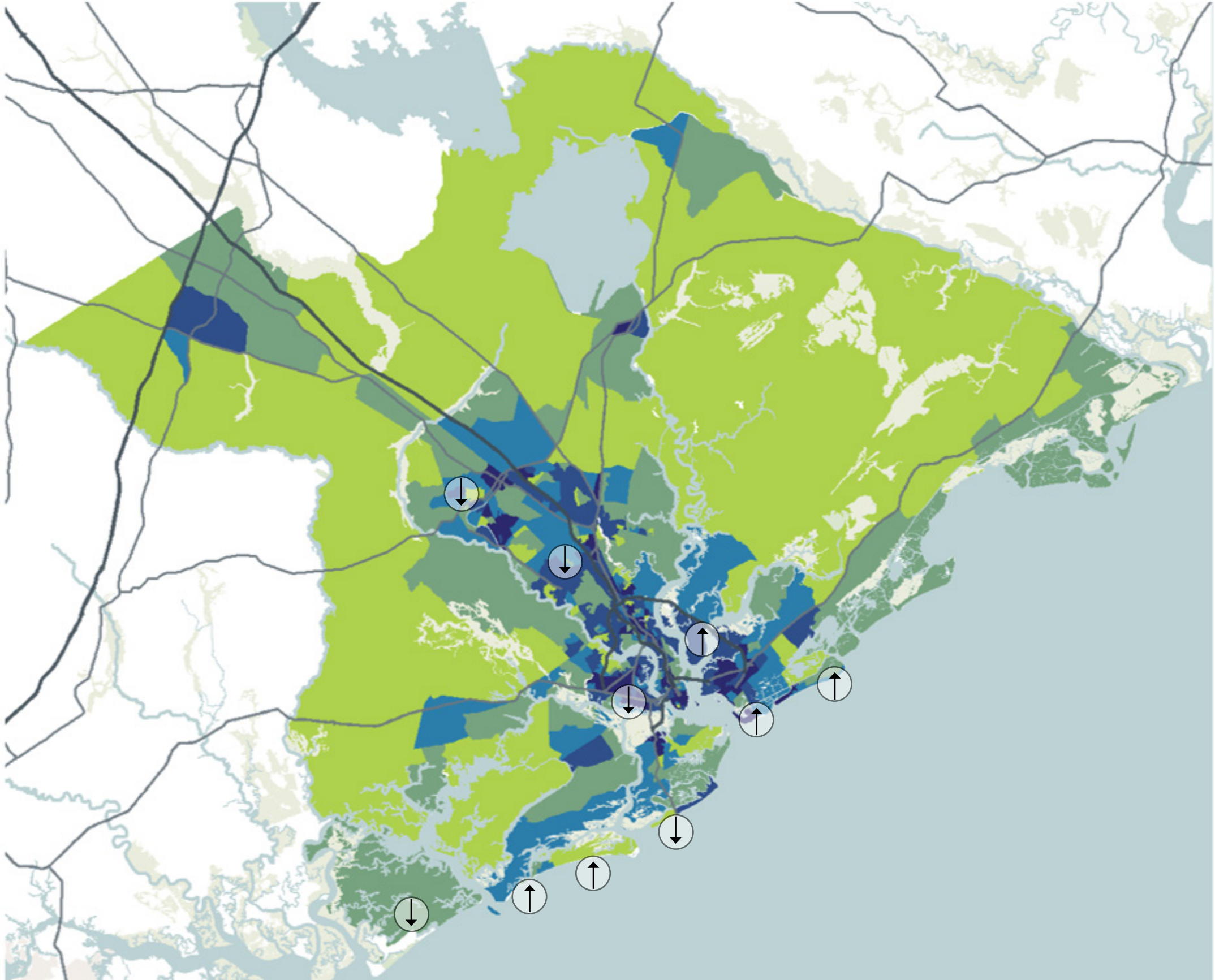


# WALKABILITY & REAL ESTATE

Walkability in the Charleston region varies substantially from community to community. Communities closer to the urban core have a much higher walkability index relative to newer suburban and rural communities on the periphery of the region. Walkability is reported by a 'National Walkability Index' available through the United States Environmental Protection Agency. A higher walkability index is indicative of a greater diversity of employment and housing alternatives, shorter blocks, and transit availability.

The highest walkability scores within the region are attributed to census block groups on the Peninsula, throughout North Charleston, downtowns in Summerville and Mount Pleasant, and within island communities that also include a commercial node. Many of these highly walkable island communities with access to beaches and other open space also reported the greatest change in median sales prices from 2020 to 2021. Sullivan's Island, Isle of Palms, Seabrook Island, Kiawah and Daniel Island all reported an increase in the median home sales price of over 25% in a 12-month period.

Strong market performance in the top five areas is not attributable to new construction. Regionwide, new construction accounted for nearly 20% of all home sales in the region in 2021. Communities with the highest share of sales attributable to new construction generally report lower walkability scores (e.g., Greater Summerville, Goose Creek / Moncks Corner, Wando / Cainhoy and John's Island).



**↑ Top 5 Areas: Change in Median Sales Price from 2020**

- ▶ Sullivan's Island (+32.7%)
- ▶ Isle of Palms (+32.6%)
- ▶ Seabrook Island (+30.6%)
- ▶ Kiawah (+29.3%)
- ▶ Daniel Island (+28.6%)

**↓ Bottom 5 Areas: Change in Median Sales Price from 2020**

- ▶ Greater North Charleston (+14.0%)
- ▶ Folly Beach (+13.3%)
- ▶ Greater Summerville Area (+13.3%)
- ▶ James Island (+12.7%)
- ▶ Edisto Area (+6.4%)

Source: Census 2010, Census 2019, EPA, Renaissance Planning Group

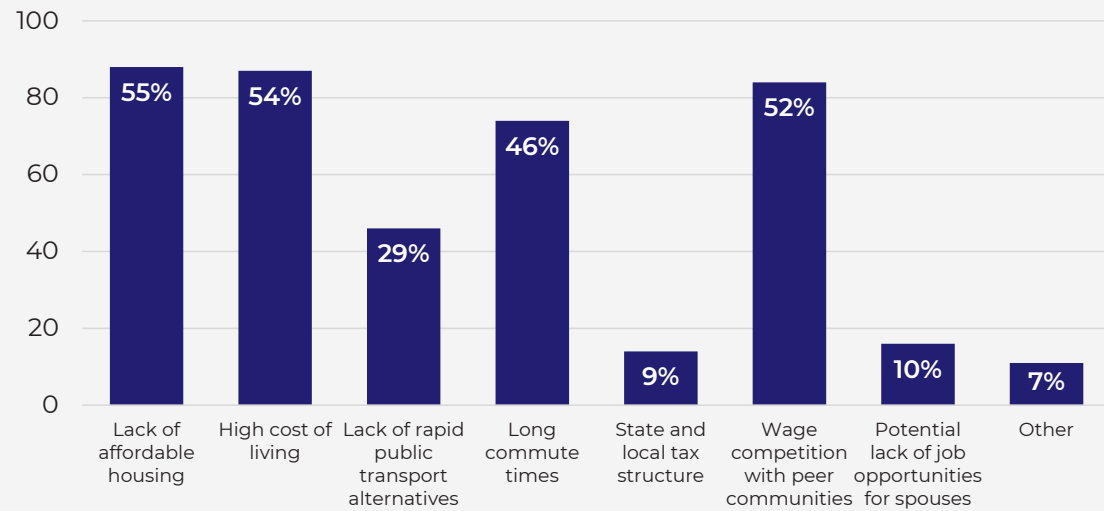


## WHAT WE HEARD

Residents and businesses alike value the existing quality of place within the region but acknowledge increasing challenges. Business respondents indicated key quality of place metrics – including affordable housing and traffic congestion – are negatively impacting their ability to attract and retain employees in the region. Despite differences between the desire to live in urban versus rural places, over 70% of resident respondents indicated a desire to live near parks, green space and/or natural areas.

### HOUSING COST AND LONG COMMUTES ARE NEGATIVELY IMPACTING REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Have any of these factors challenged your ability to attract and retain employees? (Check all that apply)



### RESIDENTS HAVE VARYING COMMUNITY PREFERENCES WHICH DRIVE HOUSING CHOICE

Presently, which of these statements describes where you want to live? (Check all that apply)

28% I want to live in a city or town center

26% I want to live in a rural area

52% I want to be able to walk to shopping, community centers, social activities and entertainment

46% I want to live close to my job

73% I want to live close to a park, green space and/or natural area

### SURVEY WRITE-IN RESPONSES CALLED FOR PRESERVATION OF THE EXISTING QUALITY OF PLACE

EXAMPLE SURVEY RESPONSES:

“

Clean environment

Sense of community

Equity

Improved infrastructure, responsible development

## QUALITY OF PLACE SWOT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

### STRENGTHS

- ▶ Natural amenities and protected open spaces
- ▶ Vibrant urban core and smaller main street nodes
- ▶ Willingness to collaborate across jurisdictions to address open space needs

### WEAKNESSES

- ▶ Imbalance in development patterns across the region
- ▶ Lack of urgency in addressing quality of place challenges
- ▶ Limited land availability to absorb increasing demand
- ▶ Lack of a clear, unifying vision for land use planning
- ▶ Negative perception of density

### OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Infill opportunities
- ▶ Transitioning from highway-centric to walkable, multi-modal transit networks
- ▶ Making planning more inclusive
- ▶ Ongoing dialogue about a cohesive growth strategy will add clarity for both public and private sector
- ▶ Include more voices in the planning process

### THREATS

- ▶ Dangerous transportation systems
- ▶ Displacement from highway building
- ▶ Land constraints
- ▶ Need for growth strategy with more efficient land use
- ▶ Negative perception of density





# STRATEGIES

One Region Roadmap's ultimate success will lie in its ability to drive meaningful, positive change. Through close collaboration with stakeholders and residents of the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region, One Region has identified 33 high-impact strategies that will accelerate recovery from the pandemic and safeguard against future economic disruptions.





Guided by these strategies, One Region and its partners will continue to work together to build a thriving region where all residents, regardless of economic status, have quality housing choices, lifelong education opportunities and access to diverse, well-paying careers.



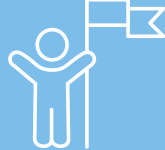



# ONE REGION ROADMAP STRATEGIES

The following section provides additional information on each strategy as well as case studies from around the country. One Region will need to work collaboratively with members and implementation partners to implement the set of strategies, collectively building a stronger, more resilient region.

☆ Indicates top-ranked strategy from virtual public meeting

<b>EQUITY</b> 	1	Fund a regional Officer to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within government policies and initiatives.
	2	Create an equity data dashboard with annual performance metrics to measure progress on improving racial equity.
	☆3	Expand the regional minority and women-owned business registry.
	4	Identify collaborative goals for increasing local minority- and women-owned business participation on county and regional government contracts.
	5	Conduct an annual summit led by a regional collaborative to discuss progress and how the region can advance more equitable practices.
<b>ECONOMIC MOMENTUM</b> 	6	Create a coalition of regulatory authorities and economic development entities to identify zones for sustainable development
	☆7	Focus regional economic development efforts on development zones consistent with infrastructure availability and land use strategy.
	8	Create an automotive research center focusing on e-mobility.
	9	Develop an Innovation District with cutting edge spaces for life sciences and information technology
	10	Support first-time entrepreneurs with essential business launch services.
<b>AFFORDABILITY</b> 	☆11	Pursue opportunities to expand funding for the renovation and preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing
	12	Champion the inclusion of 20% affordable housing within a quarter mile of premium transit stations.
	13	Promote zoning overlays in areas around employment centers that allow for denser housing types and streamlined permitting.
	14	Create a regional housing coalition to champion policy around, and the development of, affordable housing.
<b>GLOBAL FLUENCY</b> 	☆15	Create a resource center for international residents that connects people to programs, events, and initiatives to exchange cultures and ideas.
	16	Increase the number of international flights to targeted business destinations.
	17	Create a volunteer corps of ambassadors willing to connect with new foreign nationals in the region

<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> 	18	Develop a regional broadband council to coordinate existing pilot programs and initiatives to increase broadband coverage.
	19	Work with broadband providers to ensure total geographic coverage for high-speed broadband throughout the region.
	20	Create a coordinated network of publicly available broadband locations through partnerships with libraries, schools, hospitals, businesses and government entities.
	21	Encourage government entities to adopt dig once policies to reduce the cost of broadband expansion.
	☆22	Coordinate capital improvement planning across regional, county and local governments to align regional infrastructure investments.
	<b>INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b> 	23
24		Form a regional technology council to better connect entrepreneurs and opportunities in information technology.
25		Develop a new entrepreneurship center to support start-up businesses.
☆26		Create an investment fund for minority-owned businesses.
<b>TALENT</b> 	☆27	Support the continuation of making technical college free for Charleston region residents advancing their education in high-demand fields.
	28	Build upon existing programs to help grow the Black and Latinx community in tech.
	29	Establish a co-teaching program that enables industry professionals to assist K-12 teachers with STEM curriculum.
	30	Convene a workforce training task force to improve connections between educational institutions, workforce training providers and regional employers.
<b>QUALITY OF PLACE</b> 	31	Establish a regional data dashboard to evaluate consistency between development patterns and regional planning goals.
	32	Develop a regional watershed approach to open space preservation and the use of natural systems in flood and drainage management.
	☆33	Initiate a land preservation and acquisition program to support the long-term retention of open space, critical habitats and systems that support resiliency throughout the region.



## Use an equity lens in public policy and decision making

### 1. FUND A REGIONAL OFFICER TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INITIATIVES.

Advancing more equitable outcomes across the Charleston region requires a coordinated effort. In recognition of the need to advance equity, organizations have established Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) leaders and policies. However, like many regional issues, independent efforts to address disparities will not have the same impact as a well-coordinated regional strategy. One Region should therefore establish and fund a DEI officer for the Charleston region. A dedicated DEI officer would serve as a coalition builder to help coordinate goals, leverage resources across different sectors, build new partnerships for action, and regularly report on progress against key indicators. This, in turn, would help the region reduce redundancy of efforts, identify replicable best practices, and facilitate the sharing of limited resources to advance equity initiatives. The designation of a regional equity officer also sends a critical message to the region and beyond that equity matters.

### 2. CREATE AN EQUITY DATA DASHBOARD WITH ANNUAL PERFORMANCE METRICS TO MEASURE PROGRESS ON IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY.

What gets measured gets managed. One Region members collect and post statistics aimed at profiling regional employment, wages and corporate expansions, among other topics. This type of data collection and synthesis could easily be expanded to include equity metrics. Doing so can reinforce an understanding of the key racial disparities of the region and create a transparent and easily discernable way to track trends. For example, Charleston region residents repeatedly brought up the need for more local, Black-owned business growth. A regional dashboard could include indicators that track Black-owned business starts and employees as a share of regional business growth to see if historic trends of underrepresentation change over time. The dashboard could be hosted by a regional entity, but data updates and information sharing should come from various existing One Region members and partners.

### 3. EXPAND THE REGIONAL MINORITY AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS REGISTRY.

Growing minority- and women-owned businesses starts with identifying the businesses already present in the region today. The Charleston Metro Chamber recently launched the Lowcountry Minority Biz Directory. One Region should therefore work with its partners to expand the registry and increase awareness of this resource. Even a simple regional registry has benefits. Public and private sector entities could use the registry to identify partners that could help them meet federal, state, or local contracting requirements. Businesses on the registry would in turn receive exposure to a range of potential clients. For One Region, a more comprehensive minority- and women-owned business enterprise registry would highlight industry clusters where these businesses are underrepresented. One Region and its partners could then use this information to tailor future programming, training and grant programs.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"A much broader awareness needs to be created about equity in our community. Armed with an understanding of the challenges, strategies and tactics can be designed to attack these challenges. Metrics for success will be an instrumental part of this approach, allowing the community to measure the success or failure of the approach."*





### CASE STUDY: REALIZING ARLINGTON'S COMMITMENT TO EQUITY (RACE)

In 2019, Arlington County, Virginia adopted an Equity Resolution that outlined specific steps through which the County could reduce racial inequities. Among other things, the Resolution tasked the County Manager with developing a racial equity tool that could inform policy, programming, and budgeting decisions. In May 2021, Arlington County launched a new data dashboard that tracks 22 key indicators around topics like income, education, and housing by race and/or ethnicity. The data is tied to the annual American Community Survey and can be easily updated or replicated. Overall, the dashboard provides data that communicates existing racial disparities and tracks progress on reducing those gaps. More than just a communication tool, the dashboard will be used to inform the County's initiatives around equity. By embedding data and racial equity in its decision-making, Arlington County is working to improve outcomes for all and build towards a future where race does not predict one's success.

### 4. IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE GOALS FOR INCREASING LOCAL MINORITY- AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS PARTICIPATION ON COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.

Public sector contracts represent a major opportunity for local businesses. When those contracts include targets for small or disadvantaged business participation, they can support the growth of those businesses. Already, many public sector entities have such targets embedded in their practices. For example, the US Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program requires that at least 10% of federal transportation funds be expended with disadvantaged businesses. Other federal, state and local public agencies have enacted similar goals to foster growth in minority and women-owned businesses across a range of sectors. One Region should survey local governments to identify current annual contract spending. Local, county and regional governments can then work together to establish consistent participation targets for minority- and women-owned businesses. Public sector entities can learn from the South Carolina Department of Transportation, the University of South Carolina, and other institutions that already have strong DBE programs in place. Consistent DBE participation targets across the region will also help to identify areas of unmet demand or strength over time and inform future policy and programming.

### 5. CONDUCT AN ANNUAL SUMMIT LED BY A REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE TO DISCUSS PROGRESS AND HOW THE REGION CAN ADVANCE MORE EQUITABLE PRACTICES.

Fostering a regional culture around equity and measurably combatting racial disparities will take leadership, continuing education and partnerships across sectors. There are several existing initiatives already underway in the Charleston region. The Charleston Forum brings together residents to have open discussions about race. Meanwhile, Coastal Community Foundation led the Charleston Cohort in the Reinventing Our Communities Cohort program in 2021, which sought to encourage and create strong local economies by helping communities address structural racism and systemic barriers to economic opportunities. An annual summit would bring people committed to driving equity in the region together to share success stories, discuss obstacles and create partnerships to advance the implementation of various equity initiatives. The annual summit could also bring in speakers from outside the region to share lessons and best practices from other parts of the country.

### WHAT WE HEARD

*"Right now most contracts and procurement opportunities are not pursued by small, local businesses because it is such a pain and a massive investment of time and money for them. Also, finding these opportunities is incredibly difficult."*

*"Minority communities struggle to find funding and access capitals as is, putting together a pot of money that has the same barriers on them as traditional loans doesn't really help."*





# ECONOMIC MOMENTUM

Promote compact, sustainable, mixed-use forms of development to discourage sprawl and auto-dependency

## 6. CREATE A COALITION OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES TO IDENTIFY ZONES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

A high quality of life and a strong economic base have resulted in continued growth across the Charleston region. Planning for growth is challenging in any region, but especially so in a region that is constantly evolving and attracting new residents and business. Effective land use planning requires coordination between many different groups: elected officials, land use and transportation planners, economic development entities, utility providers, developers, and residents. To align planning efforts across these many entities, the Charleston region should establish a coalition of key stakeholders to regularly meet and discuss regional trends, share information about ongoing economic development initiatives, and identify potential zones to accommodate future growth. The latter objective can help the region identify priority development zones that can facilitate growth while maintaining quality of life for existing residents and minimizing fiscal impact to communities.

## 7. FOCUS REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ON DEVELOPMENT ZONES CONSISTENT WITH INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABILITY AND LAND USE STRATEGY.

Some regional economic development occurs organically. Other times economic development entities actively work to attract the world's best companies, talent and entrepreneurs to the Charleston region. Organizations like SC Commerce, the Charleston Regional Development Alliance and county economic development offices are regularly contacted by businesses interested in expanding within or relocating to the Charleston region. Recruiting these companies requires an understanding of the region's sites and buildings which could accommodate varying sizes and types of users. Economic development entities rely on their knowledge of available commercial properties, in addition to relationships with the real estate community, to identify spaces for prospective new businesses. Moving forward, the region seeks to identify development zones consistent with infrastructure availability and a regional land use strategy. Sites within these zones should be prioritized when target businesses look to expand within or relocate to the region.

Promote emerging economic opportunities and provide resources to attract firms, research centers and incubators

## 8. CREATE AN AUTOMOTIVE RESEARCH CENTER FOCUSING ON E-MOBILITY.

The automotive cluster is a major strength of the Charleston region's economy, driving growth and offering high wages to workers – including those without a college degree. From 2010 to 2021, the number of jobs in the cluster increased by over 140%. This rapid growth was no accident, but rather the result of an attractive business climate, investments in talent development, and commitment from corporate partners such as Volvo and Mercedes-Benz to expanding the region's industry. To continue to grow the automotive industry, the Charleston region needs to keep innovating. The region has an opportunity to invest in and become a global leader in applied research around vehicle electrification, or e-mobility. More and more consumers are purchasing electric vehicles, and demand will increase as the technology improves and charging networks grow. An automotive research center focused on e-mobility would complement the region's existing strength, support cutting-edge R&D, and serve as a launch pad for start-ups and entrepreneurs. To make this vision a reality, One Region will need to convene university, business and government partners to identify gaps in commercial research, areas of collaboration, and potential funding sources for a research center.

## CASE STUDY: CLEMSON UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR AUTOMOTIVE RESEARCH (CU-ICAR)

Clemson University's International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR) is a research center that spans academia, government and industry. It was created through a public-private partnership that included the university and several major corporations. Located in Greenville near several automotive companies, CU-ICAR is home to the nation's only graduate Department of Automotive Engineering.

CU-ICAR counts AT&T, BMW and Michelin as founding partners alongside its academic and non-profit partners. Campus facilities focus on applied automotive research. CU-ICAR's Component Testing Laboratory is a commercial-use facility that tests whether automotive components are safe, reliable and durable. BMW, which operates a production factory in Greenville, has an Information Technology Research Center on campus where it works on IT-related innovations. Meanwhile, the Center for Emerging Technologies allows companies to expand and develop technologies that complement student and faculty research.

CU-ICAR has been successful at advancing innovation and driving economic growth. Hundreds of new automotive jobs in the community have been attributed to the presence of the center. The model works for talent development too – 95% of CU-ICAR's graduates find gainful employment in the automotive industry. Over a quarter of program graduates remain in South Carolina and help the State maintain its strength in the automotive sector.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"The current planning and land-use in our region is the main driver for pretty much every problem in the region. Traffic, affordability, economic momentum, flooding, equity and every other issue we're facing could be addressed to a degree if we had some sort of land-use/zoning plan as a region that made sense. Public transit can't function in this region without changes to this and that is a major remedy for many of the issues above. Greater density can address affordability and housing and create opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs and expand access to jobs, education, [and] healthcare"*



## CASE STUDY: WINSTON-SALEM INNOVATION QUARTER

Winston-Salem's Innovation Quarter is one of the leading innovation districts in the world and a thriving example of successful placemaking. The Innovation Quarter has 1.9 million square feet of office, lab and institutional space housing 90 companies, 1,800 students and 3,600 workers. Not just an employment hub, the Innovation Quarter is also a vibrant, mixed-use district with nearly 800 residential units located within or adjacent to the district.

The roots of the Innovation Quarter stretch back to the late 1990s, when local academic institutions, businesses and government entities envisioned a thriving downtown that could drive innovation and economic development. After a robust planning process, Wake Forest Biotech Place opened in 2012 in a redeveloped tobacco warehouse. This in turn sparked a period of growth and expansion for the district. International businesses relocated to the Innovation Quarter while educational institutions opened new buildings. The Innovation Quarter choice of tenants was deliberate; rather than simply fill the available space, it brought in specific users focused on health care and social innovation.

Today, the Innovation Quarter is a place for research, business and education in biomedical science, information technology and advanced materials. It has fostered a forward-thinking environment of partnership and innovation in the Winston-Salem region and hopes to do so for generations to come.

## 9. DEVELOP AN INNOVATION DISTRICT WITH CUTTING EDGE SPACES FOR LIFE SCIENCES AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

An innovation district is a focused geographic area where public and private sector partners collaborate to create a cluster of research institutions, companies start-ups and business incubators. Innovation districts can help a city or region add jobs in a targeted industry. In WestEdge, Charleston has begun working toward a modern research and discovery district. With state-of-the-art lab, incubator and accelerator space, WestEdge has attracted some of the region's best healthcare and research talent; tenants like MUSC and SCRA are driving innovation in life sciences. There is potential for the Charleston region to build upon this success. The region today is home to 2,000 life science and information technology entrepreneurs—a 35% increase from 2010—as well as hospitals and universities that share facilities and research priorities. An innovation district that helps bring all these partners together in cutting edge spaces could aid collaboration, reinforce the region's reputation for medical research, and expand its commercialization potential. One Region can continue to strengthen ties between businesses and universities and cultivate a culture of innovation in the region. Long-term, One Region should work with its partners to coordinate the planning, development and marketing of a new innovation district.

## 10. SUPPORT FIRST-TIME ENTREPRENEURS WITH ESSENTIAL BUSINESS LAUNCH SERVICES.

South Carolina is home to many first-time business owners and entrepreneurs. From 2015 through 2020, the rate of business application growth in the State exceeded the national average by 12%. Within just the Charleston region, entrepreneurs applied for over 14,000 business permits in 2020. However, many of these first-time entrepreneurs need help getting their businesses off the ground. New entrepreneurs may not be familiar with how to incorporate, or how to effectively market their business. To help grow the region's small businesses, leaders in the economic development ecosystem—small business development centers, incubators, non-profits, and chambers of commerce, to name just a few—should support entrepreneurs with essential business launch services. These players are well-placed to assist with processes like business license applications, tax ID applications and website development. High-impact small businesses are critical to regional economic development. By creating a support system committed to helping these ventures thrive, the Charleston region can help create high-quality jobs and build a rich economy.

### WHAT WE HEARD

*"Charleston can leverage its nascent life sciences sector by improved laboratory and other real estate offerings suited to the industry, as well as collaboration across applicable entities to form an ecosystem that will support recruitment, retention, expansion, and entrepreneurial start-ups."*

*"The locally owned small businesses in my community are what make it special and provide both tangible and intangible benefits to our community. The more we can support a strong and diversified economy that reflects the diversity in our communities, rather than relying on a silver bullet sector, the better."*





# AFFORDABILITY

## Expand and diversify the region's housing stock

### 11. PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND FUNDING FOR THE RENOVATION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURALLY OCCURRING AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Housing is the single greatest expenditure for nearly all households in the Charleston region. Over the last decade, population growth and the relatively slower pace of housing production in the region strained the housing market and further drove up housing prices. Today, three out of ten Charleston region households are cost-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs. To maintain housing affordability for households across the region, it is critical to preserve and increase the supply of naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH): existing housing that is attainable for low- and moderate-income households, but not subsidized by any federal program. NOAH units are the most common form of attainable housing in the country. They are also at risk of being lost due to neglect, redevelopment, or rising rents. Stakeholders can currently pursue grants and other funding sources for the renovation of such units. One Region needs to pursue additional strategies to keep these units on the market and at attainable rents and resale values. Common strategies to preserve NOAH units include acquiring units at risk of redevelopment, providing funding to property owners in exchange for affordability protections, and establishing a land bank that acquires and manages NOAH units along with surplus vacant land.

### 12. CHAMPION THE INCLUSION OF 20% AFFORDABLE HOUSING WITHIN A QUARTER MILE OF PREMIUM TRANSIT STATIONS.

Commute times have been increasing within the Charleston region due to growing congestion and new development farther from job centers. Since 2010, the share of commuters spending more than 30 minutes commuting to work increased by 7%. Improving mobility and working to provide attainable housing in areas with existing infrastructure are important steps in maintaining quality of life in the Charleston region. A way for One Region to advance these goals is to push for the inclusion of affordable housing in new multifamily developments near planned Lowcountry Rapid Transit stations. Incentive-based policies, such as allowing higher density in return for providing affordable units, can increase the supply of affordable housing near transit, thereby expanding economic opportunity and reducing congestion for all Charleston region residents.

### 13. PROMOTE ZONING OVERLAYS IN AREAS AROUND EMPLOYMENT CENTERS THAT ALLOW FOR DENSER HOUSING TYPES AND STREAMLINED PERMITTING.

Where people in the Charleston region live and where they work are not always aligned. Commute times have been increasing across the region. At the same time, people have shown an increased desire to live closer to job centers in highly walkable neighborhoods. Housing costs in many of these areas have increased as a result. To address these trends, the region should allow and plan for denser and more diverse housing types, particularly at strategic locations such as around premium station areas. A zoning overlay, a planning tool that creates additional rules in an area on top of the existing zoning, is a relatively simple way to create more of the walkable neighborhoods that are in high demand. Overlays that streamline the process around building and allow for greater density can incentivize developers to increase the supply of denser housing. These overlays can also permit lively retail activity in designated mixed-use areas. Changing land use is a long-term process, but one that has the potential to positively shape the Charleston region for a generation or more. The BCDCOG should evaluate zoning overlays in its next Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. One Region should also advocate for these land use policies to be included in community and regional plan updates.

### CASE STUDY: RALEIGH HOUSING INITIATIVES

Raleigh, North Carolina is one of the fastest growing cities in the country. However, the city's rapid population growth occurred without a proportionate expansion of housing supply. To combat rising land and housing costs, the City of Raleigh committed to preserving and expanding its supply of affordable housing. Starting in 2016, the City set an aspirational goal to create 570 affordable housing units a year for the next decade. Since then, the City has implemented a multi-faceted approach to meet this target.

In 2020, Raleigh voters approved an \$80 million affordable housing bond, with 72% supporting the measure. The bond will fund a variety of housing initiatives and programs, including site acquisition near transit hubs, down payment assistance for low- and middle-income homebuyers, and new affordable rental housing construction. The City also helps homeowners finance repairs through two Raleigh Housing Rehabilitation programs. With all of its programs, the City partners with nonprofit and for-profit organizations, neighborhood groups, and other local governments to advance each of these strategies.

Raleigh recognizes that housing affordability is a key factor in community vitality and continued economic growth. By setting ambitious goals and implementing an array of housing programs, Raleigh has demonstrated its intention to advance affordability so that all residents can thrive.

### WHAT WE HEARD

*"The cost of housing in the Charleston area has skyrocketed. We must have housing for all levels of incomes or we can't get the workers to work. These units need to be located within walking distance to work creating the minimum need for the ownership of a car."*

*"While, by itself, being housed will not make someone a successful member of society, it is a fundamental building block to successful individuals through which we generate vibrant societies."*





# GLOBAL FLUENCY

## Increase collaboration and communication between regional attainable housing champions

### 14. CREATE A REGIONAL HOUSING COALITION TO CHAMPION POLICY AROUND, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF, AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

Previously affordable neighborhoods throughout the Charleston region have experienced substantial price changes in recent years. Ensuring that there are attainable housing options should be a key policy goal for decision-makers across the region. A regional housing coalition could help coordinate efforts to advance attainable housing development and policy. There are many existing organizations and efforts for a future coalition to build upon. The Charleston Trident Association of Realtors has thought deeply about this issue and conducted a housing affordability and policy study in 2019. Meanwhile, the Charleston Metro Chamber Attainable Housing Vision Lab previously championed the idea of a regional housing coalition. There are many robust discussions about attainable housing in both public and private-sector circles, but limited coordination or cross-pollination of different ideas. A regional housing coalition can ensure housing maintains a regional priority. It can lead policy campaigns, better share information between partners, and advocate that this issue receives the necessary funding.

## Cultivate a welcoming and globally connected culture in the region

### 15. CREATE A RESOURCE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTS THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE TO PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND INITIATIVES TO EXCHANGE CULTURES AND IDEAS.

Nearly 42,000 Charleston region residents were born abroad. To welcome to the growing international community, the region can ensure that there are sufficient supports and resources for multinational neighbors and visitors. But while there are some existing initiatives to welcome students and employees of multinational corporations, stakeholders described gaps present in the support system – particularly after the initial welcome. One Region should help create a resource center that provides long-term support to international residents and serves as a hub for global cultural programming. This center could build on the expertise and resources available through university centers within the region, such as the College of Charleston Center for International Education or Charleston Southern University Office of International Programs, which together welcome hundreds of students from around the world each year. Given Charleston's growing reputation as a destination for international residents, a robust resource and cultural center would help cultivate a welcoming environment for international residents new and old.

### 16. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO TARGETED BUSINESS DESTINATIONS.

Global trade and investment drive the Charleston region's economy. Key industries and clusters are global in nature – with international competitors, supply chains, R&D, and talent. Attracting and supporting foreign direct investment is therefore a key element to ensuring the region's continued economic competitiveness. Regular international flights are an opportunity to support global trade, investment, and connectivity. Attracting additional flights will be more plausible as the region's population and global economy continue to grow. Explore Charleston (the Charleston Area Convention & Visitors Bureau) lobbied successfully to get a direct flight between London's Heathrow Airport and Charleston International Airport in 2019. While this route was suspended because of the pandemic, air travel is now returning to pre-pandemic levels and other smaller markets have resumed international flights. One Region, in conjunction with Explore Charleston, should assess the viability of restarting the London flight, as well as adding direct flights to and from key business locations, such as Frankfurt, Toronto and Mexico City. A globally connected region is one that is primed for success in today's global economy.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"International residents must feel immediately welcome and valued. International centers in other cities have proved an effective way to do this and serve to support greater understanding of different cultures, attitudes and contributions. We operate in a global environment and must embrace differences, not isolate ourselves from those who are different or unknown!"*



## CASE STUDY: UPSTATE INTERNATIONAL

Based in Greenville, SC, Upstate International has welcomed immigrants and provided opportunities for region residents to engage with the world and one another since 1997. The organization began as a way to help international families engage with the community. It carries on its original mission to this day through support from corporate and nonprofit partners, including BMW, Piedmont Natural Gas and the Upstate South Carolina Alliance.

Upstate International helps residents new to the region with a wide range of key tasks, including obtaining a driver's license, setting up utilities, and registering kids for school. Beyond those relocation services, it maintains an online depository of resources and a list of contacts from different countries to assist new residents. Upstate International hosts numerous international clubs: conversation clubs, book clubs and women's clubs, among others. The organization also offers language classes (e.g., English, Spanish, Japanese, etc.) at various levels of proficiency for members.

## 17. CREATE A VOLUNTEER CORPS OF AMBASSADORS WILLING TO CONNECT WITH NEW FOREIGN NATIONALS IN THE REGION.

Foreign nationals noted the many challenges of immigrating to the United States, from confusion over banking practices and health insurance, to the challenge of securing appropriate housing. These interviewees repeatedly asked for a single point of contact that could help them with these issues. A volunteer corps of ambassadors is one promising solution. Already, large companies like Bosch have a buddy assignment for foreign nationals that relocate to the Charleston region. A more expansive volunteer corps—potentially organized through a new international resource center—could assist employees of smaller companies as well as families. Besides assisting with basic relocation needs, members of this volunteer corps could connect new foreign nationals to the greater Charleston region and help make their new home a friendly and welcoming place.

## Advance digital inclusion

### 18. DEVELOP A REGIONAL BROADBAND COUNCIL TO COORDINATE EXISTING PILOT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES TO INCREASE BROADBAND COVERAGE.

Access to the internet is an essential part of daily life nowadays - it is necessary for people to do their jobs, to stay connected with one another, and to participate equally in education, local government, and other aspects of society. However, high-speed internet is out of reach for some. In 2019, approximately 18% of households in the Charleston region did not have access to paid broadband in their homes due either to inability to pay or to gaps in broadband infrastructure. Ensuring that all residents have access to fast and reliable internet will require cross-sector cooperation. Already, dozens of government entities, businesses and nonprofits have committed to advancing digital inclusion through the Lowcountry Connect! Digital Inclusion Pledge. A regional broadband council made up of these could coordinate all existing and future efforts to expand internet service across the region. It could connect residents to direct subsidy programs that are presently available, advocate for new initiatives that improve broadband access, and coordinate capital expansion plans amongst providers, ensuring that the future of the Charleston region is both connected and inclusive.

### 19. WORK WITH BROADBAND PROVIDERS TO ENSURE TOTAL GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE FOR HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

Even setting cost aside, some Charleston region households simply cannot obtain high-speed internet due to infrastructure gaps. According to the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff, each county in the Charleston region contains at least one census tract where the majority of housing units lack high-speed internet (download speeds of at least 25 Mbps). One Region and other stakeholders—government entities, businesses and nonprofits—should work with broadband providers to expand the high-speed broadband network to cover all parts of the region. Total geographic coverage of high-speed broadband would potentially allow more people to work remotely, either part-time or full-time. In our business survey, respondents opposed to work-from-home policies indicated that concerns over access to reliable employee internet at home is a key consideration. As the recent uptick in remote work slowed traffic congestion, better broadband coverage could similarly ease the burden on other infrastructures.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"Broadband should be tackled on a regional level rather than piecemeal by every city and county. With regional planning and prioritization, a multi-year program would offer cost savings, cohesiveness and greater economies of scale. It is important, however, that all counties and cities (and their individual and distinct communities) be accounted for in the implementation plan. COVID has demonstrated how under-served some rural communities are, and they should have precedence over the urban areas that are seeking improvement of their service. The broadband council would also be a great mechanism by which to give more public transparency to the programs of work and performance of various providers."*



### CASE STUDY: NTIA GRANT PROGRAMS

In November 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act into law. The Act includes a \$65 billion investment to ensure that all Americans have access to fast, reliable and affordable broadband. As part of this effort, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will implement several funding programs aimed at improving infrastructure and advancing digital inclusion. The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program will give South Carolina and its communities a minimum of \$100 million from an overall pot of \$42.5 billion to expand broadband to unserved and underserved areas. The NTIA will also administer several digital equity grant programs to ensure that all individuals and communities have the skills, technology and capacity needed to fully participate in today's digital economy.

State and federal grants are key to advancing digital inclusion. Within the Charleston region, Home Telecom has been particularly active in using grants to expand infrastructure to underserved areas. The provider previously used an \$8.1 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to bring high-speed broadband to the rural communities of Awendaw and Huger. Now, another matching grant from the South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff will allow Home Telecom to install an additional 100 miles of fiber and connect places like Pineville and Jamestown.

### 20. CREATE A COORDINATED NETWORK OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE BROADBAND LOCATIONS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENT ENTITIES.

Public- and private-sector entities can help bridge the digital divide by establishing a free wireless internet network across the region. Already, many public entities—such as the Charleston County Public Library—offer free Wi-Fi in and around their buildings. Businesses play a key role too. Since a Google community grant sponsored a successful pilot project at Marion Square Park, more companies and individuals have stepped up to sponsor public Wi-Fi at other city parks through the Charleston Free Wi-Fi program. However, the current system of publicly available internet is provided by a patchwork collection of providers with limited coordination. The various public-sector partners operate their own networks with their own branding, which makes it difficult to easily identify where broadband locations are located. One Region should coordinate between different providers and create a shared brand that easily communicates where there is free access to internet. After there is robust cooperation among the public sector, One Region can identify other private sector partners willing to participate within the brand and increase free internet access beyond public hotspots.

### WHAT WE HEARD

*"Coordinating major investments like this should have been done a while ago. It gives you greater leverage, more resources to work with, and a better end-result. For broadband it's a no-brainer...this is a proven investment that generates economic growth. Chattanooga invested in that years ago and turned their economy around."*

### Prioritize new development in areas with existing infrastructure

### 21. ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT ENTITIES TO ADOPT "DIG ONCE" POLICIES TO REDUCE THE COST OF BROADBAND EXPANSION.

Burying fiber optic cable represents the single biggest cost to deploying broadband, while also being disruptive to the community. Digging projects can block traffic, reduce the lifespan of infrastructure, or cause unintended service disruptions. Municipalities can encourage broadband expansion, reduce digging costs and minimize disruption by adopting dig once policies. These policies require installation of broadband conduits during infrastructure projects, a relatively inexpensive task which nonetheless greatly aids future broadband expansion. Internet providers can easily add fiber optic cable later—and without incurring significant digging expenses—by passing it through the buried conduits. While dig once policies can be effective for each individual municipality, the policy is strengthened through a regional approach. One Region should communicate the benefits of, and encourage municipalities to adopt, common dig once policies. The more government entities adopt these policies, the easier it will be to expand broadband across the entire Charleston region.

### 22. COORDINATE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING ACROSS REGIONAL, COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO ALIGN REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS.

A capital improvement plan is a community planning and fiscal management tool used to coordinate the location, timing and financing of capital improvements over a period of several years. A capital improvement plan provides a working blueprint for sustaining and improving a community's infrastructure. Most of the largest cities across the region (e.g., Charleston, Mount Pleasant, Summerville) have capital improvement plans. However, many jurisdictions do not, and even the ones that do tend not to coordinate their planning efforts with regional plans or adjacent municipalities. A good capital improvement plan identifies and prioritizes projects. A regional approach to capital improvement planning would thus help coordinate infrastructure investments and ensure that improvements overseen by various jurisdictions build upon one another. To start, One Region should create a repository of local capital improvement plans from across the region that includes original planning documents and spatial data, which alone could improve awareness of infrastructure efforts. In the longer term, One Region should encourage greater cross-governmental collaboration during the planning phase, which would improve infrastructure maintenance and expansion across the whole Charleston region.

*"The lack of coordination is felt in many ways across our region. If we truly developed a coordinated model, it would be transformative."*



# INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

## Cultivate an environment conducive to scalable, entrepreneurial enterprises

### 23. CREATE AND MARKET AN INNOVATION BRAND THAT TIES TOGETHER INNOVATION ACTIVITY OCCURRING THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

Innovation is a strength of the Charleston region. There are nearly 10 existing incubators and accelerators that help early-stage ideas come to fruition. Major manufacturers are fueling technological innovation, particularly in areas such as autonomous transport and vehicle electrification. Meanwhile, a strong medical and university system generates new knowledge and trains the innovators of tomorrow. Stakeholders across the region need to be able to effectively communicate the breadth of this activity. An innovation brand—a strategic approach to promoting the Charleston region's reputation for innovation and growth—can do just that. One Region should develop and market a new brand that connects existing innovation activity to the region's reputation as a good place for business. It should communicate the breadth of the region's incubators, innovation programs and venture capital funding sources to a global audience. Public institutions, major corporations and start-up businesses alike can then leverage the innovation brand to advertise regional opportunities to a global audience and attract a diverse, talented workforce to the Charleston region.

### 24. FORM A REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL TO BETTER CONNECT ENTREPRENEURS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

There is high awareness of existing accelerator programs, testing facilities and other resources across the Charleston region. Still, barriers remain for entrepreneurs. Many of the existing incentive or accelerator programs work best for people already connected to the technology ecosystem, but less so for those with less experience or financial resources. Some of the companies that could most use seed funding never have the opportunity to connect with investors. One Region should help set up a council made up of local leaders in technology. A regional technology council could improve connectivity between start-up entrepreneurs and the investor community. Members of the council could also provide entrepreneurs with coaching on how to pitch and attract investors. This council would build upon the work of existing networks, such as the Charleston Digital Corridor, which hosts workshops, tech showcases and collaborative user groups. The South Carolina Research Authority's SC Industry Solutions (SCIS) is another strong model. SCIS builds relationships between entrepreneurial companies and academic researchers, first identifying corporate needs and finding partners that can deliver technical solutions. The organization often assists the innovation process by providing matching grants to lower the development risk.

## Grow small, women, and minority-owned local businesses

### 25. DEVELOP A NEW ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER TO SUPPORT START-UP BUSINESSES.

A start-up business is a new company in the early stages of its operations, often financed and run by its founders. The Charleston region is home to many start-ups: the number of new business applications within the region increased by nearly 40% from 2019 to 2020 despite a year full of uncertainty. The region should strive to maintain the entrepreneurial spirit driven by the pandemic while bringing back the financial and networking support systems absent recently. A new entrepreneurship center would be a strong addition to this support system. This center should seek to build on the existing network of South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA) facilities. SC Launch, one of the SCRA's programs, provides start-ups with mentoring, access to a network of business experts, and grants. One Region should work with its partners to create a locally focused center with similar programs that would complement the SCRA's work and be well placed to identify and support start-ups in the region.

### CASE STUDY: SOUTH CAROLINA MINORITY BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

The South Carolina Minority Business Accelerator is a statewide initiative formed by the Greenville, Charleston Metro and Columbia Chambers of Commerce. Funded through a grant from Bank of America, this initiative was designed to help reduce the barriers and economic disparities faced by minority-owned businesses. It will provide high-potential minority-owned firms with the training and opportunities to drive business growth.

As part of the broader initiative, the Charleston Metro Chamber just launched a new program: the Lowcountry Minority Business Accelerator, which will complement similar accelerators in other regions of the state. The first cohort began the year-long program in early 2022. Participants will undergo intensive training, then work closely with mentors, coaches and peers to create strategic action plans for business growth. The long-term economic momentum of the Charleston region requires a diverse, talented workforce. The Lowcountry Minority Business Accelerator will help build up the region's talent pipeline and advance economic inclusion across both the region and South Carolina.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"Innovation in Charleston is a major theme that is overlooked by many. There are a surprising number of unique success stories and "firsts" that we can brag about. Marketing the sophistication of Charleston as a business community should serve to accelerate the number of tech businesses either relocating or being formed in our market."*

*"The pandemic and great resignation has demonstrated the creativity and entrepreneurial sensibilities of many minorities to establish home-based and e-commerce businesses. They need funding and guidance to grow these businesses and develop new ones!"*







# TALENT

## Provide workforce training in high-demand and living wage sectors

### 26. CREATE AN INVESTMENT FUND FOR MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES.

Regional stakeholders stated that minority entrepreneurs faced systemic economic challenges, particularly lack of access to capital. While the Charleston region is home to various chamber and industry associations, lenders and investment groups, there are few resources specifically focused on minority-owned businesses. To support these small businesses—a critical part of the local economy—One Region should help create a targeted investment fund. Any new fund should learn from existing programs such as the CLIMB Fund (formerly Charleston LDC) and Hi Mark Capital which invest in Black, women-owned and other minority-owned businesses in the Southeast. The new fund management team should also leverage the expertise of nonprofits like the Coastal Community Foundation or the South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development to determine which areas to target and how to structure the fund. While not specifically focused on minority-owned businesses, both organizations have experience in making grants for community economic development in the Charleston region. Alongside establishing a new fund, One Region should also increase municipal awareness of existing federal and state grant opportunities focused on minority entrepreneurship.

### 27. SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION OF MAKING TECHNICAL COLLEGE FREE FOR CHARLESTON REGION RESIDENTS ADVANCING THEIR EDUCATION IN HIGH-DEMAND FIELDS.

In November 2021, Governor McMaster pledged \$17 million to the South Carolina Technical College System. As a result, students at technical colleges going into high impact fields—such as healthcare, manufacturing or computer science—will receive free tuition for the Spring 2022 semester. While this initiative is temporary, Governor McMaster also asked the state’s General Assembly to provide \$124 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds to extend the program through June 30, 2024. Now, One Region should work with state legislators to make this program permanent and ensure that cost is not a barrier for those pursuing higher education. Currently, 17 U.S. States provide some form of tuition-free community college. The SC Technical System—which includes Trident Technical College—already educates more of the State’s undergraduates than all the other public higher education institutions combined. By committing to help make Trident Tech and other technical colleges free, the Charleston region can reach even more students, address ongoing labor shortages in high-demand fields, and grow the economy for all residents.

### 28. BUILD UPON EXISTING PROGRAMS TO HELP GROW THE BLACK AND LATINX COMMUNITY IN TECH.

Information technology is one of the fastest-growing—and highest-paying—sectors nationwide. Within the region, information technology has been a priority economic cluster for the past decade. Increasing community exposure to tech training programs has the twofold benefit of meeting workforce demands and improving access to higher-wage career opportunities. According to existing tech firms located in the region, talent attraction is the greatest barrier to continued growth. At the same time, regional stakeholders mentioned how barriers to entry such as education, equipment needs, and negative perceptions of the industry have led to below average tech employment by Black and Latinx residents in the workforce. The region has sought to address this shortfall by increasing the number of tech programs in high schools, which provides low-cost exposure to tech fields and curriculum. However, these programs could be augmented by increasing the presence of national nonprofits focused on building inclusive communities for Black, Indigenous and People of Color in IT and STEM jobs. The region should leverage existing relationships with nonprofits like Black Girls Code and CODE2040, both of which are dedicated to removing structural barriers preventing full participation of Black and Latinx community members in the economy.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"South Carolina's technical colleges are a true success story, and we should build on them and keep them vital."*

*"Industry is desperate for more skilled trade workers. High school counselors need to encourage students to consider trade schools as of equal value to colleges."*



### CASE STUDY: BOSTON BEYOND

Boston Beyond is a public-private partnership that combines the teaching expertise of Boston Public School teachers with the enrichment and learning expertise of community-based organizations. The program takes 14,000 Boston students around the City of Boston to its many assets—parks, museums, companies and more—to create active, skill-rich summer and after-school learning programs.

Boston Beyond launched in 2005 to address inequities in education outside of school hours. What happens outside of school is equally critical to students' development. In particular, learning loss during summers disproportionately impacts students from low-income families and causes them to lose ground in reading and math. Boston Beyond created a new model to combat these challenges that uses fun and exciting programming across the city to connect students with mentors and career paths.

For example, Boston Beyond's BoSTEM program leverages a coalition of partners to bring high-quality and relevant STEM opportunities to middle schoolers. In BoSTEM, nonprofits directly serve students via STEM-focused learning programs. Meanwhile, industry partners host field trips, provide career mentors to students, and assist with learning materials to better align program content with industry knowledge. Both nonprofit and industry partners also collaborate with public schools on program curriculum.

### 29. ESTABLISH A CO-TEACHING PROGRAM THAT ENABLES INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS TO ASSIST K-12 TEACHERS WITH STEM CURRICULUM.

The Charleston region economy is increasingly focused on high-demand fields that require a strong knowledge of STEM: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. To prime today's students for success in the modern job market, K-12 schools should expand STEM curriculum. As part of this, co-teaching could be a way to integrate STEM into student's primary and secondary education. Co-teaching refers to the practice of two or more teachers working together to present curriculum to students. Industry professionals are more familiar with the ins and outs of their respective industry than teachers, and know which skills are needed for career success. By pairing K-12 teachers with industry professionals in STEM fields, a formal co-teaching program could augment the expertise of Charleston's K-12 teachers and introduce students to various high-demand fields. A co-teaching program could also highlight different career paths for students, strengthening the local talent pipeline.

### 30. CONVENE A WORKFORCE TRAINING TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, WORKFORCE TRAINING PROVIDERS AND REGIONAL EMPLOYERS.

Developing talent is critical to sustaining long-term economic growth. Technical colleges, universities, and continuing education and certification programs all play a part in workforce development across the Charleston region. Businesses and residents alike believe that these programs provide affordable opportunities to access more gainful employment. However, these various efforts are somewhat disjointed and don't always complement each other. One Region should therefore establish a new workforce training task force that brings together the many entities active in workforce development, including readySC and SC Works. The task force should also include representatives from local educational institutions, public library systems, social service organizations and private firms to cover the full spectrum of education and workforce training. It should engage employers to identify the most critical occupations in their industries and the skills needed to succeed in these positions. This task force could map existing workforce training efforts and improve awareness and coordination between actors in the sector and create a clear continuum of education for adults looking to access continuing education programs.

### WHAT WE HEARD

*"STEM studies in this country are woefully inadequate. Nothing better than bringing real-world hands-on experience into the classroom. Do everything possible to ensure that a steady source of qualified labor to the types of businesses we want to attract and grow."*

*"Until we strengthen ties between workforce providers/educational institutions and regional employers, we'll never live up to our full potential. Need to draw a straight line between employer needs and the institutions that prepare the workforce."*





## Prioritize the preservation of the natural environment

### 31. ESTABLISH A REGIONAL DATA DASHBOARD TO EVALUATE CONSISTENCY BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND REGIONAL PLANNING GOALS.

One of the Charleston region's greatest assets is the distinctive character of its built and natural environments. Currently, more than 30 people move into the region each day, and there is enormous pressure to build new housing, retail, schools, and employment centers across the region. There is strong demand to support growth but also to ensure a functioning transportation system, keep housing attainable, and reinforce the region's character and unique sense of place. There are many local policies in place to direct growth, however there is no comprehensive tracking of how effective these policies are in achieving regional quality of place goals. Therefore, One Region should create a regional dashboard that tracks relevant metrics, including: job and housing density, greenfield development, daily vehicle miles traveled, transit usage, and walkability. The metrics can aid in pinpointing where growth management policies are working well and where additional intervention may be needed. These data can also support state of the region reporting and help communicate the region's quality of place when recruiting new businesses.

### 32. DEVELOP A REGIONAL WATERSHED APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND THE USE OF NATURAL SYSTEMS IN FLOOD AND DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT.

Regional watershed planning is an emerging best practice that can assist coastal communities deal with sea-level rise and elevated flood risk. It supports the preservation and restoration of coastal wetlands and promotes green infrastructure as a key strategy for flood mitigation. Watershed planning in the Charleston region would support a more comprehensive strategy for protecting natural areas. Land preservation not only has the potential to provide positive water quality and resiliency outcomes but can also contribute positively to quality of place in the region. Regional watershed management can also initiate the creation of model codes and development standards to create consistency across jurisdictions and further highlight opportunities for pooling resources for larger scale stormwater management initiatives. Finally, this approach can also support tracking and monitoring of regional metrics in land preservation for resiliency.

### 33. INITIATE A LAND PRESERVATION AND ACQUISITION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT THE LONG-TERM RETENTION OF OPEN SPACE, CRITICAL HABITATS AND SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT RESILIENCY THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

Given demands for development across the region, there are limitations to growth management through land use and transportation policies alone. Rural and natural land protection and preservation programs have been a key strategy for many regions in maintaining natural areas and supporting quality of life. One Region should therefore evaluate the strengths and challenges of establishing a similar program. A land preservation program can help to clarify regional goals around land use. It can emphasize the region's desire to retain and preserve areas for agriculture or habitat. By permanently protecting certain areas, it can further influence goals around directing growth into existing centers and corridors. There are many federal and state land protection programs that can match funding and maximize land conservation, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund being one prominent example. As part of its evaluation of a land preservation program, One Region should also identify funding sources that can help the region achieve its long-term resiliency goals.

### CASE STUDY: BEAUFORT COUNTY RURAL AND CRITICAL LAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Beaufort County, South Carolina's Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program aims to maintain the region's rural and coastal character. The program protects rural working lands, cultural and historical sites, and other critical natural areas from development through land purchases and conservation easements. In doing so, the program alleviates inconsistent and sprawling development patterns. It has also been key in supporting local agri-business and driving eco-tourism to the region.

Beaufort County established the program in 1999. Voters passed an initial \$40 million bond referendum for land purchases in 2002. Since then, five additional referenda have passed with strong local support. According to the County's most recent annual report, the program has generated more than \$137 million through bonds and grants and has been able to harness an additional \$42 million from partner organizations for land protection. The County has successfully preserved more than 28,500 acres of land with these funds.

Land preservation protects the region's water quality and wildlife habitat. It also contributes to Beaufort County's distinctive sense of place and its local economy. By preserving the beautiful Lowcountry landscape in Beaufort County, the Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program will help maintain quality of life for generations to come.

## WHAT WE HEARD

*"Watersheds do not abide by legal boundaries so if we are to be successful in becoming a more resilient region, we have to take a watershed and regional approach. This also advances equity because flooding and drainage issues have historically impacted lower-income and minority communities the most."*

*"Charleston is losing open space way too fast with way too little attention to the effects of development on eco systems, waterways, and habitat."*



# EQUITY

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
FUND A REGIONAL OFFICER TO ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INITIATIVES.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber
CREATE AN EQUITY DATA DASHBOARD WITH ANNUAL PERFORMANCE METRICS TO MEASURE PROGRESS ON IMPROVING RACIAL EQUITY.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Charleston Metro Chamber
EXPAND THE REGIONAL MINORITY AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS REGISTRY.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber
IDENTIFY COLLABORATIVE GOALS FOR INCREASING LOCAL MINORITY- AND WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESS PARTICIPATION ON COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions
CONDUCT AN ANNUAL SUMMIT LED BY A REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE TO DISCUSS PROGRESS AND HOW THE REGION CAN ADVANCE MORE EQUITABLE PRACTICES.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber, Jurisdictions, Coastal Community Foundation, Universities

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
DIFFERENCE IN BLACK AND WHITE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$36,400 (2019, ACS)	DECREASE
DIFFERENCE IN BLACK AND WHITE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	3.5% (2019, ACS)	DECREASE
NUMBER OF MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES	1,663 (2019, ABS)	INCREASE

# ECONOMIC MOMENTUM

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
CREATE A COALITION OF REGULATORY AUTHORITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ENTITIES TO IDENTIFY ZONES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, CRDA, Charleston Metro Chamber, Charleston Trident Association of Realtors
FOCUS REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ON DEVELOPMENT ZONES CONSISTENT WITH INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABILITY AND LAND USE STRATEGY.	CRDA, SC Commerce, County Economic Development
CREATE AN AUTOMOTIVE RESEARCH CENTER FOCUSING ON E-MOBILITY.	Industry Partners, Universities, CRDA, BCDCOG
DEVELOP AN INNOVATION DISTRICT WITH CUTTING EDGE SPACES FOR LIFE SCIENCES AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.	Industry Partners, Universities, Health Systems, CRDA, BCDCOG
SUPPORT FIRST-TIME ENTREPRENEURS WITH ESSENTIAL BUSINESS LAUNCH SERVICES.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber, CRDA, Coastal Community Foundation, South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
NUMBER OF JOBS IN PRIORITY CLUSTERS	25,215 (2021, EMSI)	INCREASE
NUMBER OF BUSINESSES IN PRIORITY CLUSTERS	1,193 (2021, EMSI)	INCREASE
GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT	\$44.1B (2021, EMSI)	INCREASE



# AFFORDABILITY

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND FUNDING FOR THE RENOVATION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURALLY OCCURRING AFFORDABLE HOUSING.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber, Jurisdictions, Charleston Trident Association of Realtors
CHAMPION THE INCLUSION OF 20% AFFORDABLE HOUSING WITHIN A QUARTER MILE OF PREMIUM TRANSIT STATIONS.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions
PROMOTE ZONING OVERLAYS IN AREAS AROUND EMPLOYMENT CENTERS THAT ALLOW FOR DENSER HOUSING TYPES AND STREAMLINED PERMITTING.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Charleston Metro Chamber
CREATE A REGIONAL HOUSING COALITION TO CHAMPION POLICY AROUND, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF, AFFORDABLE HOUSING.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber, Jurisdictions

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE RENTAL UNITS	+/- 9,400 (2019, SC Housing)	INCREASE
HOUSING COST BURDENED RENTER HOUSEHOLDS	46.1% (2019, ACS)	DECREASE
MONTHLY EVICTION FILINGS [1]	689 (February 2022, Eviction Lab)	DECREASE

[1] Data currently collected only for Charleston County

# GLOBAL FLUENCY

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
CREATE A RESOURCE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTS THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE TO PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND INITIATIVES TO EXCHANGE CULTURES AND IDEAS.	BCDCOG, CRDA, Jurisdictions, Universities, SC Commerce, Industry Partners
INCREASE THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO TARGETED BUSINESS DESTINATIONS.	CRDA, Charleston Metro Chamber, Explore Charleston
CREATE A VOLUNTEER CORPS OF AMBASSADORS WILLING TO CONNECT WITH NEW FOREIGN NATIONALS IN THE REGION.	BCDCOG, Industry Partners

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
NUMBER OF ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL VISITORS	+/- 720,000 (2018, College of Charleston)	INCREASE
NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES WITH OVER 50 EMPLOYEES	401 (SC Commerce)	INCREASE
NUMBER OF FOREIGN-BORN RESIDENTS	41,559 (2019, ACS)	INCREASE



# INFRASTRUCTURE

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
DEVELOP A REGIONAL BROADBAND COUNCIL TO COORDINATE EXISTING PILOT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES TO INCREASE BROADBAND COVERAGE.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative, Utility Providers
WORK WITH BROADBAND PROVIDERS TO ENSURE TOTAL GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE FOR HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND THROUGHOUT THE REGION.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative, Utility Providers
CREATE A COORDINATED NETWORK OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE BROADBAND LOCATIONS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH LIBRARIES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENT ENTITIES.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Industry Partners, Libraries, Universities, K-12 Schools
ENCOURAGE GOVERNMENT ENTITIES TO ADOPT DIG ONCE POLICIES TO REDUCE THE COST OF BROADBAND EXPANSION.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions
COORDINATE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING ACROSS REGIONAL, COUNTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO ALIGN REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
PERCENT OF PEOPLE WITH COMMUTES LESS THAN 30 MINUTES	58.8% (2019, ACS)	INCREASE
HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO HIGH SPEED INTERNET	67.0% (2019, ACS)	INCREASE
PERCENT OF POPULATION WITH ACTIVE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK	3.9% (2019, ACS)	INCREASE

# INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
CREATE AND MARKET AN INNOVATION BRAND THAT TIES TOGETHER INNOVATION ACTIVITY OCCURRING THROUGHOUT THE REGION.	BCDCOG, CRDA, Charleston Metro Chamber, Universities, Industry Partners
FORM A REGIONAL TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL TO BETTER CONNECT ENTREPRENEURS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.	BCDCOG, CRDA, Universities, Industry Partners
DEVELOP A NEW ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER TO SUPPORT START-UP BUSINESSES.	BCDCOG, CRDA, Universities, Industry Partners
CREATE AN INVESTMENT FUND FOR MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, CRDA, SCRA, Universities, Industry Partners

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
NUMBER OF MINORITY & WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES	4,436 (2019, ABS)	INCREASE
NUMBER OF PATENTS FILED ANNUALLY	1,801 (2020, USPTO PatentsView)	INCREASE
SHARE OF KNOWLEDGE-BASED WORKERS [1]	6.8% (2020, EMSI)	INCREASE

[1] Knowledge-based workers are those who generate value through using or generating knowledge, historically referred to as 'white collar' workers.



# TALENT

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
SUPPORT THE CONTINUATION OF MAKING TECHNICAL COLLEGE FREE FOR CHARLESTON REGION RESIDENTS ADVANCING THEIR EDUCATION IN HIGH-DEMAND FIELDS.	BCDCOG, CRDA, Universities, Industry Partners
BUILD UPON EXISTING PROGRAMS TO HELP GROW THE BLACK AND LATINX COMMUNITY IN TECH.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Charleston Digital Corridor, Harbor Entrepreneurship Center
ESTABLISH A CO-TEACHING PROGRAM THAT ENABLES INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS TO ASSIST K-12 TEACHERS WITH STEM CURRICULUM.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions, Charleston Digital Corridor, Harbor Entrepreneurship Center, K-12 Schools
CONVENE A WORKFORCE TRAINING TASK FORCE TO IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, WORKFORCE TRAINING PROVIDERS AND REGIONAL EMPLOYERS.	BCDCOG, Charleston Metro Chamber, CRDA, K-12 Schools, Universities, Industry Partners

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE	60.8% (2022, EMSI)	INCREASE
SHARE OF REGION WORKERS WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE	35.6% (2019, ACS)	INCREASE
ANNUAL CHARLESTON REGION COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES	8,286 (2019, EMSI)	INCREASE

# QUALITY OF PLACE

STRATEGY	IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS
ESTABLISH A REGIONAL DATA DASHBOARD TO EVALUATE CONSISTENCY BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS AND REGIONAL PLANNING GOALS.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions
DEVELOP A REGIONAL WATERSHED APPROACH TO OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION AND THE USE OF NATURAL SYSTEMS IN FLOOD AND DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions
INITIATE A LAND PRESERVATION AND ACQUISITION PROGRAM TO SUPPORT THE RETENTION OF OPEN SPACE, CRITICAL HABITATS AND SYSTEMS THAT SUPPORT RESILIENCY THROUGHOUT THE REGION.	BCDCOG, Jurisdictions

INDICATOR	LATEST DATA	TARGET
ANNUAL ACRES OF GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT	N/A	DECREASE
ACRES OF PRESERVED OPEN SPACE	N/A	INCREASE
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION CURRENTLY LIVING IN AN AREA WITH A MEDIUM WALKABILITY SCORE OR GREATER (>6.7)	57% (2019, ACS, EPA)	INCREASE





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