



UPPER SAVANNAH

Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

2022 - 2027

VISION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to encourage the development of a diverse economy in the region while recognizing the need to maintain a balance between attracting new investment, supporting existing businesses, fostering local entrepreneurship, and strengthening the region's key industries. This will enhance the region's quality of life by identifying and promoting projects for funding that strengthen the regional economy leading to job creation.

Executive Summary

Upper Savannah Council of Governments was established in 1967 by Act 487 of the South Carolina General Assembly. This Act provided jurisdiction to include all incorporated and unincorporated areas within the limits of Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick and Saluda counties of South Carolina.

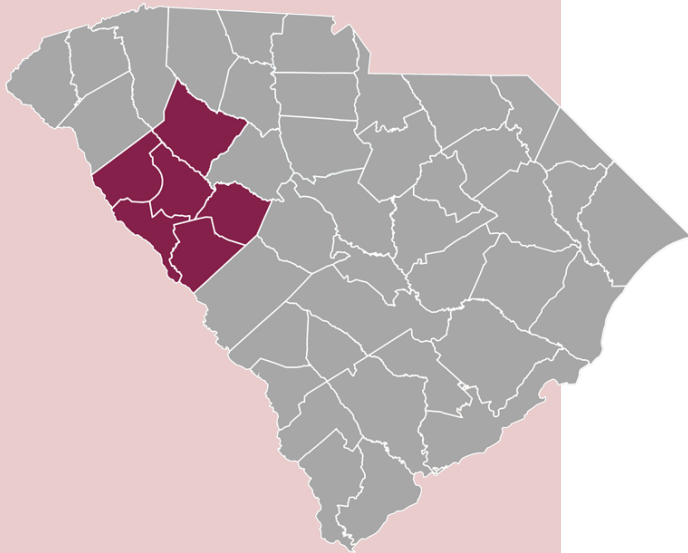
Upper Savannah COG is governed by a 32-member Board of Directors who represent the six counties that participate in the financial support of the organization, as well as the major incorporated areas in these counties. These incorporated areas include Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Saluda and Clinton. The Board employs an Executive Director to carry out the overall management responsibilities of the organization. In March 1991, the Upper Savannah Board of Directors approved an amendment to the by-laws that created Ex-Officio members. This designation was created to recognize loyal and dedicated service to Upper Savannah COG and the South Carolina Association of Regional Councils (SCARC). It is believed that these individuals can do much to further the concept of regional cooperation in economic and community development. The maximum number of Ex-Officio members that can be elected is three (3).

All member governments of Upper Savannah Council of Governments are EDA Designated re-development areas. These member governments are also active participants in the District's organization and work progress.

The District is composed of the counties of Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick and Saluda. Major urban centers in the District include the areas in and around the City of Abbeville, the Town of Edgefield, City of Greenwood, City of Laurens, City of Clinton, Town of McCormick and the Town of Saluda. These areas contain about 25.5 % of the District's total population. All of the participating governing units in the District have the Upper Savannah Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) serve their economic development planning needs and designation obligations.

Background

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a continuing regional economic development planning process with broad based community participation designed to help guide the economic growth of the region. The purpose of the CEDS is to create an economic environment that fosters job creation, a more diversified economy, and improves the quality of life for the residents of the Upper Savannah Council of Governments region. The CEDS provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of local governments, private industry, organizations and individuals concerned with economic development. The CEDS is developed by the board and staff of Upper Savannah Council of Governments. The members of the board of directors represent a broad spectrum of interests, including: local economic development organizations; private industry; local governments; education and workforce; civic organizations; minority and special interest groups. The board of directors meets to discuss progress on elements of the CEDS, and to make recommendations for amendments to the CEDS based on changes to the economic environment. In addition to providing a cooperative framework for economic development coordination and planning, the CEDS also provides:



- An analysis of economic and community development problems and opportunities that incorporate relevant material from other government sponsored or supported plans;
- A background and history of the economic development situation of the region, with a discussion of the economy, including geography, population, labor force, resources and the environment;
- A discussion of community participation in the planning efforts;
- A section setting forth goals and objectives for taking advantage of the opportunities and solving the economic development problems of the area serviced;
- A plan of action, including suggested projects to implement objectives and goals set forth in the strategy;
- Performance measures that will be used to evaluate whether and to what extent goals and objectives have been or are being met.

The development and maintenance of the CEDS is required to qualify for U.S. Economic Development Administration assistance under its public works, economic adjustment and planning programs, and is a prerequisite for designation by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as an Economic Development District.

TWENTY LARGEST EMPLOYERS IN THE REGION

(Listed Alphabetically)

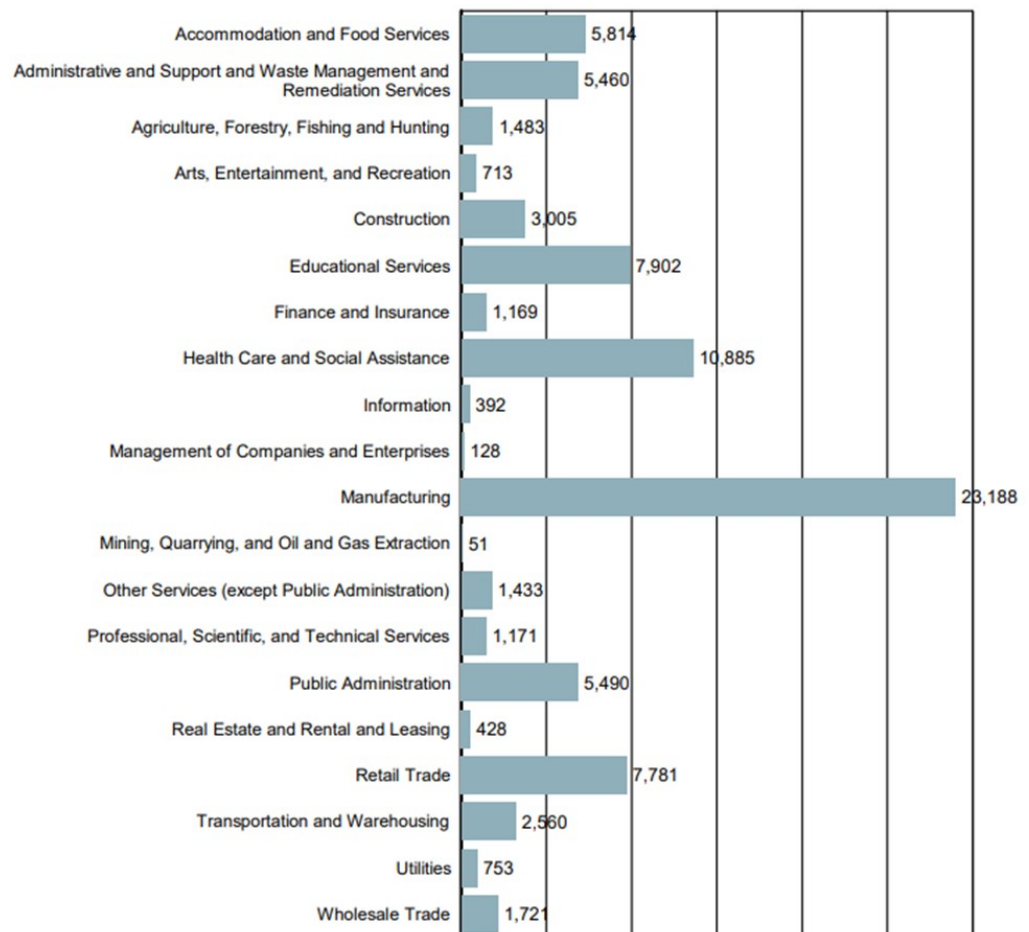
Abbeville County School District
 Amick Farms, LLC
 Capsugel Manufacturing, Inc.
 Eaton Corporation
 Effex Management Solutions, LLC
 Food Lion, LLC
 Generac Power Systems, Inc.
 Greenwood County Government
 Greenwood School District 50
 Kraft Foods North America
 Lander University
 Laurens County School District 55
 National Health Corporation
 Nexien, Inc.
 Samsung Electronics Home Appliances
 Self Medical Group, Inc.
 Self Regional Healthcare
 Wal-Mart Associates, Inc.
 Yanfeng US Automotive Interior Systems
 ZF Transmissions Greenville LLC

Source: SC Department of Employment & Workforce - 2021 Q4

Economy of the District

The district is located in the west central piedmont region of South Carolina. The area was at one time primarily supported by an agrarian economy. Today, the majority of the population still resides in rural areas, however, the economy has transformed into one driven increasingly more by Services with a strong Manufacturing component.

Employment by Industry

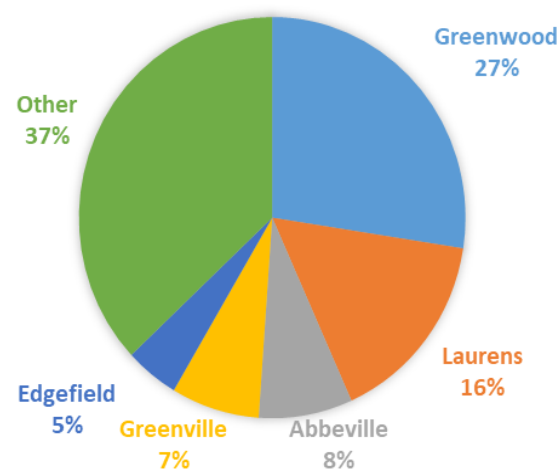


Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce
Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) - 2021 Q4

Economy
(cont.)

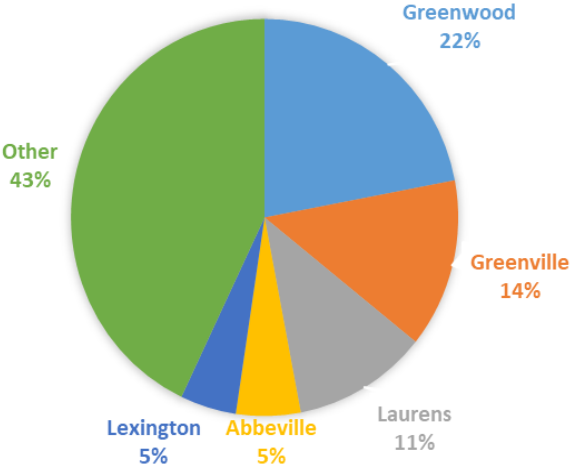
The district is centrally located in relation to several major metropolitan areas. These include Atlanta, Charleston, Charlotte, Greenville/ Spartanburg, Augusta, and Columbia. This advantageous location has not benefited the region to its fullest potential because of lack of adequate highway transportation connecting the district to these regional markets.

Where do Upper Savannah
Region Workers Live?



Source: SC DEW

Where do Upper Savannah
Region Residents Work?



Source: SC DEW

The annual unemployment rate for the region has remained generally higher than the state average the past several years. However, the more rural areas within the region would have a much higher rate than more urbanized areas or areas closer to larger metropolitan areas.

Regional Annual Unemployment Rate

<u>Year</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Unemployed</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>SC</u>	<u>US</u>
2021	106,560	4,501	4.1%	4.0%	5.3%
2018	106,129	3,797	3.5%	3.4%	3.9%
2016	108,844	5,664	4.9%	4.8%	4.9%
2015	106,703	7,084	6.2%	6.0%	5.3%
2014	105,840	7,640	6.7%	6.4%	6.2%

Source: SC DEW

Economy (cont.)

Population in the district is unevenly distributed among its six counties. Greenwood and Laurens compromise more than 64% of the district's population.

The total regional population has remained stagnant since 1990 and the average population growth rate in all the counties in the district is lower than the state growth rate. The following charts are based on information from the US Bureau of the Census.

Population by County, 2020

County	Population, 2020
Abbeville County	24,295
Edgefield County	25,657
Greenwood County	69,351
Laurens County	67,539
McCormick County	9,526
Saluda County	18,862
Upper Savannah Region	215,230
South Carolina	5,118,425

Median Household Income by County, 2020

County	Median Household Income, 2020
Abbeville County	\$38,741
Edgefield County	\$49,127
Greenwood County	\$42,336
Laurens County	\$43,304
McCormick County	\$43,633
Saluda County	\$45,714

Percentage of Persons Under 18 Years Old by County, 2020

County	Percentage of Persons Under 18 Years Old, 2020
Abbeville County	20.8%
Edgefield County	19.8%
Greenwood County	22.1%
Laurens County	21.9%
McCormick County	11.9%
Saluda County	18.6%

Percentage of Persons Below Poverty Level by County, 2020

County	Percentage of Persons Below Poverty Level, 2020
Abbeville County	18.7%
Edgefield County	16.2%
Greenwood County	20.8%
Laurens County	20.3%
McCormick County	15.4%
Saluda County	15.1%

Total Housing Units, 2020

County	Total Housing Units,
Abbeville County	11,540
Edgefield County	11,022
Greenwood County	31,323
Laurens County	31,276
McCormick County	5,380
Saluda County	9,2

Natural Resources

Out of all the natural resources in the district, forest lands and lakes have the greatest impact on the district's economy. These resources create jobs by attracting tourists to the area. In addition, forests produce timber for lumber and wood products. This natural resource may be in jeopardy. The agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining industries employed 1,633 persons over the age of sixteen in 2014. The number of forests used exclusively for timber production is decreasing. This resource must be preserved. Although it is not viewed as a public problem, resource conservationists and foresters are working on several programs to insure the availability of this valuable resource in the future.

The lakes in the region offer promise of future economic opportunity. Although these lakes are man-made, their value to the economy is vital and should be considered a natural asset. The major lakes in the region include Lake



Greenwood, Lake Russell, and Lake Thurmond, and attract hundreds of thousands of tourists annually to the district. Although the lakes are not directly responsible for all tourism revenues in the district, it is fair to say that their influence on tourism is significant. According to the South Carolina Statistical Abstract 2010, total district tourism provides approximately 1,000 jobs and \$3,155,000 in local tax receipts.

The quantity and quality of water supplies in the district varies by county. Generally, water quality in the area is good according to South Carolina Department of Health and Environment Control. The quantity of this supply is expected to be adequate to meet the immediate and future needs of the district's population.

Infrastructure

Water and wastewater systems in the region provide quality delivery and collection for the district's population and industrial base where such services are available.



Unfortunately, the lesser developed counties of the region do not have extensive infrastructure systems. The service that is available to these counties is usually limited to the incorporated areas. Further, the ability of these systems to serve other portions of the counties is limited by their capacity and financial resources. Most of the systems have little or no additional capacity. Persons residing beyond the limit of service must rely on wells for drinking water, septic tanks, lagoons, or community treatment facilities to treat and dispose of wastewater. This lack of infrastructure in the unincorporated areas of these counties severely limits the possibilities for industrial development.

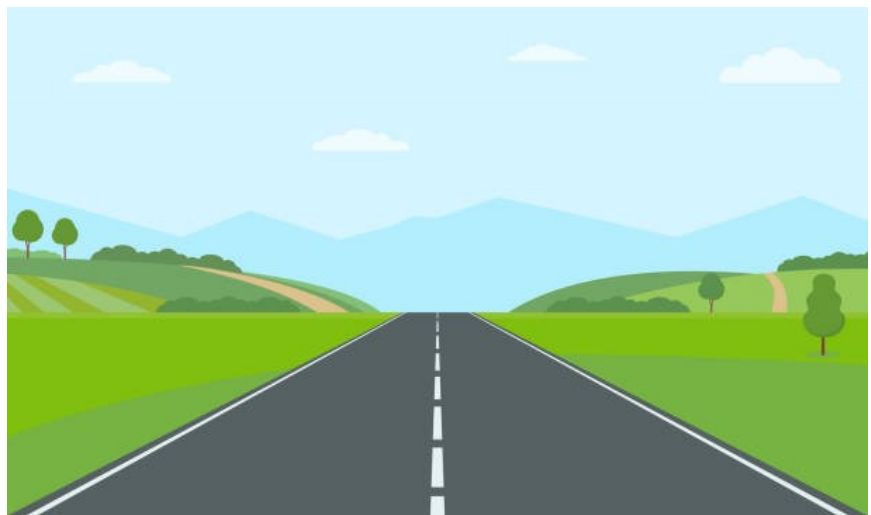
Conversely, in the larger developing counties infrastructure availability is a major reason for their ability to attract industry. Generally, their capacity to treat both water and wastewater is far superior to their less fortunate neighbors. It is likely that the disparity between the two will continue because of the lack of federal and state funds available and the inability of these systems to internally finance needed improvements and expand their service.



Transportation

The lack of adequate highway transportation could possibly be the most significant barrier to economic development in the Upper Savannah region. Except for Laurens County, there are no interstate highways and only two four-lane connections to interstate highways in the region. This fact has consistently hampered industrial development efforts. South Carolina offers an excellent network of interstate highways, which connect the major cities with regional markets like Atlanta and Charlotte. The networks are inadequate in their coverage and isolation of large portions of South Carolina exists. Several projects are underway to address this need. These projects will provide greater access to larger urban markets.

Based on approximate funding levels over the next ten years, there will be \$71,820,000 available to spend on new transportation improvements in the Upper Savannah region. Several intersection projects, totaling \$54,530,00 are already waiting on available funds to start engineering. That leaves \$17,290,000 worth of projects to prioritize over the next ten years if prices remain stable and construction schedules do not change.



Transportation (cont.)

With the assistance of SCDOT and the use of our regional traffic model, we have identified the following prioritized recommendations using the high project estimates:

Future Intersection Projects

Project Ranking	Major Route	Major Route Name	Minor Route	Minor Route Name	County
1	US 25	Edgefield Road	S-494	Trailside Dr and Short Cut Rd	Edgefield
2	US 221	Hwy 72/221 E	S-99	Kateway	Greenwood
3	SC 14	Hwy 14	SC 101	Hwy 101	Laurens
4	US 25	Bypass 25 SE	S-101	Sweetwater Rd	Greenwood
5	US 25	Augusta Rd	S-10	Bauskett St	Edgefield
6	SC 121	Lee St	S-41	Edisto St	Edgefield
7	SC 72 BUS	W Cambridge Ave	S-108	Mathis Rd	Greenwood
8	SC 121	Johnston Hwy	S-21	Fruit Hill Rd	Saluda
9	US 221	Hwy 221 South	S-49	Lisbon Rd	Laurens
10	SC 49	Hwy 49	SC 308	Hwy 308	Laurens
11	SC 121	Johnston Hwy	S-37	Rocky Creek Rd	Saluda
12	S-178	Murrah Rd	S-339	Springhaven Dr	Edgefield
13	US 76	Hwy 76 W	S-312	Wilsontown Rd	Laurens
14	SC 14	Hwy 14	Owings Parkway	Owings Parkway (County)	Laurens
15	SC 20	Hwy 20	SC 201	Hwy 201	Abbeville
16	SC 28	Hwy 28 N	SC 10	Hwy 10	McCormick
17	SC 418	Gulliver St	S-67	Durbin Rd	Laurens
18	US 221	Hwy 221 South of Bradley	SC 10	McCormick Hwy	Greenwood
19	SC 20	Hwy 20 South of Due West	SC 185	Hwy 185	Abbeville
20	S-136	Ivory Key Rd	Saluda MS Drive	Middle School Drive	Saluda
21	SC 252	Hwy 252	SC 184	Hwy 184	Abbeville
22	SC 20	Hwy 20 North of Due West	SC 185	Hwy 185	Abbeville
23	SC 28	Hwy 28 N	S-25 & S-37	Richey Rd & Foster Rd	McCormick

Red = Not state-maintained roads, on MPO Boundary.

Other Needs

Although presently not funded, the following road widening needs have also been identified:

Rank	County	Road	From	To	Improvement	2020 Cost Estimate
1	Greenwood	SC 246	SC 72/US 221	S-100 Emerald Rd	2-lane to 5-lane	\$ 58,191,617.00
2	Greenwood	US 25 Bypass	US 178 BUS	S-29 E Cambridge Ave	2-lane to 5-lane	\$ 72,836,000.00
3	Edgefield	SC 121	S-104 McQueen St	SC 191 (turn lanes)	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 16,485,031.00
4	Laurens	SC 14	S-183 Spring St	S-24 Lynn Ave	2-lane to 5-lane	\$ 31,762,501.00
5	Laurens	SC 56	Springdale Dr	S-98 Barrel Stave Rd	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 37,715,786.00
6	Greenwood	Emerald Road Phase II	S-100 Evans Pond Rd	SC 246	2-lane to 5-lane	\$ 79,506,040.00
7	Saluda	US 178	SC 121	SC 39 Ridge Spring Rd (turn lane)	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 38,386,812.00
8	Saluda	SC 121	S-140 Wheeler Cir	S-51 Butler Rd (turn lane at med facility)	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 30,515,087.00
9	Abbeville	SC 28 Bypass	SC 72	S-32 Old Calhoun Falls Rd	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 24,268,448.00
10	Laurens	SC 101	I-385	SC 14	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 37,694,931.00
11	McCormick	SC 28	S-401 Cedar Rd	State Park Rd (Hamilton Branch St Park)	2-lane to 3-lane	\$ 18,636,444.00
12	Edgefield	S-37 Bettis Academy Rd	US 25	Aiken County line	2-lane to 5-lane	\$ 31,951,975.00

These widening projects are ranked, but unfunded and not included in the TIP.

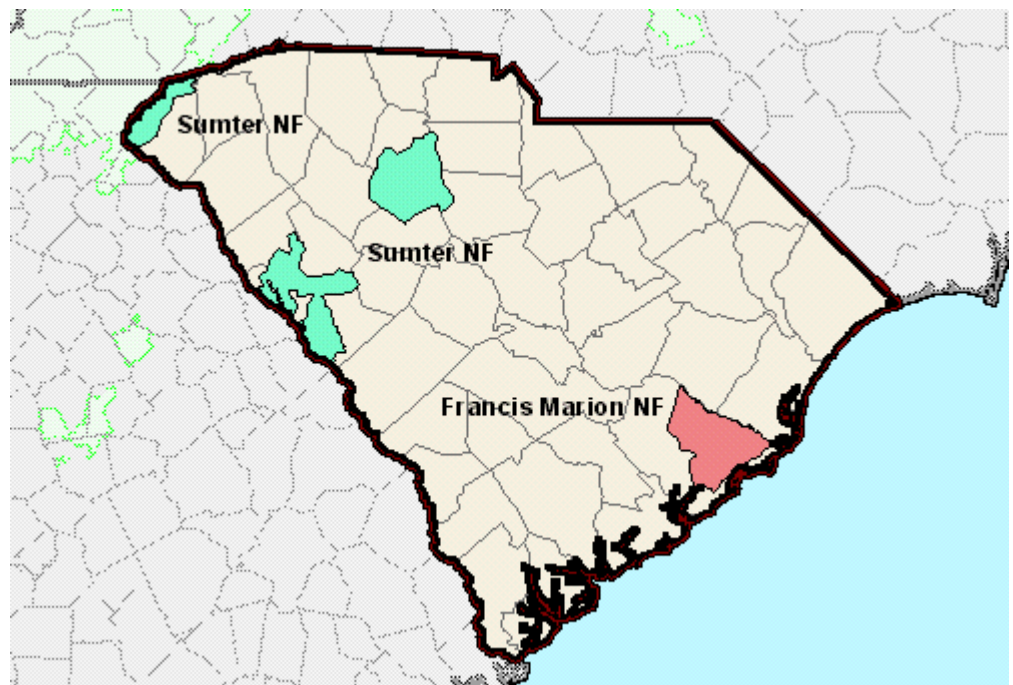
These costs are based on 2020 estimates and will need to be revised if Preliminary Engineering starts.

Rail access is available throughout the region. This mode continues to be utilized by many of the industries in the region.

Commercial air transportation is not available within the boundaries of the Upper Savannah region. This service is available at nearby airports in Greenville/Spartanburg, Columbia and Augusta.

Land Use

Land use in the region still includes large areas of land for agricultural use of timber as well as other various undeveloped uses. The most significant factor of land use in the region as it relates to economic development is public ownership. According to a report by the South Carolina Land Resources Conservation Commission, state and federal governments own 12.85 % of the total acreage in the region. In South Carolina 10.4 % of the total acreage is publicly owned. This fact may seem insignificant until one considers that 47 % of the total acreage of McCormick County is publicly owned. In all, 256,117 acres of land are owned by either the state or federal government. This amount of public ownership limits development opportunities and decreases the tax base available to counties.



Source: <https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/state-level.php?sc>

Natural Hazard Planning & Mitigation

Using the findings from the risk assessment and the capabilities assessment as a guide the planning committee developed the following mitigation goals, objectives, and strategies for implementation. Goals and objectives were developed in a working session with the planning committee with a period provided for comment and revision. Once the final goals and objectives were determined the planning committee developed the mitigation

strategies that would aid the region in meeting the goals and objectives identified in the plan. Strategies were selected using the information obtained from the capabilities assessment, which identified existing programs and shortfalls related to mitigation activities.

The goals for this plan are consistent with the hazard vulnerabilities as determined through the process laid out by SC EMD and the University of South Carolina. Sample goals were drawn from analysis of Mitigation

20/20 software provided by SC EMD. Working towards achieving all of these goals is expected to minimize hazard-related losses associated with any of the hazards for which the region is potentially at risk. Projects will be assigned a priority and feasibility rank, in addition to having a listing of implementing agencies and a general timeframe for implementation.



Natural Hazard Planning & Mitigation (cont.)

Goal: The availability and functioning of the community's infrastructure will not be significantly disrupted by disaster.

Strategy: Ensure that all shelters and critical facilities have adequate emergency power resources.

Project: Continue to work with the Red Cross and existing critical facilities managers to upgrade all shelter resources to include emergency generators and broadband access.

Goal: The economic vitality of the community will not be threatened by a disaster.

Strategy: Ensure critical facilities run as smoothly as possible after a disaster.

Projects: Provide generators to all existing critical facilities to prevent lengthy power outages.

Include utility providers in all planning and drills for mitigation planning.

Ensure emergency power sources are available at all utility providers.

Ensure broadband access at all shelter facilities and government facilities.

Continue to regularly inspect roads and bridges throughout the county to ensure they are ready for extra service if a disaster strikes.

Regularly review local government comprehensive plans and ordinances to ensure that they include provisions for pre- and post-disaster planning.

Goal: Reduce the potential impact of natural and man-made disasters on private property.

Strategy: Educate and plan for taking basic steps to mitigate localized disasters.

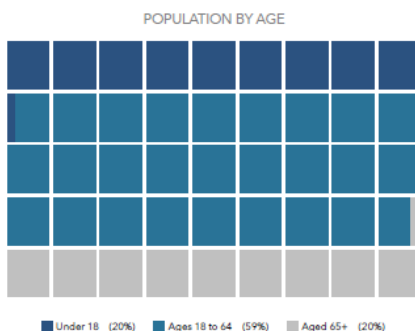
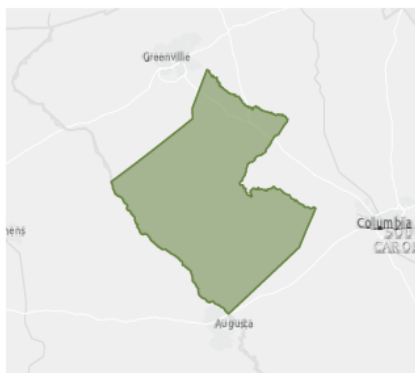
Project: Work with local governments to target storm water problem areas.

Human Resources and Labor Profiles

Since 1990, the population in the Upper Savannah region has grown from 185,121 to 215,230 in 2020, according to the Bureau of the Census. This growth of 30,109 is an 16% growth rate for the period. In contrast, South Carolina's growth rate for the same period was 47%.

Each of the counties in the Upper Savannah region experienced population declines between the 2010 and 2020 Census except for Laurens County. This Census was impacted by the COVID pandemic and reduced the efficiency of person-to-person information gathering, particularly in rural areas. While no overall population surges are expected, increases in areas near adjoining Metropolitan areas are likely to increase, while more rural parts of the region will stay the same or decline slightly.

Approximately 70 % of the region's population resides in a rural area according to the Census. The major population centers are in and around each of the county seats and the City of Clinton. The median age of the district's population is trending higher than the median age of the state population. The average median age of the regional population according to the 2020 census is 44.6 years. The South Carolina and the United States populations have a median age of 39.7 and 38.2 years respectively.



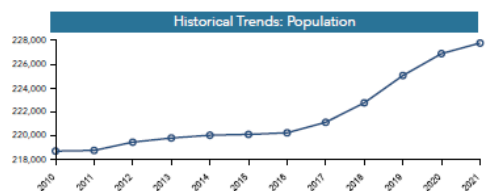
This infographic contains data provided by American Community Survey (ACS), Esri, and Bureau of Labor Statistics. The vintage of the data is 2015-2019, 2021, 2026.
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POPULATION TRENDS AND KEY INDICATORS

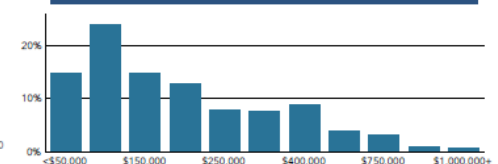
6 Counties

227,779	88,609	2.46	42.0	\$45,344	\$137,194	58	193	55
Population	Households	Avg Size Household	Median Age	Median Household Income	Median Home Value	Wealth Index	Housing Affordability	Diversity Index

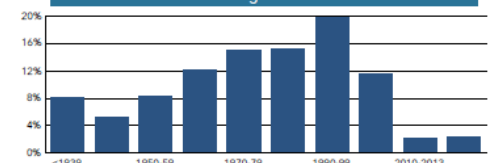
MORTGAGE INDICATORS



Home Value



Housing: Year Built



Human Resources and Labor Profiles (cont.)

The racial composition of the district is approximately 31% African American and 62% White. These percentages are almost the same as the racial composition for South Carolina. The minority population percentage in the district however is more than twice the minority population for the nation.

In analyzing the opportunities for economic development, one must look for the availability of and trends in the labor force, employment, and unemployment. The most recent data available from South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce shows that the labor force in the region has increased from 95,100 in 2001 to 106,560 in 2021. During the period of increased employment, the unemployment rate has decreased from an average of 5.15% to 2.6% in April 2022.

The change in the national economy and the region's manufacturing orientation has resulted in a decreasing number of jobs in the manufacturing sector. However, job opportunities in other sectors have increased in the region. Retail and wholesale trade and service industries continues to show the most gains in employment. Manufacturing continues to decline but is still a driving force behind other sectors of the employment base. Per capita income in the district averaged \$25,419 in 2020 according to data provided by the Bureau of the Census. This figure is 83% of South Carolina per capita income of \$30,727.

Financial Resources

For the most part the governments in the region are financially sound. The ability of localities to borrow money through bonded indebtedness however has been drastically reduced because of lack surplus funds from operations to pay back such obligations. The loss of revenue from state and federal governments has put more burden upon property owners to finance local governments. This has caused both the raising of fees and taxes and a reduction or elimination of many services.

The region is fortunate to have some very strong local, state and regional financial institutions, which are the primary source of capital for personal and commercial lending. Although traditionally conservative, Upper Savannah has been able to work closely with the banks in the region to assist the financing of small to medium business start-up and expansions more recently by utilizing its own EDA Title IX Revolving Loan Fund.



Selection of Economic Development Center

The City of Greenwood urban area is the economic development hub of the district. This area meets or exceeds the general standards for designation as an economic development center. The City of Greenwood and its surrounding area has the economic capacity to relieve the economic distress of nearby redeveloping areas based on the following factors:



- ◆ *Proximity*

The economic development center is geographically located at the center of the district. The City of Greenwood is well within commuting distance from any place in the region. The City of Greenwood is located at the intersection of two major highways which transverse the region, SC 72 which is the east-west route and US 25 which is the north-south route through the region. US highways 221 and 178 are also major highways in the region, which provide access into the city from nearby counties.

- ◆ *Population Growth*

The City of Greenwood's 2020 population was 22,545 people, up 2.1% from the 2000 census. Currently it is ranked as the 23rd largest city in the state of South Carolina and more than twice the size of the next largest city in the region. Approximately 40,000 people live in the area and around the City of Greenwood; this represents about 60 percent of Greenwood County's population.

The economy of the economic development center once entirely dependent on textiles has diversified dramatically in the last ten years. The diversification of the industrial base has led to growth in the retail trade and this growth is expected to continue provided the national economy rebounds.

Selection of Economic Development Center (cont.)

♦ *Regional Services*

The City of Greenwood is the home to one of the most modern hospitals in South Carolina. Self Regional Medical Center is a 421-bed health care facility offering a wide range of care and treatment to the people of the entire region.

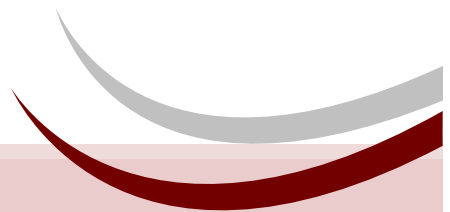
Lander University is also located in Greenwood. This state-supported four year liberal arts university provides both undergraduate and graduate level studies in many fields. Adult and continuing education is a priority for the university.

Piedmont Technical College offers the region technical training for employment related skills. Piedmont Tech also offers Associated Degrees in various technical disciplines. Tech's service area includes the entire Upper Savannah region and Newberry County.

The economic development center has a well-developed infrastructure in terms of water, sewer, broadband, and other utilities. The availability of this infrastructure system has enabled the area to grow and diversify.

♦ *District Program Participation*

Local leadership has actively participated in the district's economic development program by having members on the Upper Savannah Board. This group of leaders has played a vital role in the success of the district's programs. This past year the importance of the economic development center has never been more evident. Several new industries have been announced recently, and there are also some potential announcements pending. Such new industrial locations are important to the continued economic viability of the region. The economic development center is implementing a major arts and entertainment project that will change the look and economic viability of the downtown area. These improvements and others have aided development officials in promoting the area.



Selection of Economic Development Center (cont.)

♦ *Potential for Economic Development*

There are factors that indicate the potential for increased economic activity in the district including human and natural resources, health care, and quality of life. These are factors that need to be promoted to stimulate economic development.

As indicated in the economy section, human resources are available in terms of the total number of unemployed in 2021 being 4,501. This figure represents the number of people actively seeking employment and available to work. The pool of labor and the availability of work force development funds through Upper Savannah's workforce development program make the area attractive to industries considering expansion in the district. Such expansion will result in the creation of permanent employment and higher per capita income. For this goal to be obtained however, local governments must invest extensively in infrastructure improvements to make necessary services available.

For most communities, allocation of resources for such activities is a fiscal impossibility. The other factors mentioned previously- health care facilities, quality of life and basic industry- will also contribute to further economic development in the region. There are factors that may be constraints to economic development include transportation, education, and the skill level of the work force. Transportation, especially the lack of accessibility to interstate highways has challenged planners in the region for years. Working closely with local officials and state representatives the situation has been alleviated for the time being.

The education and low skill level of the work force at one time allowed industry to take advantage of low wage rates and attracted many firms to the south. Technological advances in manufacturing have forced many firms to seek better trained and better educated workers to fill the jobs of the future. For those persons lacking the appropriate skills, the possibility of entering the competitive job market is limited. Upper Savannah has been designated as the administering agency for the workforce development program in the region. This program will help those less skilled workers obtain the skills they need to be self-supporting as well as helping them advance further in the working world.

SWOT Analysis

Upper Savannah Council of Governments conducted an analysis of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – also known as a SWOT analysis in 2017 and updated it in 2022. The analysis identifies what local government staff, elected officials, community members, and other stakeholders believe to be important in each category. This helps guide the process to identify regional priorities for economic and community development.



The SWOT Analysis had respondents from each of the six counties of the region. The results of the SWOT are shown below:

Strengths: Strong community leadership; effective economic development organizations; a well-trained workforce; strong existing businesses; attractive and livable communities; access and proximity to economic markets; local health care facilities; and the overall mix of employers.

Weaknesses: Transportation connections; renewable energy potential; distance to health care in some rural communities; limited available housing options in rural areas; and areas without access to broadband.

Opportunities: Workforce development; continuing education opportunities; entrepreneurial support; small business expansion: tourism; community leadership; local school systems; distance to larger metropolitan areas; specialized or niche manufacturing; and natural resources.

Threats: Infrastructure deficiencies; absentee landlords for commercial properties; supply chain breakdowns nationally; limited living wage jobs available; limited affordable housing opportunities.

Goals and Objectives

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy establishes the goals and objectives necessary to solve the economic problems and capitalize on the resources of the region. Strategic projects, programs and activities identified in the CEDS are designed to fulfill these goals and objectives.

- ♦ Goals are broad, primary regional expectations.
- ♦ Objectives are more specific than goals, clearly measurable, and stated in realistic terms considering what can be accomplished over the five-year timeframe of the CEDS.

Workforce Development

Goal 1: Connect and align education and workforce development programs to develop the region's current and future talent supply chain and meet employer needs.

Objective 1.1	Expand options for high school students to become industry certified while still in high school, as an alternative to college path.
Objective 1.2	Integrate education, training, and workforce development to develop a strong labor supply chain.
Objective 1.3	Support efforts by Piedmont Technical College, Lander University, Erskine College, Presbyterian College, and USC-Union at Laurens to expand education programs in healthcare-related fields and continue marketing strategy to promote enrollment in health professions programs.
Objective 1.4	Support the creation of education and training programs responsive to current needs and expected future trends.

Goal 2: Expand access to education and training programs for talent in markets throughout the region.

Objective 2.1	Support the creation of online and distance learning programs for students that lack other means of attaining necessary training.
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Goals and Objectives (cont.)

Innovation and Economic Development

Goal 3: Grow, sustain, and integrate efforts related to research and development, technology commercialization, and seed capital to create, nurture and expand regional innovation businesses.

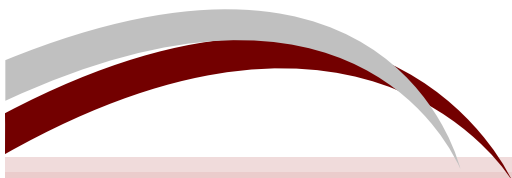
Objective 3.1	Support research and development programs to assist new and existing businesses to make or invent new products or to make existing products better.
Objective 3.2	Support development of the Greenwood Genetic Center and the partnerships with Clemson University.

Goal 4: Increase the number of regional businesses engaged in selling goods and services internationally and the diversification of the markets they serve.

Objective 4.1	Provide educational opportunities to regional businesses interested in international trade on the advantages of exporting their goods and services.
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Goal 5: Support on-going branding and marketing of the Upper Savannah counties as the best locations for business.

Objective 5.1	Support the area economic development partnerships efforts to market the region in the country and around the world.
Objective 5.2	Support the development of certified industrial sites by pursuing funding sources for the infrastructure necessary to develop the catalyst sites to shovel ready status.



Goals and Objectives (cont.)

Infrastructure and Growth Leadership

Goal 6: Modernize the region's transportation, broadband, energy, water, and wastewater systems to meet future demand and respond to changing business needs.

Objective 6.1	Support the development of an efficient and affordable public transit system or coordinated systems within the region and to connect to nearby urban centers.
Objective 6.2	Develop and maintain a cutting-edge telecommunications infrastructure by supporting local internet service providers initiatives to bring high-speed internet service to the rural areas of the region.
Objective 6.3	Support the development of diverse, reliable, and cost-effective energy sources and systems to meet the region's economic and environmental goals.
Objective 6.4	Ensure the future supply to meet the region's economic and quality of life goals. Support efforts to sustainably produce safe drinking water.
Objective 6.5	Support the management of wastewater from residential and industrial sources to maintain the healthy environmental standards for all lakes and streams.
Objective 6.6	Develop and maintain multimodal, interconnected trade, logistics, supply chain, and transportation systems to enhance freight mobility in support of a prosperous, competitive economy.

Goal 7: Improve coordination of economic development, land use, infrastructure, water, energy, natural resources, workforce and community development decision-making and investments at the regional level.

Objective 7.1	Improve collaboration and alignment between regional and local agencies and business leaders.
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Local Impact

Goal 8: Support and sustain regional partnerships to accomplish the region's economic and quality of life goals.

Objective 8.1	Utilize the existing economic development partnership's public education efforts as a vehicle to provide a functional understanding of economic development concepts to local elected officials.
Objective 8.2	Work with the South Carolina Association of Counties and the Municipal Association of South Carolina to continue offering economic development information to their curriculums for newly elected officials.
Objective 8.3	Assist local governments in applying for funds to address economic development priorities.

Goals and Objectives (cont.)

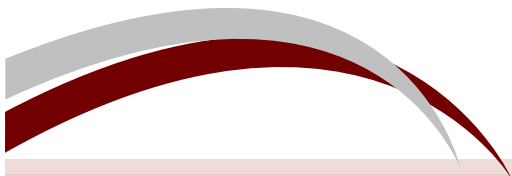
Quality of Life

Goal 9: Ensure future growth and development decisions maintain a balance between sustaining the region's environment and enhancing the region's economy and quality of life.

Objective 9.1	Create and sustain vibrant, healthy communities that attract workers, businesses, residents, and visitors to the region.
Objective 9.2	Promote and support local governments in the development of vibrant city centers.
Objective 9.3	Seek to expand health care access to all underserved areas .

Goal 10: Promote, develop, and leverage the region's natural and cultural assets in a sustainable manner.

Objective 10.1	Support the efforts of the state and other regional tourism marketing organizations to develop sustainable tourism-based economic development programs and increase the entrepreneurial capacity of the hospitality industry.
Objective 10.2	Improve the branding and awareness of the region as a tourism destination by leveraging regional resources with state tourism organizations.
Objective 10.3	Promote and support the national and state parks within the region and improve branding and awareness of the parks as a tourist destination.



Performance Measures

- ◆ Number of Jobs Created After Implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
 - ◇ Total Employment in Initial Year
 - ◇ Total Employment in Subsequent Years
- ◆ Number and Types of Public Sector Investments Undertaken in the Region
 - ◇ EDA Sponsored Investments
 - ◇ Significant State and Local Investments
- ◆ Number of Jobs Retained in the Region
 - ◇ Number of Jobs Retained as a Result of Federal Investments
 - ◇ Number of Jobs Retained as a Result of Select State and Local Investments
- ◆ Amount of Private Sector Investment in the Region After Implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- ◆ Changes in the Economic Environment of the Region (Changes to Taxes and Fees, and New Incentive Programs)



Plan of Action

Upper Savannah Council of Governments will coordinate the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy projects and activities with local and state economic development agencies where appropriate. The plan of action will implement the goals and objectives of the CEDS as follows:

- ◆ Conduct regular meetings of the board of directors to monitor the status of regional projects and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy implementation. District staff will actively participate in economic development activities in the region and provide technical assistance when needed.
- ◆ Support the existing Economic Development Partnerships by providing technical assistance when necessary.
- ◆ Promote sustainable economic development through regional tourism promotion, while encouraging the preservation of resources that bring visitors to the area.
- ◆ Identify economic development projects that may qualify for federal and state funding opportunities and provide grant writing and administrative services where needed.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance in the form of economic impacts analysis, research and best practices to local economic development organizations and government agencies.
- ◆ Facilitate coordination between regional economic development strategies and the state's economic development efforts.



Strategic Projects, Programs, and Activities

Vital Project Areas of the Upper Savannah Council of Governments Region include:

- ♦ *Workforce Development & Education*
 - ◇ Support the development of educational programs to increase the labor force in the healthcare and life sciences industry.
- ♦ *Innovation & Economic Development*
 - ◇ Support the development and expansion of regional industry, business incubators, and research parks.
 - ◇ Support the development of the Greenwood Genetic Center.
- ♦ *Infrastructure & Growth Leadership*
 - ◇ Support continuing improvements to multi-modal infrastructure, including highway interchanges along interstate corridors, railway corridors, airport facilities, public transit and broadband infrastructure.
- ♦ *Local Impact*
 - ◇ Support programs to educate local government officials in the fundamentals of economic development.
- ♦ *Quality of Life*
 - ◇ Support regional tourism promotional initiatives.



WHAT A DISASTER!

“A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources. Though often caused by nature, disasters can have human origins.”

International Federation of Red Cross
and Red Crescent Societies
www.ifrc.org

Economic Recovery & Resilience

Disasters can come in a variety of forms and can include natural disasters or hazards, climate change impacts, the closure of a large employers, the decline of an important industry, or changes in the workforce. They are often unpredictable and random events, but can also be somewhat predictable in nature, providing ample opportunities for planning.

The purpose of a disaster and economic recovery plan is to provide a framework which can be used by local governments, organizations, and businesses to recover, while at the same time enhancing the abilities of the communities throughout the region, and the Region as a whole, to better withstand future stressors. This ability is known as resilience and is vital to the recovery of a community or region after a disaster.

Who should develop a Disaster & Economic Recovery & Resiliency Strategy?

States, counties, local jurisdictions, Tribal communities, universities, and private businesses should each adopt a plan to mitigate and/or recover from a disaster.

A disaster and economic recovery strategy requires communities to anticipate risks, lessen their vulnerabilities, assemble their resources, and prepare for a better future. While USCOG can act as bridge between local needs and regional and national resources, pursuing resiliency is the responsibility of each part of our region.

Pre-disaster mitigation planning has been done at various levels of government as part of a program funded in years past by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). Most regions across the country have a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan that outlines mitigation strategies for local jurisdictions, which can decrease potential risks from natural disasters. In 2005, USCOG wrote the first Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan for the Upper Savannah Region and updated that plan in 2010 and 2015. The 2020 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans were done for each county by each county’s Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee.

Whether natural or man-made, disasters not only have the potential to cause physical damage to people, property, and the environment, but they can also damage critical infrastructure used to access various services. City centers and commercial/industrial areas can become physically inaccessible to those needing goods and services. Likewise, impacts from disasters can create financial burdens on businesses and local residents, which can hinder potential economic sustainability and/or development in affected areas.

RESILIENCY

is “the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether,” according to the Economic Development Administration (www.eda.gov).

Resilient communities are well prepared to respond and recover from shocks. Through economic recovery and resilience planning, it is hoped that economic hardship can be minimized, and that recovery for businesses and local communities from disasters of all kinds can be expedited.



PHASE I: Pre-Disaster Preparedness

1. Engage in pre-disaster recovery and mitigation planning.

Hazard mitigation planning was completed by USCOG for local jurisdictions in the Upper Savannah Region in 2005, and then updated in 2010 and 2015. The 2020 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans were done for each county by each county’s Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee. County working groups were utilized consisting of emergency managers, the local health department, local community officials, county and community planners, public works, public transit providers, chambers of commerce, interested citizens, state mitigation planners, and others. Hazards were mapped, vulnerabilities and risks determined, and mitigation strategies created to help minimize damage to life and property.

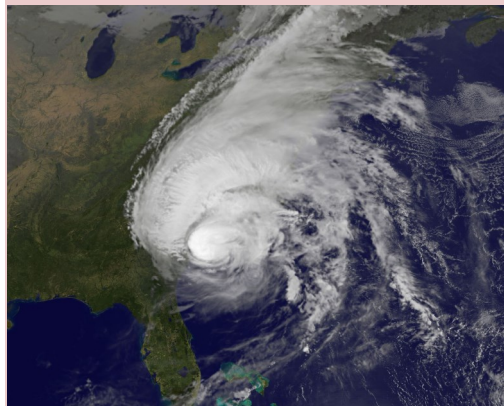
2. Know the community’s risks and vulnerabilities.

Potential hazards identified in the Upper Savannah Region include the following:

- ◆ Wildfire
- ◆ Earthquake
- ◆ Flood
- ◆ Dam Failure
- ◆ Drought
- ◆ Severe Weather (heat, cold, lightning, snow, ice, wind, microbursts, and tornados)
- ◆ Hurricanes/Tropical systems
- ◆ Agricultural (infestation, disease, livestock/crop loss)
- ◆ Pandemic Illness
- ◆ Others (HAZMAT, economic/industrial, terrorism, medical, radon, air, and water quality)



PHASE I: Pre-Disaster Preparedness (cont.)



2. Know the community's risks and vulnerabilities. (cont.)

The following is a summary of the most common risks and vulnerabilities in the Upper Savannah Region:

- ◆ *Drought*

Drought has been an on-going concern for the region. It impacts drinking water and industrial water use.

- ◆ *Flooding*

Annual flooding along river and stream channels, as well as isolated flooding in high water table areas, are common risks in our region. Dam failure is also always a potential with flooding.

- ◆ *Wildfires*

There is an annual wildfire risk in late summer/early fall throughout the entire region.

- ◆ *Hurricanes/Tropical Systems*

Hurricanes or tropical systems can cross the region, bringing rain, winds, and possible tornadoes.

- ◆ *Extreme Temperatures*

Extreme temperatures region-wide, including occasional below freezing temperatures in the winter and hot summer temperatures in the summer, are an annual occurrence. Some instances of snow and ice create hazardous living and traveling conditions. Extreme temperatures can negatively affect vulnerable populations such as seniors and persons with disabilities. Summer and fall drought can negatively affect various types of agriculture, which is a major economic driver for the Upper Savannah Region.

- ◆ *Earthquakes*

Some earthquakes do occur in the region. Although mostly low impact so far, the area is vulnerable to earthquake impacts and aftershocks from larger earthquakes in nearby areas.

- ◆ *Pandemic Illness*

Due to the rural nature of the area and the limited number of healthcare facilities, the Region is particularly vulnerable to loss of life and reduction in worker availability across all fields in the initial stages of a pandemic.



PHASE I: Pre-Disaster Preparedness (cont.)

3. Inventory and organize the community's economic recovery resources.

Community economic recovery resources (people, businesses, public services, etc.) in the Upper Savannah Region include the following:

- ◆ Each County Emergency Management Agency
- ◆ Each County Sheriff's Office
- ◆ South Carolina Emergency Management Division
- ◆ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- ◆ Regional Economic Development Alliances
- ◆ South Carolina Association of Counties
- ◆ Municipal Association of South Carolina
- ◆ Upper Savannah Council of Governments (USCOG)
- ◆ Small Business Development Center
- ◆ South Carolina Department of Commerce
- ◆ U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- ◆ Local Chambers of Commerce
- ◆ Healthcare Systems

USCOG could serve as the coordinating and organizing body for the above-mentioned organizations to help expedite the economic recovery process. USCOG currently serves as the regional Economic Development District and is governed by a board consisting of elected officials from each county in the region.

4. Engage in business continuity planning.

Businesses are encouraged to utilize the resources available on the www.ready.gov website for Business Continuity Planning. The 5 steps recommended on the website for developing a preparedness program include the following:

1. Program Management
2. Planning
3. Implementation
4. Testing and Exercises
5. Program Improvement

Other resources are also available on the website including the Business Continuity Planning Suite, which includes several training videos illustrating each of the 5 steps.

PHASE I: Pre-Disaster Preparedness (cont.)



5. Ensure there are resources available for the elderly and those with special needs.

USCOG acts as the Area Agency on Aging for the Upper Savannah Region. This agency provides direct services to elderly citizens and their families, as well as coordination between the area's multiple senior citizen centers and other service providers. Following a disaster, USCOG will work with these providers to find ways to transport those with special needs to necessary resources.

6. Identify shelters.

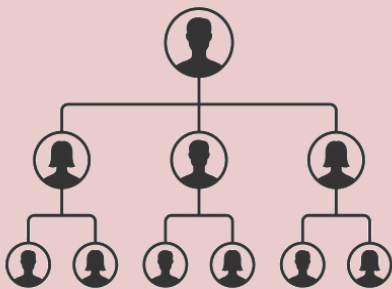
Local emergency managers already have emergency response plans for their jurisdictions, including potential shelter locations throughout the region. Generally, local churches and schools can be utilized as large public shelters on an as-needed basis at the discretion of the local emergency managers. In some cases, homes or businesses can be used for shelters depending on the type, scale, extent, location, and magnitude of the disaster. Local emergency managers also coordinate on a regional level to discuss cross-jurisdictional coordination. The Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans for each county include maps of critical facilities, some of which could be used for public shelters at the discretion of local emergency managers.

7. Identify recovery partners.

Resilience is not just the responsibility of the local governments, but that of each part of each community working together to take a regional approach. Federal, state, local, and private sector agencies offer various types of assistance and resources to individuals and governments. The agencies listed in Section 3 of this portion of the CEDS are the federal, state, local, and private sector recovery partners which will be encouraged to develop an informal interagency action plan. USCOG will help coordinate between these various agencies and organizations in order to assist the economic development community with recovery efforts as needed and at the request of local government partners. Depending on the extent and magnitude of the disaster event, a Business Continuity Action Plan will be created. Agencies and organizations included on the before-mentioned list will be able to provide emergency response and public infrastructure-related assistance; local chambers of commerce and business resource centers will be able to provide training and resources for local business recovery; federal and state government will be able to provide case study information, expertise, and funding source information; and local government entities can serve as the necessary link between the public and various agencies.



PHASE I: Pre-Disaster Preparedness (cont.)



8. Identify immediate, short-term, intermediate, and long-term recovery activities will take place.

Recovery activities and timelines will depend greatly on the type, scale, extent, location, and magnitude of a disaster. USCOG will assist agencies, local governments, and the business community in utilizing available resources and expertise to create immediate, short-term, intermediate, and long-term recovery activities.

- ◆ Immediate
 - Restore critical infrastructure and utility service to healthcare systems, shelters, critical community services, residences, businesses supplying staple commodities and services
- ◆ Short-Term (Days)
 - Prioritize based on local land use plans and goals, major employment, and service centers
- ◆ Intermediate (Weeks, Months)
 - Focus on job creation, job preparation (skills training, job quality, reduce barriers to employment), and job access
- ◆ Long-Term (Months/Years)
 - State & Federal financial assistance to businesses through the EDA and SBDC/SBA

9. Support existing communication chains.

USCOG will work with various organizations and agencies to develop a communication chain if they do not have one already. However, all emergency response-related communications will be managed by local emergency management. Healthcare systems have their own system of working, both internally and between systems, as needs arise. Local chambers of commerce and business resource centers are a critical resource for disseminating business recovery information to local businesses. Cities, towns, and counties are also valuable resources for disseminating similar information.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES and regions are those that are able to anticipate their vulnerability to natural, economic, and other potential threats. They take action to limit their exposure to these threats, and they have plans, processes, and resources in place to help them recover quickly should disaster strike. At the core of resilience is the willingness and ability to adapt to change to ensure positive outcomes for all residents and businesses.

“Planning for a More Resilient Future:
A Guide to Regional Approaches”
NADO Research Foundation

PHASE II: Post-Disaster Planning & Implementation

1. Disaster Assessment

USCOG will work closely with local organizations and agencies to assess the nature and magnitude of the disaster; the impacts on the economy (business, industry sectors, labor market, etc.); the impact on transportation and public infrastructure; and the impact on housing, schools, and health care facilities.

2. Develop and/or Implement Recovery Timeline

Depending on the type, scale, extent, location, and magnitude of a disaster event, USCOG will work with local organizations and agencies to list and prioritize recovery activities to be performed based on local plans; identify resources (Federal, state, local, private sector) needed for each activity; determine the level and type of assistance needed; identify roles and responsibilities; determine the timeframe for each recovery activity; and establish recovery benchmarks.

3. Implement Recovery Plan for Long-Term Recovery

USCOG will work with local organizations and agencies to identify business, economic, and entrepreneurial rebuild initiatives; identify workforce initiatives to employ dislocated workers and rebuild the economy; describe the Federal, state, and local funding programs; and describe management plans to ensure the most effective use of Federal, state, local, and private sector funds.

Addendum: Potential Project List

Location	Potential Projects
Abbeville County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of county-wide water system • Lake Russell development • Corbin Road Site Enhancements • Infrastructure improvements to accommodate potential projects
Edgefield County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highway 25 Industrial Park Development • Re-development of abandoned industrial properties • Infrastructure improvements and expansion
Greenwood County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biotechnology Business Park Development • Highway 25 Class “A” Business Park • Rail and Water Site Infrastructure Development • County Economic Development Office initiatives • Utility upgrade, expansion, and/or relocation
Laurens County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owings and other Industrial Parks • Economic Development Corp. initiatives • Laurens County Water Treatment Plan and Distribution System Improvements • City of Clinton Industrial Park development • Utility upgrade and expansion
McCormick County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town of McCormick utility upgrades • Plum Branch Industrial Site Development • Utility upgrade, expansion, and/or relocation • Expansion of utilities to State Parks
Saluda County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Hwy 378 Water Tank and Line Expansion • Saluda-Batesburg-Leesville Sewer facility • Infrastructure development and expansion
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SC Heritage Corridor Initiatives • Regional utility improvements and expansion, including broadband

In addition to the priorities by county, there are certain projects and programs that take on a regional significance in improving overall economic development. The goal of this plan is to identify priority strategies and initiatives to propose grant assistance from the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.