



St. Stephen

Empower | Revitalize | Prosper South Carolina

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**Draft for Planning Commission:
September 9, 2024**

PREPARED BY



BERKELEY-CHARLESTON-DORCHESTER
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

PLANNING, PARTNERSHIP & PROSPERITY



Amos Gourdine Landing on Lake Moultrie. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Introduction

After years of economic decline, St. Stephen, South Carolina is beginning to reemerge. This transformation is due to a dynamic combination of private investment, local government support, federal grants, grassroots community organizations and the aspirations of the town's resilient residents.

One example of this rejuvenation occurred in September 2022, when a \$500,000 grant was awarded from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant Program. This award will fund up to 15 brownfield site assessments in the area. These are utilized to determine if there are any environmental hazards present at a site, assess the risk and determine the cleanup requirements and cost. The completion of these assessments can be a conduit for further investment and revitalization.

St. Stephen's resurgence is further exemplified in its town center, where a number of new businesses have emerged. Among these are Lowcountry Coffee Co., a coffee shop; Lowcountry Munition, a firearm store; and Ole Town Feed and Supply, an agricultural supply store. The expansion of locally-owned and operated businesses within the town center serves as a key indicator of revitalization progress of the town's commercial core.

Furthermore, two major industrial sites have opened up for development: the 497-acre Berkeley Rail Park in nearby Russellville and the 85-acre Turner Mill Tract in St. Stephen. Berkeley Rail Park offers direct rail

access and can accommodate large industrial buildings. The rail is also connected to Camp Hall Industrial Park, home to major companies like Volvo and Redwood Materials. The Turner Mill Tract provides flexible development options near the Town Center. Both sites have the potential to attract substantial industrial investment that would drive transformative economic impacts on St. Stephen.

With this positive momentum, St. Stephen still has many challenges to overcome. 34 percent of the Town's residents live below the poverty line, the median household income lags Berkeley County by \$40,000, the labor force participation rate is historically low at 39.2% and many structures remain in disrepair.

This Economic Development Strategy aims to meet this important moment to ensure sustainable, resilient and inclusive economic prosperity occurs. It envisions a future where local residents thrive, businesses flourish, and industries are drawn, all while preserving the distinct small-town character and the natural beauty of St. Stephen's environment.

Note: This Economic Development Strategy was developed as an appendix to the St. Stephen Comprehensive Plan. The strategies within this plan are focused on economic development and complement the strategies within the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed in tandem with this strategy for an overall view of the Town of St. Stephen and the Greater St. Stephen area.

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Introduction

Purpose: Create a roadmap for a prosperous economic future

The purpose of St. Stephen Economic Development Strategy (EDS) is to align the community around a collective vision of its economic future and develop the path to achieve it. This forward-looking strategic plan aims to create a prosperous economic future that is sustainable, resilient and benefits all community members —both now and for generations to come.

The development of the EDS was driven by extensive community engagement through a public survey and open house, the input of the Town of St. Stephen Planning Commission and Town Council, the assessment of existing conditions and assets and conducting a SWOT analysis all leading to the creation of actionable strategies to achieve the community's vision.

Note: The Comprehensive Plan has a detailed summary of the community engagement effort.



*Attendees to the public open house on May 16, 2024 at the American Legion Hut.
(Photo/BCDCOG)*

Amos Gourdine Landing Boat Launch on Lake Moultrie. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Vision

St. Stephen envisions a future where sustainable economic growth thrives through diverse investments in the community that are accessible to all residents, fostering prosperity while safeguarding its small-town character, natural beauty, and cultural heritage.

This vibrant community will ignite residents' pride and serve as a catalyst, attracting investment and prosperity for generations to come.

Economic Priorities

Three key economic priorities will be focused on to achieve the vision set forth by the community

Empower

Eliminate barriers to employment, education, and training faced by St. Stephen's residents, fostering a sustainable and equitable economic future that is accessible and beneficial to all

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Ensure that every resident has equitable access to high-quality educational opportunities, along with training and skills development programs that are tailored to local job opportunities and align with the needs of local industries.
- Encourage local entrepreneurship by providing support and resources fostering innovation, and creating opportunities within the community.
- Work to remove barriers to employment by increasing access to affordable, high-quality childcare and transportation options.

Revitalize

Attract commerce, residents and visitors back to the Town Center through targeted public investment, a supportive small business environment, zoning for smart growth and activating vibrant communal spaces

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Revitalize the town center to attract new businesses, job opportunities, and investments, boosting the local economy and providing residents with access to diverse employment options, entrepreneurship and resources to prosper.
- Preserve the identity and character of downtown while promoting responsible development, that honors St. Stephen's heritage.
- Create vibrant, safe, public spaces that cultivate a sense of belonging and connection among residents.
- Beautify town center with greenery, public art, and pedestrian access promoting physical activity, reducing stress, enhancing mental well-being, and contributing to a healthier and happier community.

Prosper

Bring high-wage, employment opportunities to the area by investing in the supportive infrastructure, while attracting new residents, retirees, tourists and remote workers to an ideal destination to live, work, and play

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Recruit a range of industries to create a diversified and resilient economy that offer high wage employment in close proximity to residents.
- Invest in supportive infrastructure including wastewater, broadband internet access and transportation to attract capital investment.
- Preserve natural and cultural assets and retain small-town character.
- Foster collaborative partnerships between the public sector, private sector, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders to advance economic development goals.
- Market St. Stephen's natural beauty, small-town character, and quality of life to attract residents, retirees, tourists, and remote workers.

Section Title

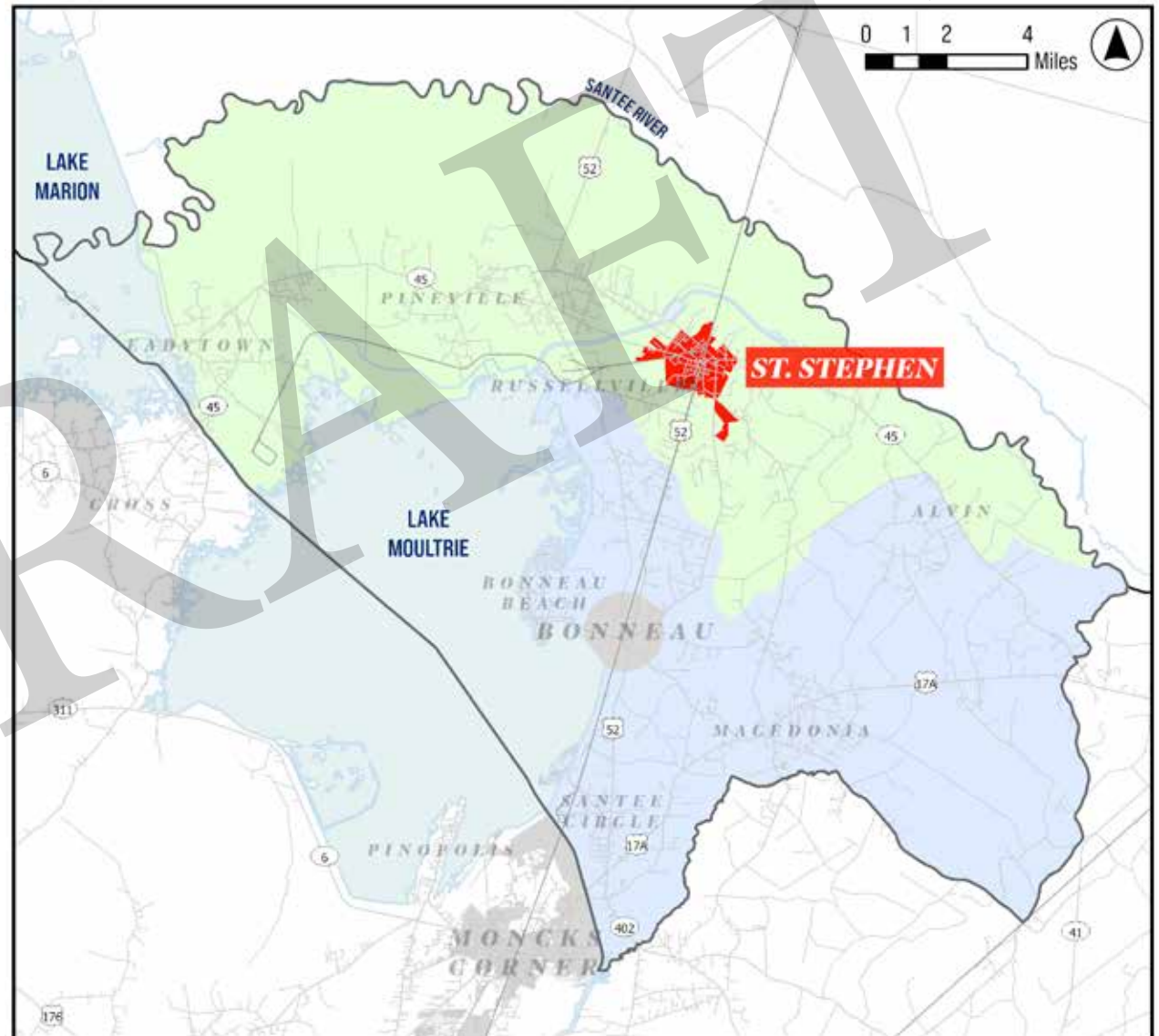
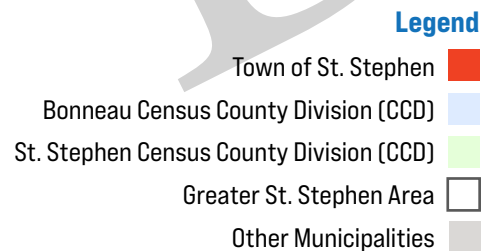
Planning area

Similar to the Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) also extends its scope beyond the official boundaries of the Town of St. Stephen. The Town is strategically positioned to draw spending and investment from a broader geographic region, referred to as the Greater St. Stephen area throughout the EDS. This encompasses St. Stephen and the surrounding communities that contribute to the local economy.

This Greater St. Stephen Area includes the St. Stephen Census County Division (CCD) and the Bonneau CCD. Leveraging the U.S. Census Bureau's CCD designations allows for consistent data for both the CCDs and the Town.

This wider geographic approach reflects the reality of how local economies operate and amplifies St. Stephen's ability to attract a diverse array of businesses, visitors, and investors. Economic growth can occur by harnessing the spending power and investment potential of this larger regional population, strengthening the foundation for both commercial expansion and job creation in and around the Town.

Map 1: St. Stephen - Greater St. Stephen Area Comparison



Existing Conditions

An evaluation of St. Stephen's existing conditions reveals that the Town and Greater St. Stephen area have not experienced the same rate of growth other portions of Berkeley County have. This is in contrast to towns just to the south, like Moncks Corner and Goose Creek, which have seen transformational growth, primarily driven by suburban sprawl from the region's urbanized area. This shows the need for the Greater St. Stephen area to become active participants in the region's economic growth, while planning now to maintain its small-town character, natural and cultural assets and the quality of place that residents have identified as a priority.



Notes: Additional information regarding the existing conditions can be found in the Comprehensive Plan. Unless otherwise noted the source for the existing conditions is the U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census or 2022 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Disclaimer: U.S. Census data may be less accurate for smaller communities like St. Stephen due to their smaller sample size. However it remains the standard data source utilized when applying for government funding. Using it effectively can help secure vital resources for the town's development.

Fig. 1: Population change, 2010-2022

The Greater St. Stephen area has yet to see the substantial population growth that has occurred in other parts of Berkeley County. This is likely driven by the rural location and lack of employment opportunities, housing stock and educational opportunities.

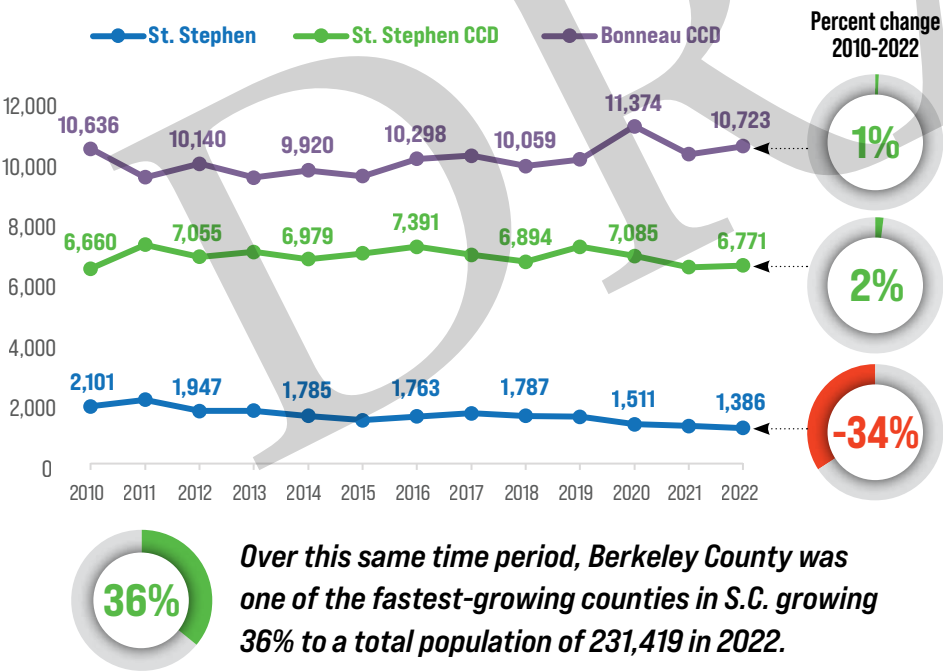
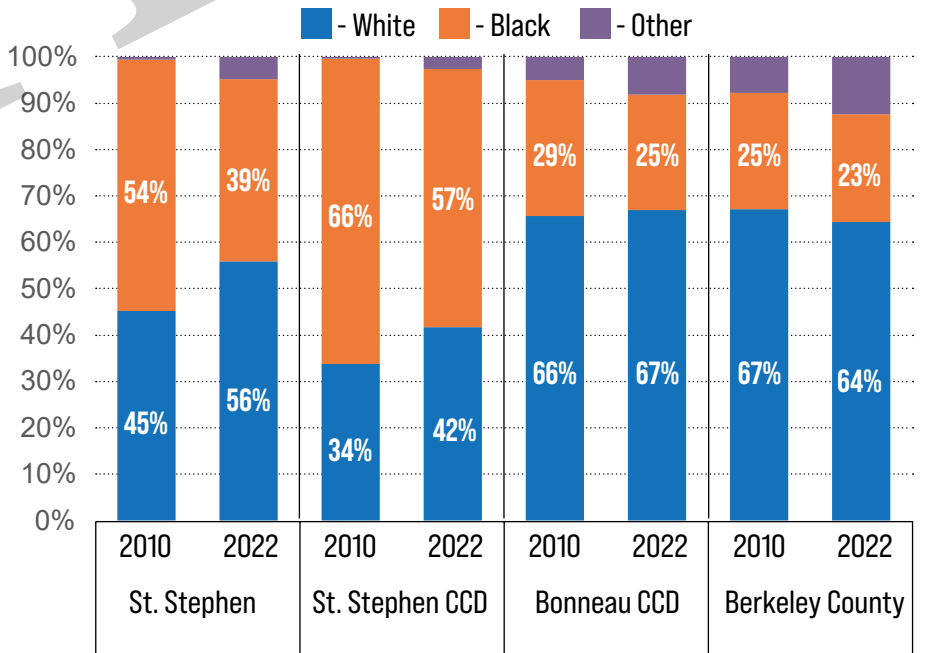


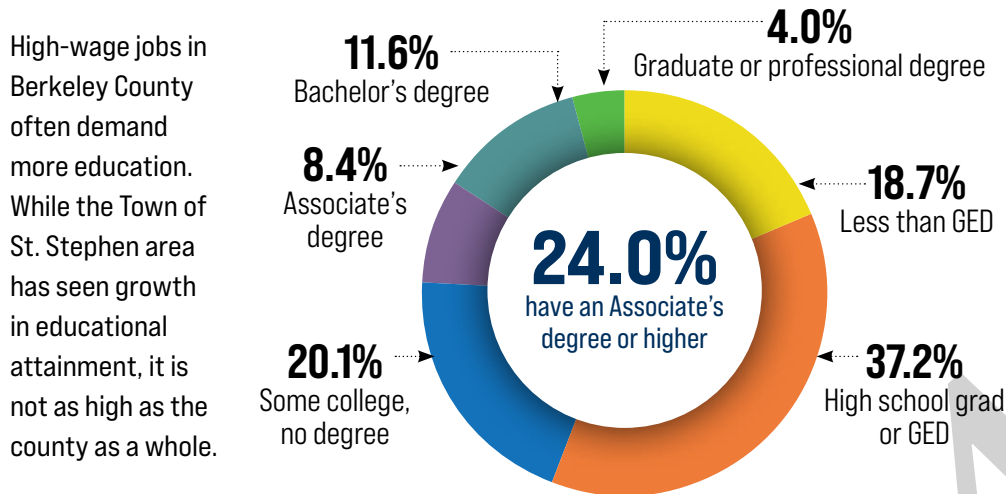
Fig.2: Change in racial composition, 2010-2022

In addition to the population decrease in the Town of St. Stephen (Fig. 1), the Greater St. Stephen area has experienced a significant shift in racial composition, a change that is less pronounced in Berkeley County as a whole.



Existing Conditions

Fig. 3: Educational attainment, Town of St. Stephen for population 25 years and older, 2022



Growth in attainment of an Associates degree or higher in the Town of St. Stephen, 2010-2022



Greater St. Stephen lags behind Berkeley County, in the percentage of population 25 years and older, with an Associates degree or higher, 2022

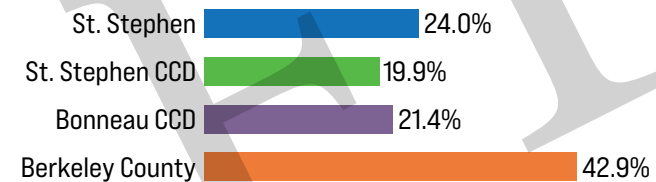


Fig. 4: Change in median household income, 2010-2022

While the Greater St. Stephen area saw an increase in Median Household Income (MHI) from 2010 to 2022, Berkeley County's MHI grew at more than double the rate. This suggests residents have not been able to access the higher wage jobs that exist in other parts of the county. Many of these opportunities require long commutes from this rural location, where 6.7% of St. Stephen households lack access to a vehicle, and public transit options are inadequate.

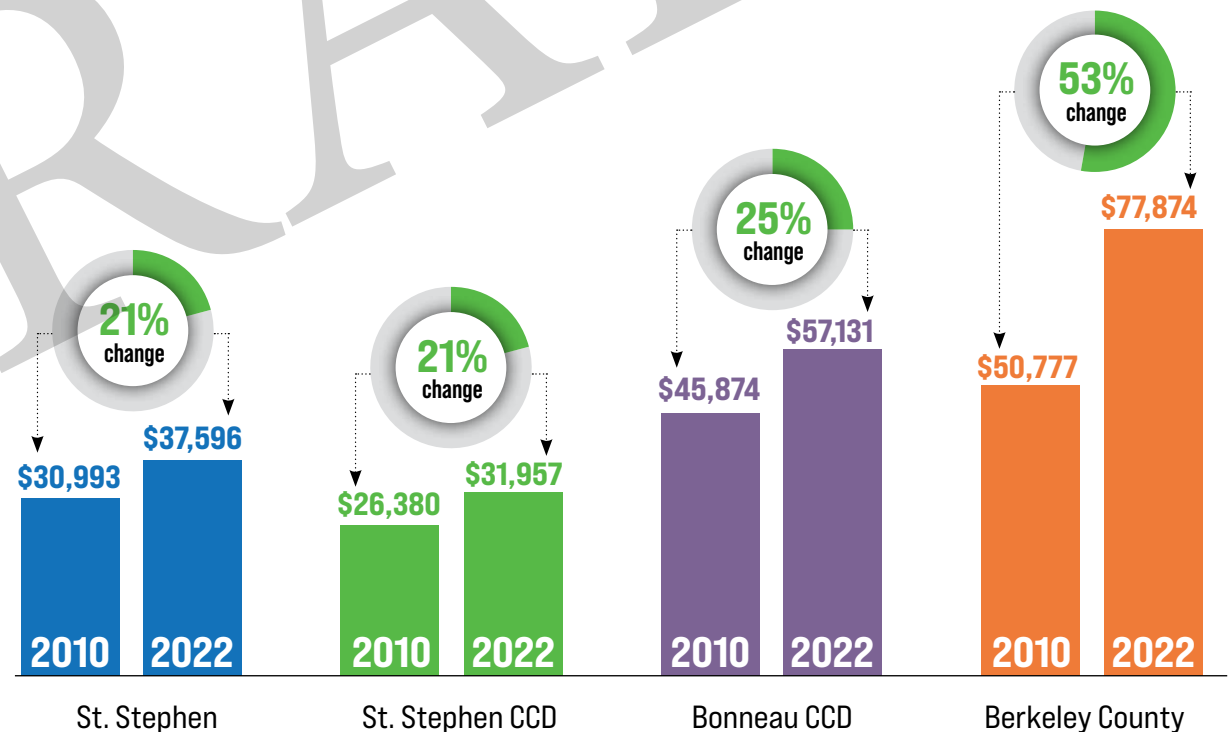
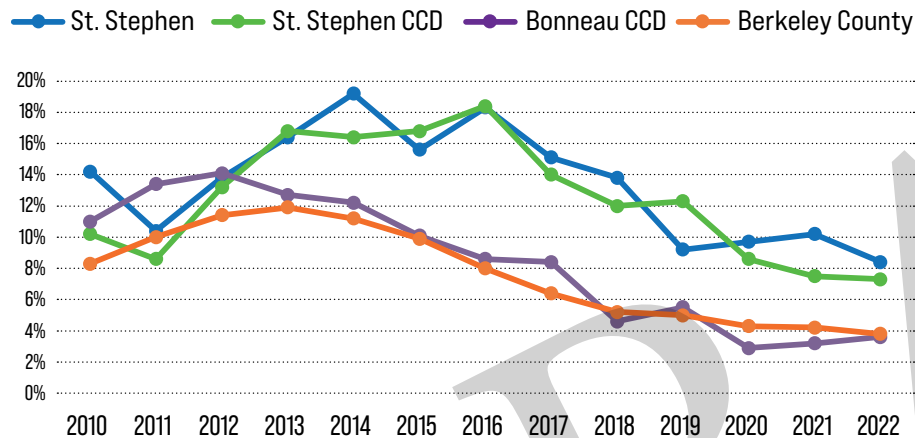
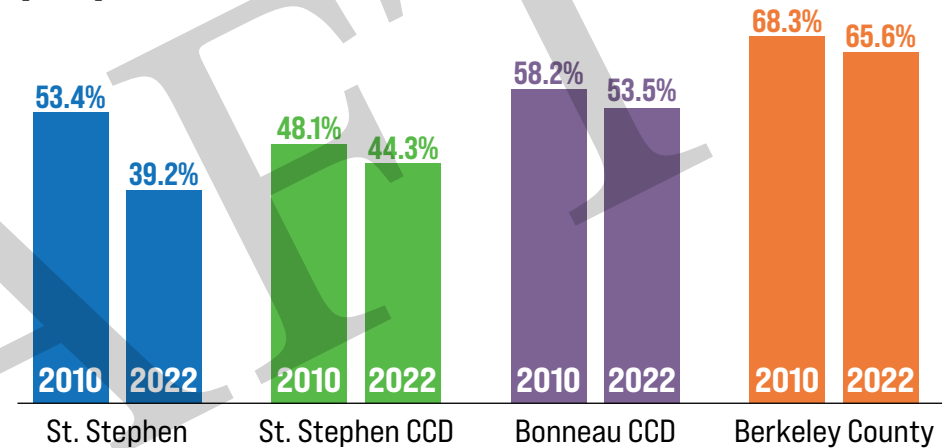


Fig. 5: Unemployment rate, 2010-2022

The comparative trends in unemployment rate show that the Town of St. Stephen and St. Stephen CCD have experienced higher unemployment. Events such as the recession in 2008 show a more significant impact, leading to longer recovery periods. Until there is access to a diversified base of employers, offering a wider selection of jobs, the area's employment rate will continue to lack resilience to sudden shocks to the economy.

**Fig. 6: Labor force participation rate, 2010-2022**

Labor force participation rates throughout the area are lower than in 2010. COVID-19 was one contributor to this decrease as many people lost or left their job and never returned to the workforce. Factors such as limited transportation, expensive and inadequate childcare, and inflexible job requirements, have hindered workforce reentry. Creating job opportunities closer to residents and addressing barriers to employment will be essential in increasing labor force participation.

**Table 1: Percent of civilians employed by occupational class, Town of St. Stephen**

An analysis of occupations using the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) System which simplifies the nearly 900 different detailed occupations into five broad classes, reveals a balanced workforce with no dominant occupational class.

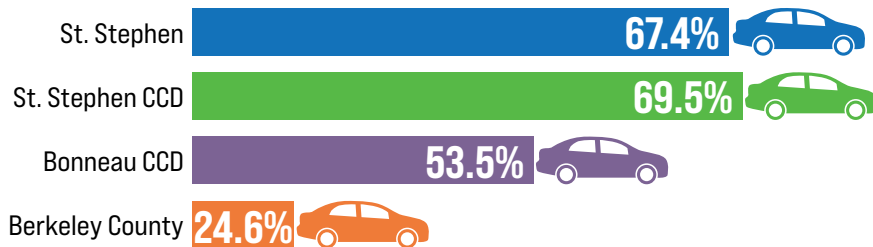
Occupational Classifications	% of Total Employed (2010)	% of Total Employed (2022)
Civilians Employed 16+	-	-
Management, Business, Science, & Arts	17%	17%
Service	26%	18%
Sales & Office	13%	12%
Natural Resources, Construction, & Maintenance	14%	21%
Production, Transportation, & Material Moving	30%	32%

Existing Conditions

GETTING TO WORK

St. Stephen's rural location necessitates that many residents drive 25 or more miles, increasing vehicle ownership costs and creating a significant employment barrier. Additionally, Town of St. Stephen residents are nearly four times more likely to live in a household without a car compared to Berkeley County, further limiting access to regional opportunities.

Fig. 7: Percentage of resident's who commute 25 miles or more for employment, 2021



Source: U.S. Census, OnTheMap 2021

Fig. 8: Percentage of households with no vehicle available, 2022

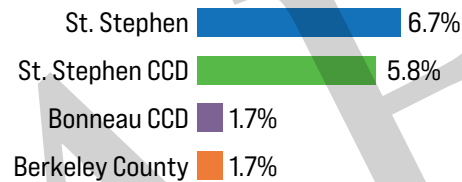
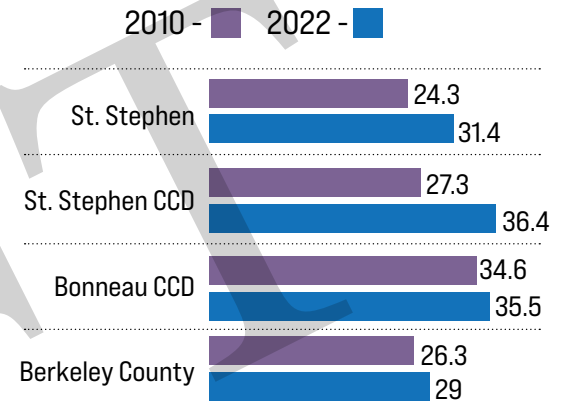


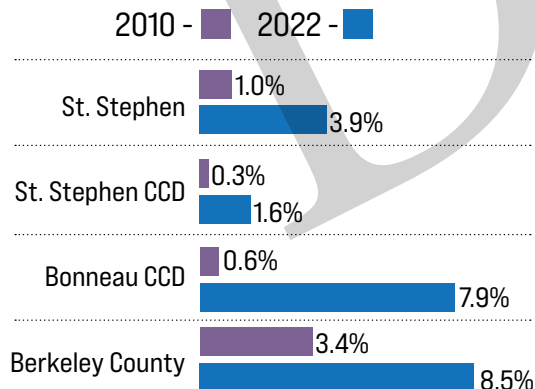
Fig. 9: Mean travel time to work, 2010-2022



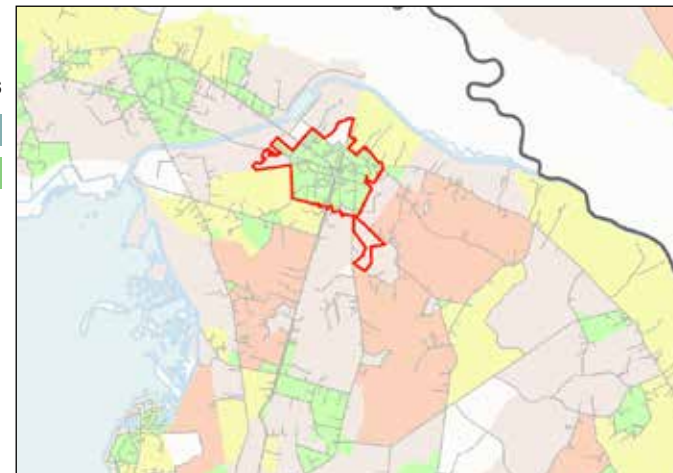
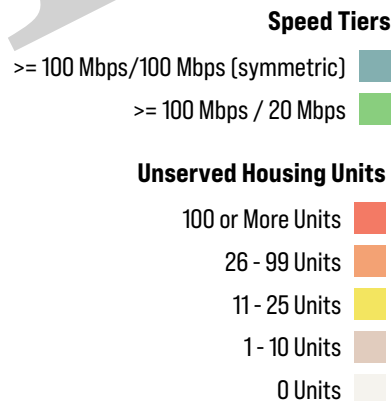
WORKING FROM HOME

The onset of COVID-19 prompted a significant shift to remote work, a trend that has continued as businesses and employees adopt long-term remote and hybrid solutions. High-speed internet access is crucial for residents to take advantage of this evolving work culture and for the region to attract remote workers.

Fig.10: Percentage of workers 16 and over who worked from home, 2010-2022



Map 2: Internet service - areas of need



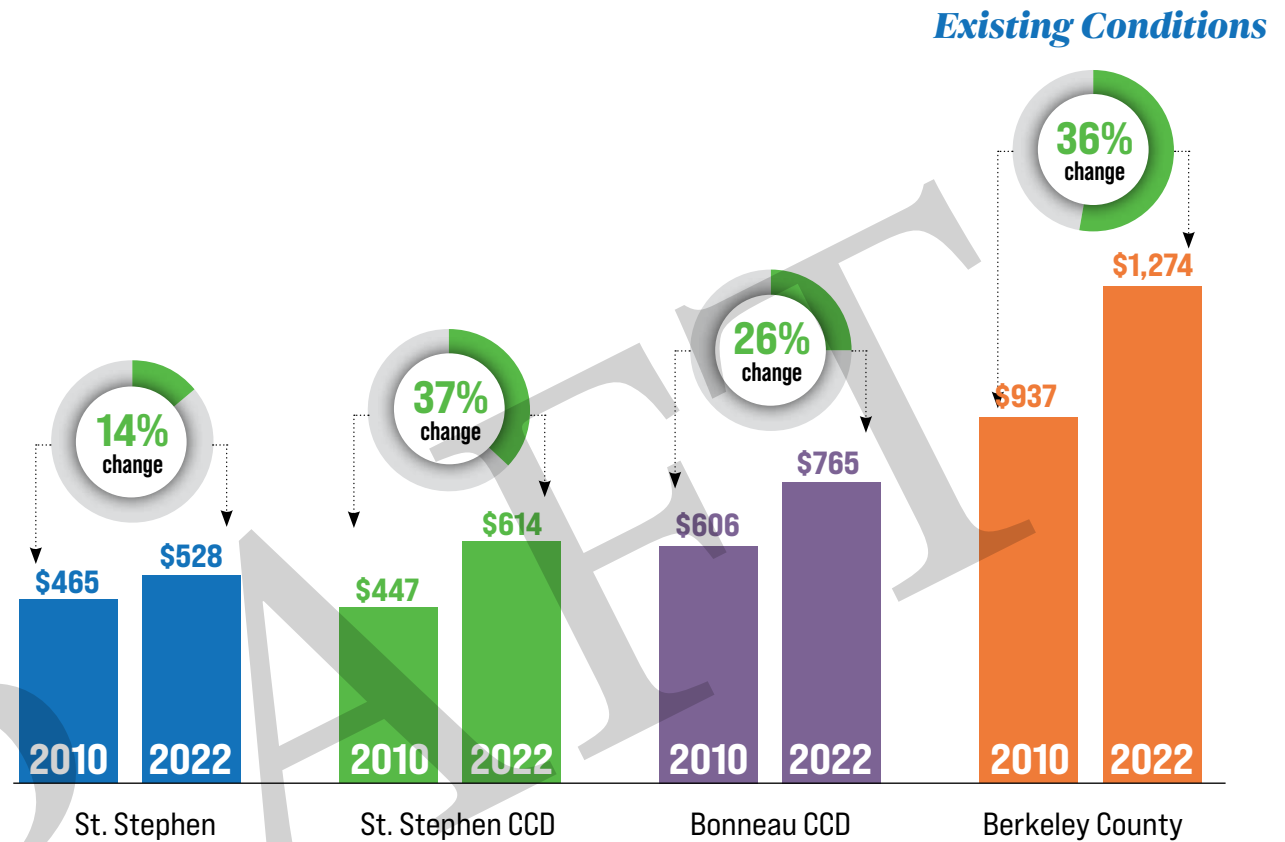
This map displays served and unserved Census blocks in South Carolina. Served areas indicate the estimated maximum download and upload speeds, while unserved areas show the number of unserved housing units per block.

Source: S.C. Broadband Office

AFFORDABILITY

Fig. 11: Change in median monthly housing costs, 2010-2022

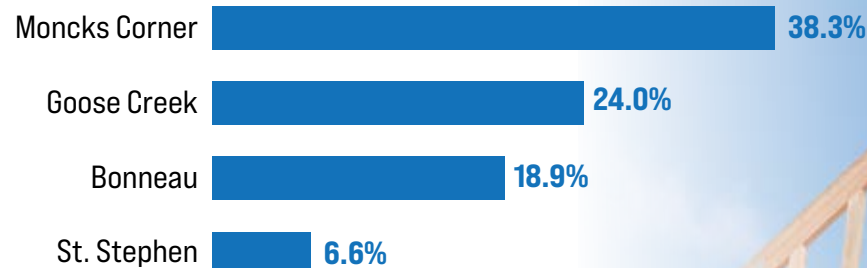
In 2022, the median monthly housing costs in Berkeley County were 2.4 times higher than the Town of St. Stephen, highlighting its relative affordability. As housing costs across the region continue to rise, Greater St. Stephen becomes an attractive, affordable alternative. This can be an asset to attract new residents. However, this influx could drive up local housing costs and strain infrastructure.



Comparable affordability can lead to rapid housing construction

The rapid growth of the region becomes evident when traveling south from St. Stephen on Hwy. 52 towards the more urbanized areas. Fig. 12 shows an astounding 38.3% of all housing units in Moncks Corner were built between 2010-2022. The comparable affordability to the region led many to “drive until they could qualify” for a mortgage. This housing expansion has yet to reach St. Stephen, but as housing prices rise and development lands dwindle, similar growth pressures become more likely. This underscores the urgency of proper land use planning to effectively manage and guide future development.

Fig. 12: Percentage of jurisdiction’s total housing units built from 2010-2022



BUSINESS & INDUSTRY PROFILE

Understanding the local economic landscape is crucial for fostering a thriving business environment. In 2023, the Town of St. Stephen had an estimated 70 businesses, with 285 businesses in the greater area. Using NAICS classifications, the analysis highlights the diversity of local industries, from retail and manufacturing to healthcare and education. The below table details the number of businesses and employees by industry.

Table 2: Industry by establishments and employees for the Town of St. Stephen and Greater St. Stephen area, 2023

INDUSTRY	TOWN OF ST. STEPHEN				GREATER ST. STEPHEN AREA			
	ESTABLISHMENTS		EMPLOYEES		ESTABLISHMENTS		EMPLOYEES	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Accommodation & Food Services	4	5.7%	30	4.7%	11	3.9%	61	2.0%
<i>Accommodation</i>	1	1.4%	7	1.1%	4	1.4%	20	0.7%
<i>Food Services & Drinking Places</i>	3	4.3%	23	3.6%	7	2.5%	41	1.4%
Administrative, Support, & Waste Management Services	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	2.8%	31	1.0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	1.4%	22	0.7%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.1%	9	0.3%
Construction	2	2.9%	14	2.2%	16	5.6%	126	4.2%
Educational Services	2	2.9%	108	17.0%	10	3.5%	521	17.4%
Finance & Insurance	4	5.7%	14	2.2%	7	2.5%	29	1.0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	5	7.1%	125	19.7%	15	5.3%	198	6.6%
Information	3	4.3%	7	1.1%	3	1.1%	7	0.2%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Manufacturing	1	1.4%	48	7.6%	4	1.4%	800	26.7%
Mining	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	19	27.1%	42	6.6%	88	30.9%	276	9.2%
<i>Automotive Repair & Maintenance</i>	1	1.4%	2	0.3%	7	2.5%	24	0.8%
Professional, Scientific, & Tech Services	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	3.2%	16	0.5%
Public Administration	5	7.1%	37	5.8%	24	8.4%	228	7.6%
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	6	8.6%	13	2.0%	13	4.6%	32	1.1%

INDUSTRY	TOWN OF ST. STEPHEN				GREATER ST. STEPHEN AREA			
	ESTABLISHMENTS		EMPLOYEES		ESTABLISHMENTS		EMPLOYEES	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Retail Trade	15	21.4%	138	21.7%	38	13.3%	234	7.8%
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealer	2	2.9%	12	1.9%	4	1.4%	15	0.5%
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	1	1.4%	3	0.5%	2	0.7%	8	0.3%
Electronics & Appliance Stores	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Building Material & Garden Equipment & Supplies Dealers	1	1.4%	2	0.3%	2	0.7%	6	0.2%
Food & Beverage Stores	5	7.1%	78	12.3%	12	4.2%	102	3.4%
Health & Personal Care Stores	1	1.4%	3	0.5%	2	0.7%	5	0.2%
Gasoline Stations & Fuel Dealers	2	2.9%	20	3.1%	5	1.8%	45	1.5%
Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, & Jewelry Stores	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	0	0.0%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.1%	10	0.3%
General Merchandise Stores	3	4.3%	20	3.1%	7	2.5%	43	1.4%
Transportation & Warehousing	1	1.4%	6	0.9%	11	3.9%	47	1.6%
Unclassified Establishments	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	7	2.5%	8	0.3%
Utilities	2	2.9%	53	8.3%	8	2.8%	327	10.9%
Wholesale Trade	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	2.1%	21	0.7%
Total	70	100.0%	635	100.0%	285	100.0%	2,993	100.0%

Source: ESRI, 2023 Estimates

TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Town of St. Stephen

1. Other Services* 27.1%
2. Retail Trade 21.4%
3. Real Estate, Rental & Leasing 8.6%
4. Public Administration 5.7%
5. Finance & Insurance 5.7%

Greater St. Stephen Area

1. Other Services* 30.9%
2. Retail Trade 13.3%
3. Public Administration 8.4%
4. Construction 5.6%
5. Health Care & Social Assistance... 5.3%

* - Excludes Public Administration

TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES BY PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EMPLOYEES

Town of St. Stephen

1. Retail Trade 21.7%
2. Health Care & Social Assistance .. 19.7%
3. Educational Services 17.0%
4. Manufacturing 7.6%
5. Other Services* 6.6%

Greater St. Stephen Area

1. Manufacturing 26.7%
2. Educational Services 17.4%
3. Utilities 10.9%
4. Other Services* 9.2%
5. Retail Trade 7.8%

LOCATION QUOTIENT

A location quotient (LQ) is an analysis that compares Greater St. Stephen's percent of businesses by industry clusters with its larger parent geographies, Berkeley County, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester (BCD) region and South Carolina to identify any specialized or concentrated industry clusters in the local economy.

LQ is commonly shown as a ratio and is relative based on the businesses in the different geographies. A higher LQ, above 1.0, indicates a regional specialization in that industry, suggesting competitive strengths and potential areas for economic growth. Conversely, a LQ lower than 1.0 can highlight gaps or underrepresented sectors, guiding strategic efforts to diversify the economy and attract new industries.

Industry clusters that had a high LQ ratio (1.25 and over) when compared to Berkeley County, BCD Region and South Carolina include:

- Utilities
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting
- Gasoline Stations & Fuel Dealers
- Public Administration
- Other Services (except Public Administration)
- Accommodation

Table 3: Greater St. Stephen Location Quotient for Businesses

	Berkeley County	BCD Region	South Carolina
Accommodation & Food Services	0.48	0.46	0.47
<i>Accommodation</i>	1.67	1.20	1.25
<i>Food Services & Drinking Places</i>	0.34	0.34	0.35
Administrative, Support, & Waste Management Services	0.79	0.75	0.85
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting	4.22	5.43	2.52
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	0.48	0.41	0.49
Construction	0.64	0.77	0.82
Educational Services	1.52	1.54	1.42
Finance & Insurance	0.50	0.50	0.46
Health Care & Social Assistance	0.72	0.58	0.57
Information	0.64	0.64	0.66
Management of Companies & Enterprises	0.00	0.00	0.00
Manufacturing	0.50	0.56	0.45
Mining	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Services (except Public Administration)	2.27	2.56	2.15
<i>Automotive Repair & Maintenance</i>	1.21	1.52	1.12
Professional, Scientific, & Tech Services	0.39	0.32	0.40
Public Administration	2.44	2.84	2.06
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	0.80	0.76	0.85
Retail Trade	0.95	1.00	0.91
<i>Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealer</i>	0.61	0.86	0.66
<i>Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores</i>	1.33	0.83	0.93
<i>Electronics & Appliance Stores</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Building Material & Garden Equipment & Supplies Dealers</i>	0.57	0.69	0.61
<i>Food & Beverage Stores</i>	1.43	1.89	1.66
<i>Health & Personal Care Stores</i>	0.47	0.54	0.50
<i>Gasoline Stations & Fuel Dealers</i>	2.49	4.29	2.41
<i>Clothing, Clothing Accessories, Shoe, & Jewelry Stores</i>	0.35	0.21	0.25
<i>Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores</i>	0.52	0.45	0.47
<i>General Merchandise Stores</i>	1.55	1.51	1.33
Transportation & Warehousing	1.16	1.53	1.83
Unclassified Establishments	0.38	0.33	0.46
Utilities	6.23	20.08	13.12
Wholesale Trade	0.75	0.78	0.69

Source: ESRI, 2023 Estimates

RECENT INDUSTRY RECRUITMENT IN BERKELEY COUNTY

Berkeley County Economic Development (BCED) is the primary government entity responsible for attracting new industries and supporting the expansion of existing ones within the County. According to their website, BerkeleyMeansBusiness.com, since Jan. 1, 2015, Berkeley County has seen \$9.2 billion in investments and the creation of 12,339 jobs. Their focus has been on five targeted industries:

- Information Technologies (IT)
- Aerospace
- Biotechnologies & Life Sciences
- Automotive
- Advanced Materials

While recent economic development announcements have not occurred in St. Stephen, they provide insights into the types of companies and industry sectors that are considering moving to Berkeley County.



Rendering/Redwood Materials

REDWOOD MATERIALS

In December 2020, Redwood Materials announced a \$3.5 billion investment which will bring 1,500 new jobs to Berkeley County. According to the S.C. Department of Commerce, this was the largest single economic development announcement in South Carolina history. They will recycle, refine and remanufacture anode and cathode battery components for electric vehicles at their 600-acre campus located at Camp Hall Commerce Park near the County's western border along I-26.



Photo/Google

GOOGLE

Google has invested \$2.9 billion since the original data center opened in 2007, the most recent of which was \$1.1 billion in 2021.



Photo/Volvo Cars

VOLVO

In 2015, Volvo announced a \$500 million investment to build their first U.S. manufacturing plant along I-26. Their cumulative investment has now reached \$1.2 billion, including the recent \$118 million to produce the Polestar 3 electric vehicle. Volvo is also producing their first electric SUV, the EX90, at the plant. The first of which rolled off the production line in June 2024.

Existing Conditions

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL LAND AVAILABILITY

This version of the Future Land Use Map (Map 3) highlights the areas designated for commercial and industrial development, which accounts for 25.8% of the Town's total land. Comparatively, the current zoning established in 1998, allocates 21.9% of the Town's land for these uses. This expansion increases the potential for job creation, entrepreneurial opportunities for residents, and increased tax revenue for the Town.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines the complete descriptions of all future land use designations. Below are highlights of the areas designated for commercial and industrial:

Neighborhood Mixed Use

- Serves as a buffer between higher intensity commercial areas and residential neighborhoods.
- Allows select commercial uses (e.g., service-based businesses, offices) alongside residential areas.

Town Center Mixed Use

- Serves as the focal point for the community, blending commercial and residential uses prioritizing pedestrian-oriented businesses like restaurants, boutique retail, offices, public spaces, and entertainment.
- Encourages infill development with mixed-use buildings (commercial on the first floor, residential above).

Highway Commercial

- Located along the US 52 corridor, focused on auto-oriented uses. Encourages development of businesses like gas stations, car washes, fast food, auto retail, garages, etc.

Employment

- Areas ideal for higher intensity commercial and/or light industrial land uses, such as a lumberyard, storage units/warehousing, distribution centers, construction, utilities, etc.

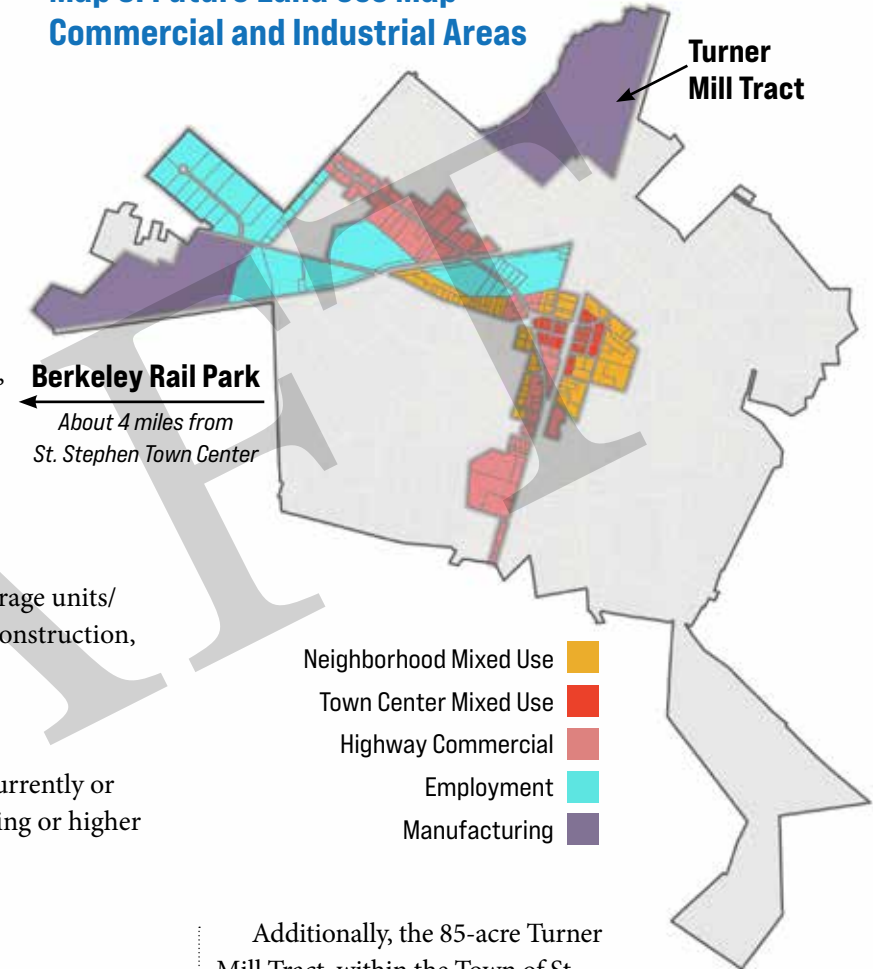
Manufacturing

- Larger areas within Town that are currently or intended to be used for manufacturing or higher intensity industrial uses.

Two major sites poised for investment and transformation

Two prominent industrial sites have become available in the area. The former location of Georgia-Pacific's 500-acre industrial site in neighboring Russellville, is being marketed as Berkeley Rail Park. Conceptual plans depict sites for seven industrial buildings ranging from 180,000 to 1,000,000 square feet and direct rail access to Camp Hall Industrial Park, home to major companies such as Volvo and Redwood Materials.

Map 3: Future Land Use Map - Commercial and Industrial Areas



Additionally, the 85-acre Turner Mill Tract, within the Town of St. Stephen and owned by Berkeley County, also includes direct rail access. Conceptual site plans show either seven sites, with buildings ranging from 45,000 to 112,500 square feet, or one 500,000 square foot building. With this tract's close proximity to Town Center, once active, it will have an immediate impact.

These sites are poised to usher in the next era of substantial industrial investment that will have a significant impact on St. Stephen.

WASTEWATER CAPACITY

As discussed in the Community Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan, most of St. Stephen is served by the St. Stephen Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). This WWTP is owned and operated by Berkeley County Water & Sanitation (BCWS) and has a capacity of 900,000 gallons per day (gpd).

As of January 2023, there were 442,000 gpd, or about 49% of the total capacity, already allocated. While this initially appears as if the WWTP has ample capacity for future development, certain uses, like industrial, manufacturing, and even higher intensity commercial uses, produce more wastewater. The Turner Mill Tract, discussed on the previous page, is connected to the WWTP. The type of industry that goes there will determine the impact on the remaining capacity. Currently, there is no connection to the Berkeley Rail Park site (former site of Georgia Pacific). However, if a connection is made and the industry that locates to this site can tap in, this could have a significant impact on the remaining capacity.

New residential development also impacts wastewater capacity. BCWS allocates 300 gpd in wastewater capacity per dwelling unit. A subdivision with 100 new homes would use 30,000 gpd of the remaining capacity.

With Berkeley County being one of the fastest-growing counties in South Carolina, BCWS commissioned a preliminary engineering report (PER) on expanding the WWTP in 2019. The report explored options for increasing capacity to 3.0 million gallons per day (mgpd) and 5.0 mgpd systems to

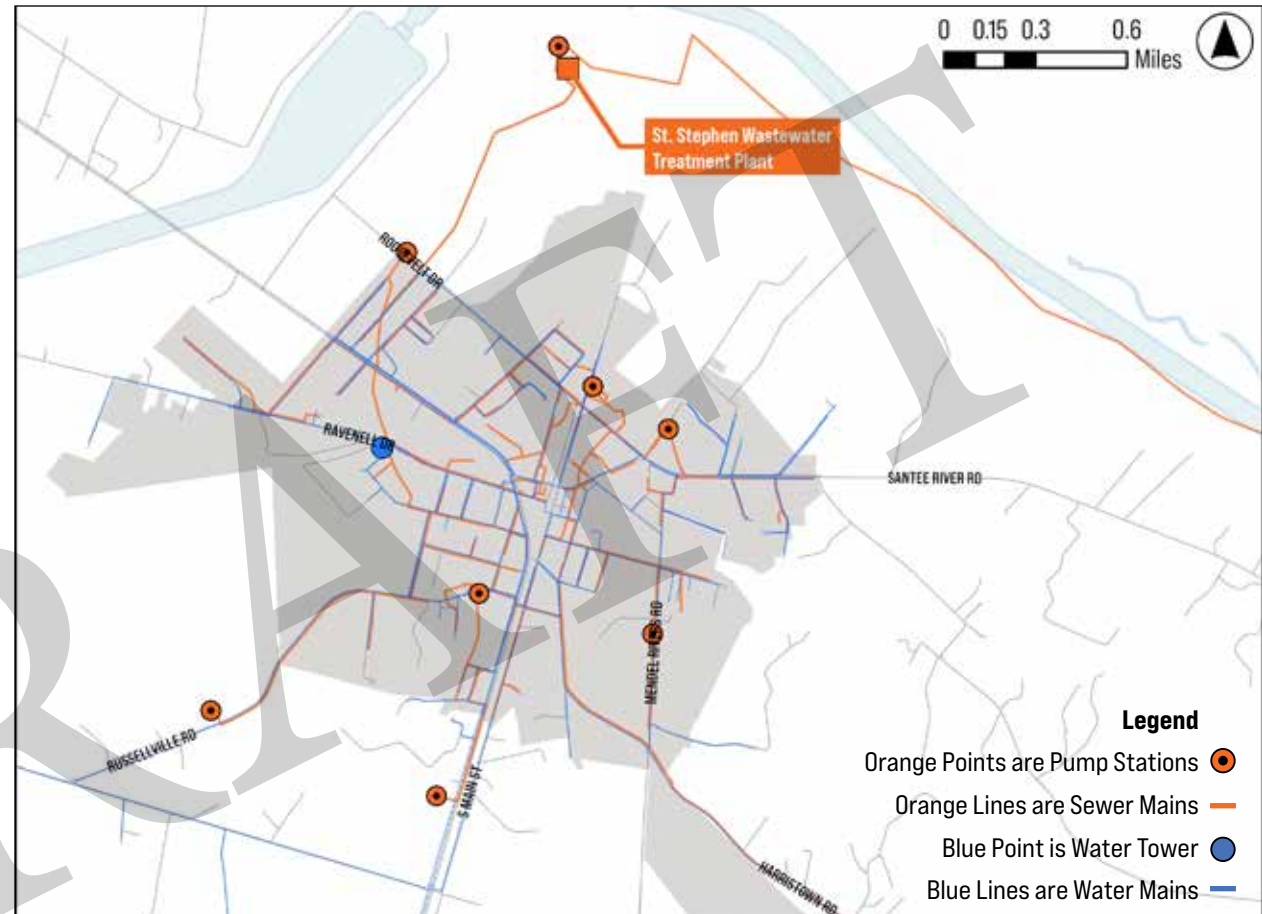
accommodate future growth and development.

The PER presented several alternatives, with cost estimates for expanding to a 3.0 mgpd system projected around \$37M and the 5.0 mgpd system was estimated between \$57M and \$60M. However, given these estimates were made in 2019, actual costs are likely to have risen significantly due to inflation and the substantial increase in the cost of building materials since that time. This underscores the

importance of strategic planning and investment in critical infrastructure.

As St. Stephen plans for future growth, it's crucial for public officials and decision-makers to consider the Town's remaining wastewater capacity when evaluating and approving new developments. As growth occurs the need for collaboration with Berkeley County and BCWS on how the remaining capacity is utilized of future investments is crucial.

Map 4: Water and sewer infrastructure



Existing Conditions

EPA REGION 4 COMMUNITY WIDE BROWNFIELD ASSESSMENT GRANT

In 2022, Berkeley County secured a \$500,000 EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant to launch transformative revitalization efforts in the St. Stephen and Russellville areas. This initiative targets underutilized properties impacted by hazardous substances that have hindered community growth.

Overview of activity

- **Site Inventories:** The Town of St. Stephen, working with the EPA and Berkeley County Economic Development, will conduct comprehensive inventories on up to 15 brownfield sites, guided by community input.
- **Key Sites Identified:** Two significant sites—the former St. Stephen High School (closed in 1996) and the historic Lumber Mill (operational from the 1930s to mid-1960s)—have been identified as redevelopment opportunities.

Goals and Impact

- **Economic growth:** Redeveloping these brownfields will stimulate job creation, attract businesses, and boost economic activity, turning idle sites into economic drivers.
- **Enhanced quality of life:** The revitalization will bring improved infrastructure, green spaces, and recreational amenities, enhancing the appeal of St. Stephen as a place to live, work, and play.

- **Environmental renewal:** Remediation will restore environmental health, turning former liabilities into community assets.

Opportunities for further funding

Completing brownfield assessments is more than a cleanup milestone, it's a powerful tool that positions communities to secure additional funding and investment. Once a property is assessed and remediation needs are identified, the community can become eligible for further EPA Brownfields grants, such as Cleanup and Revolving Loan Fund Grants.

Additionally, having comprehensive assessments completed strengthens applications for state and

federal funding sources like the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC), and USDA Rural Development programs.

Communities that capitalize on the completion of these assessments can leverage them to attract developers and investors by showcasing sites that are ready for redevelopment. With these assessments completed, St. Stephen can unlock a range of new funding opportunities to complete projects that clean up contaminated sites and have the ability to transform them into vibrant hubs of economic and community activity.



Berkeley County Economic Development has created a dedicated webpage (berekeleymeansbusiness.com/brownfield) with information about the grant, the progress and how residents get involved. This timeline was screen captured from the webpage in August 2024.

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South Main Street as seen from the Old Railroad Depot Station. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Town Center Revitalization Assessment

The condition of a Town Center/Main Street area is a visible indicator of a community's economic well-being. Prospective businesses and residents often evaluate a community based on the condition of this corridor. If it is well maintained, welcoming and has thriving businesses and community assets, visitors will begin to envision themselves, their family and their ventures prospering there. Conversely, if it appears neglected, with closed businesses and lacking amenities, it may drive

potential businesses and residents to explore other communities.

Additionally, current residents are also affected by the condition of this area. If neglected buildings and fading memories of a more prosperous time are what residents experience as they enter this corridor, it affects their mental well-being, dampening their town pride and belief in brighter days ahead. This underscores the importance of the Town Center revitalization assessment for St. Stephen.

One of the central focal points for revitalization is the Main Street corridor. Lined with commercial buildings dating back to the 1920s, this corridor runs parallel to the train tracks that run through the heart of Town Center. While once the center of activity, many of these buildings have been long-neglected and are in need of extensive renovations. However, in recent years new businesses and investments have started to arrive in this area, igniting a sense of optimism and momentum.



Lowcountry Coffee Company. (Photos/BCDCOG)



The former location of Ole Towne Feed & Supply and Lowcountry Munitions on Church Street.

Lowcountry Coffee Co. opened up in spring of 2023 on the corner of North Main Street and Church Street, the primary intersection of the Main Street corridor. They offer a menu of coffee, baked goods, sandwiches and ice cream with ample seating and free wifi for customers. At the time of its opening, it was the only food and beverage establishment on Main Street.

Ole Towne Feed & Supply and Lowcountry Munitions originally opened on Church Street, directly across from Lowcountry Coffee Co., to cater to the agricultural and outdoor needs of residents. However, both businesses have since relocated to two separate

buildings that are directly on Main Street. These businesses have become central meeting points for the community, and with their prominent location, offer the first visible signs of revitalization along the Main Street corridor.

Another sign of revitalization is on South Main Street where a building was recently renovated by Small Town Restoration, Inc., a local nonprofit organization, that according to their website “was formed to beautify, restore, rejuvenate, revitalize, and repopulate the town of St. Stephen, S.C.” Renovations included replacing the front entry way and windows. The building was leased to the St. Stephen Branch of the Berkeley County Library system for a temporary location while their current building is being renovated.

The blocks immediately behind Main Street, including Barry Place and Hood Street, are home to some of St. Stephen’s municipal buildings including City Hall, the Fire Department and Police Department. The presence of municipal buildings brings stability and people to Town Center and can be a catalyst for growth.



Building on South Main Street renovated by Small Town Restoration, Inc.



City Hall.



Fire Department.



Police Department.

Opportunities

Map 5 shows the location of the following opportunities throughout the Town Center.

Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility

The corner of Main Street and Church Street (Hwy. 45) is a main intersection in Town Center. It is bisected by train tracks which many freight trains use daily, as well as serving Amtrak's primary east coast rail line. There are no designated crosswalks for pedestrians, no dedicated lanes for cyclists, no protective barriers separating Main Street from the train tracks, and no shelter to provide cover for pedestrians in case a train obstructs the intersection during rainy or excessively hot weather. Prioritizing pedestrian safety and accessibility is essential to transforming Town Center into an inviting environment for all.

Map 5: St. Stephen - Location of Opportunities



Photos/BCDCOG

Renovate the former railroad depot station

Directly across the tracks from South Main Street sits the former railroad depot. This structure, once a symbol of the town's economic significance driven by cotton production and the timber industry, has deteriorated over time. A noteworthy example of the restoration of a historic train depots lies just to the south in Moncks Corner. This depot remained neglected for decades until the year 2000, when a federal grant was obtained to begin renovations. These renovations subsequently transformed the depot into a valuable community resource, providing spaces suitable for classes, meetings, and event rentals.



The train depot in Moncks Corner was renovated and now serves as an event venue and meeting space. (Photo/Town of Moncks Corner)



The intersection of Hwy. 52 and Hwy. 45, Church Street.

Inset: The intersection of Elm Steet and Hwy. 52. (Photos/BCDCOG)

Improve entry to Town Center from Hwy. 52 with wayfinding signs to Main Street area

Hwy. 52 goes through the Town of St. Stephen, yet it bypasses Main Street. Drivers along this route are primarily exposed to what the Town designates as the Highway Corridor. The implementation of prominent and welcoming signage where both Church Street (Hwy. 45) and Elm St. intersect with Hwy. 52 would signal the presence of Main Street to those traveling through. These signs would draw attention to the businesses and amenities within the area, as well as highlighting historically significant landmarks, such as St. Stephen Episcopal Church. As the Town Center continues to evolve the benefits of establishing an inviting entry point with clear wayfinding signage will grow.

Town Center Revitalization Assessment



The corner of Funk Street and South Main Street. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Activate Town Center with mixed-use development

Revitalizing St. Stephen's Town Center with mixed-use development will foster a vibrant community that integrates residential, commercial, and public spaces. By encouraging a mix of higher-density housing, retail shops, offices, and service-based businesses, the area can become a destination that promotes live, work, and play. Key intersections, such as Funk Street and South Main Street, present prime opportunities for this transformation. Mixed-use buildings with ground-level retail and upper-floor residential units can help drive foot traffic and economic vitality.

Additionally, public spaces can be incorporated thoughtfully, preserving the historical significance of sites like the former Old Keller Hardware Store. A small plaza or seating area could honor the location's past while offering modern amenities. This would both commemorate history and create a focal point of activity, attracting residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Reviving Town Center through building renovations and zoning regulations

The Town Center is currently witnessing a pressing need for extensive building renovations. While some progress has been initiated, as evident on pages 20-21, there remains a substantial amount of work ahead. Many of these buildings feature unique architectural characteristics. Restoration of these structures has the potential to transform the town into a charming and inviting destination, capable of attracting both residents and visitors alike. The recommendations of the Future Land Use designations found in the Comprehensive Plan, and future implementation of revised zoning regulations, is essential to encourage the town's desired style of development.

The following shows examples of the structures in need of repair.



As shown above, many of the buildings on South Main St. are in need of extension renovation. During their restoration, it is imperative to preserve the original architectural elements that give these structures their unique character, contributing significantly to the town's distinct identity. In addition, it is essential to enact precise zoning regulations that mandate adherence to specific guidelines for any new constructions within the Town Center. This is crucial for safeguarding the cohesive aesthetic of the area.



The entrance to Town Center from Hwy. 52 via Church Road has active businesses including the Farmers & Merchants Bank of South Carolina, Henryhand Funeral Home and a Barbershop. However, certain structures along this route require significant rehabilitation. It is imperative to prioritize initiatives aimed at elevating the visual appeal, enhancing pedestrian accessibility, and implementing traffic calming measures along this pivotal gateway into the heart of Town Center.





The South Main Street parcels, from Church Road to Keller Ave., are an entire block in length, extending from Main Street to Barry Place. The modest scale of the existing structures on these properties offers opportunities to create a blend of welcoming outdoor areas and the potential for mixed-use buildings. Increasing the housing options within the Town Center would establish a larger resident base, bolstering patronage for local businesses.



The Town of St. Stephen owns a former hotel at the south end of the Main Street Corridor. With businesses and amenities returning to the Town Center, visitor accommodations will become increasingly important. While some renovations have been completed, significant work remains. The Town could incentivize private redevelopment by offering the property at a low cost, contingent on the project meeting the Town's vision for the site.



The narrow alleys between buildings present opportunities for outdoor seating at a prospective restaurant or the establishment of a passageway, creating prominent communal space. The inset rendering on the right envisions the alley's untapped potential.



One cost-effective method to elevate the Town Center's aesthetics is by painting murals on prominent brick walls. Murals introduce vibrant colors and captivating imagery, transforming the environment into a more inviting and engaging space. The improvement in aesthetics help the developers see the potential for investment.



Currently, there are several storage buildings in the heart of Town Center, and many Main Street buildings appear to be used for storage instead of retail. Ordinances should limit additional storage facilities. By prioritizing space for businesses, residences, and communal areas, the Town can foster a more vibrant environment, promoting economic activity and a strong sense of place.



This former grocery store location, between St. Stephen Episcopal Church and Main Street on Church Road, offers abundant space for diverse repurposing possibilities. It could serve as a mixed-use development, an early childhood care facility, a workforce training center, or community center. Its prominent location along Church Road, as one enters Town Center from the West, would establish the Town's character as visitors arrive.

RETAIL ANALYSIS

The retail analysis evaluates the retail supply and demand in St. Stephen. Current conditions and potential retail opportunities based on ESRI's 2017 Retail MarketPlace Profile are highlighted below. The full listing of industries is on pages 28-29.

Definitions

Retail Supply:

The estimated sales to consumers by businesses within a geographic area. Sales to other businesses are excluded.

Retail Demand:

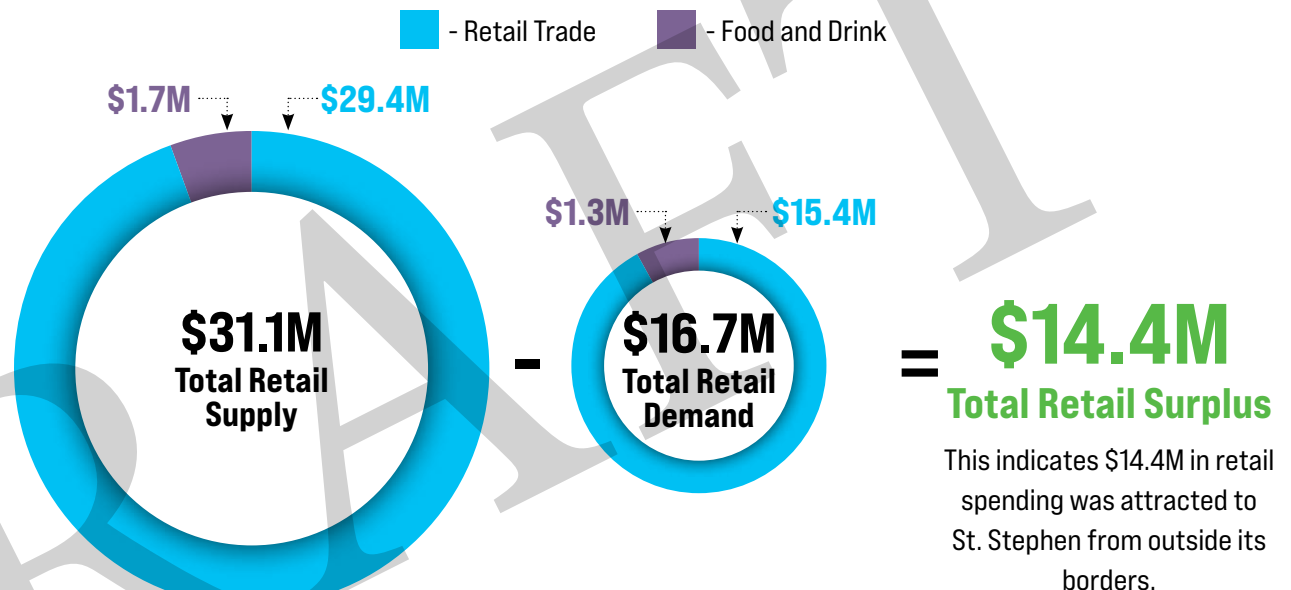
The estimated consumer spending expected at retail establishments within a geographic area.

Retail Gap:

The difference between retail supply and demand.

- **Negative values:** Indicate leakage, meaning residents of St. Stephen are spending money outside of the town. Example: A resident going to Moncks Corner for dinner, thereby spending money that could have been spent in St. Stephen. This suggests areas where local retail opportunities could be expanded.
- **Positive values:** Indicate a surplus, meaning non-residents are spending money within St. Stephen. Example: A traveler on U.S. Hwy 52 stopping for gas in St. Stephen. This reflects the Town's current ability to attract spending from outside its borders.

Town of St. Stephen Retail Trade and Food and Drink



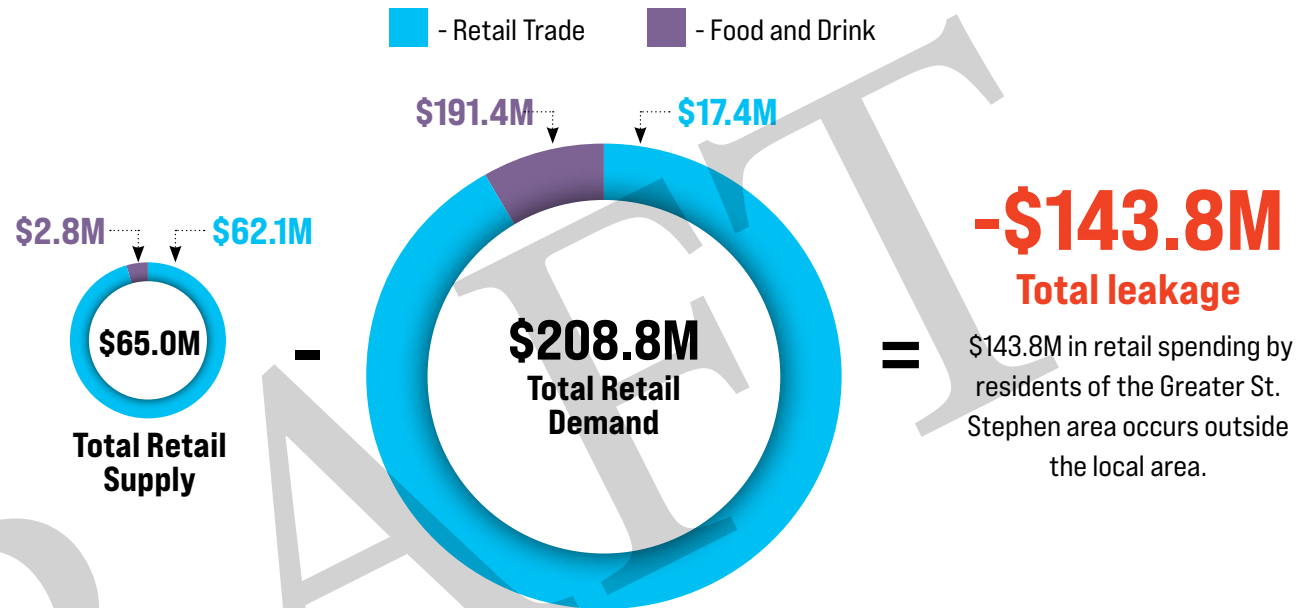
The majority of the surplus St. Stephen was able to attract was driven by two industries:



Businesses along the Hwy. 52 corridor are pivotal in attracting spending to St. Stephen. As highlighted in the existing conditions, 70% of residents in the St. Stephen CCD commute 25 or more miles to work. Local gas stations cater to this commuting population, as well as travelers passing through the area, capturing significant out-of-town spending. Furthermore, food and beverage stores attract customers from the wider rural region, channeling additional retail sales into the town.

Leakage of retail spending from the Greater St. Stephen area represents opportunity

The graphic to the right indicates the extent of retail spending by residents of the Greater St. Stephen area that occurs outside their community, a trend known as leakage. Establishing businesses within the Town of St. Stephen to meet this demand could redirect these dollars to benefit local business owners and increase the Town's tax revenue. As shown earlier, St. Stephen successfully attracts spending for gas stations and food and beverage stores, illustrating that residents will patronize local businesses that effectively address their needs. Expanding this success across other retail sectors could further strengthen the local economy.



Industries below are sectors that residents have identified as enhancing their quality of life and expressed a desire to see more of:



-\$14.6M

Leakage in Food Services & Drinking Places

The total retail demand for this industry was \$17.4M, but the Greater St. Stephen area only captured \$2.8M. This gap indicates a strong demand for more restaurants, presenting a significant opportunity for new dining establishments to thrive and meet local needs.



-\$13.8M

Leakage in Building Materials, Garden Equipment & Supply Stores

Residents repeatedly mentioned the need of a hardware store after the loss of the Old Keller Hardware Store on Main St. The building was lost to a fire in 2017. This leakage of \$13.8M indicates substantial demand that is being met outside the area.



-\$19.8M

Leakage in Food & Beverage Stores

As seen on the previous page, the Town of St. Stephen has been able to attract \$7.7M in surplus spending within this industry. However, this expanded view of the region indicates there is still substantial demand that local businesses could satisfy.

Retail Market Profile – Town of St. Stephen

See page 26 for a list of definitions.

NAISC Industry	Retail Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Demand (Retail Potential)	Retail Gap
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$31,102,248	\$16,693,485	\$14,408,763
Total Retail Trade	\$29,352,819	\$15,365,789	\$13,987,030
Total Food & Drink	\$1,749,429	\$1,327,696	\$421,733
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$46,288	\$1,157,316	-\$1,111,028
<i>Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,095,630</i>	<i>-\$1,095,630</i>
<i>Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores</i>	<i>\$46,288</i>	<i>\$61,686</i>	<i>-\$15,398</i>
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$131,080	\$528,395	-\$397,315
<i>Clothing Stores</i>	<i>\$131,080</i>	<i>\$359,479</i>	<i>-\$228,399</i>
<i>Shoe Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$90,011</i>	<i>-\$90,011</i>
<i>Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$78,905</i>	<i>-\$78,905</i>
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$401,337	\$353,275	\$48,062
Food & Beverage Stores	\$10,368,587	\$2,634,564	\$7,734,023
<i>Grocery Stores</i>	<i>\$9,977,168</i>	<i>\$2,438,017</i>	<i>\$7,539,151</i>
<i>Specialty Food Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$92,393</i>	<i>-\$92,393</i>
<i>Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores</i>	<i>\$391,419</i>	<i>\$104,154</i>	<i>\$287,265</i>
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$1,749,429	\$1,327,696	\$421,733
<i>Special Food Services</i>	<i>\$602,554</i>	<i>\$19,370</i>	<i>\$583,184</i>
<i>Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$68,346</i>	<i>-\$68,346</i>
<i>Restaurants/Other Eating Places</i>	<i>\$1,146,875</i>	<i>\$1,239,980</i>	<i>-\$93,105</i>
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$527,987	\$437,464	-\$90,523
<i>Furniture Stores</i>	<i>\$527,987</i>	<i>\$280,187</i>	<i>-\$247,800</i>
<i>Home Furnishings Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$157,277</i>	<i>-\$157,277</i>

NAISC Industry	Retail Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Demand (Retail Potential)	Retail Gap
Gasoline Stations	\$12,986,859	\$1,970,058	\$11,016,801
General Merchandise Stores	\$2,515,174	\$2,300,683	\$214,491
<i>Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,639,949</i>	<i>-\$1,639,949</i>
<i>Other General Merchandise Stores</i>	<i>\$2,515,174</i>	<i>\$660,734</i>	<i>\$1,854,440</i>
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$1,238,721	\$1,044,340	\$194,381
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$1,136,786	\$3,692,563	-\$2,555,777
<i>Automobile Dealers</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$3,020,847</i>	<i>-\$3,020,847</i>
<i>Other Motor Vehicle Dealers</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$345,769</i>	<i>-\$345,769</i>
<i>Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores</i>	<i>\$1,136,786</i>	<i>\$325,947</i>	<i>\$810,839</i>
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$0	\$642,556	-\$642,556
<i>Florists</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$17,240</i>	<i>-\$17,240</i>
<i>Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$105,666</i>	<i>-\$105,666</i>
<i>Used Merchandise Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$52,666</i>	<i>-\$52,666</i>
<i>Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$466,984</i>	<i>-\$466,984</i>
Nonstore Retailers	\$0	\$239,191	-\$239,191
<i>Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$142,923</i>	<i>-\$142,923</i>
<i>Vending Machine Operators</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$9,158</i>	<i>-\$9,158</i>
<i>Direct Selling Establishments</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$87,110</i>	<i>-\$87,110</i>
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	\$0	\$365,384	-\$365,384
<i>Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$317,782</i>	<i>-\$317,782</i>
<i>Book, Periodical & Music Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$47,602</i>	<i>-\$47,602</i>

Retail Market Profile – Greater St. Stephen

See page 26 for a list of definitions.

NAISC Industry	Retail Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Demand (Retail Potential)	Retail Gap
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	\$64,942,389	\$208,751,662	-\$143,809,273
Total Retail Trade	\$62,184,783	\$191,386,454	-\$129,201,67
Total Food & Drink	\$2,757,606	\$17,365,208	-\$14,607,602
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$764,804	\$14,536,897	-\$13,772,093
<i>Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers</i>	<i>\$672,227</i>	<i>\$13,778,727</i>	<i>-\$13,106,500</i>
<i>Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores</i>	<i>\$92,577</i>	<i>\$758,170</i>	<i>-\$665,593</i>
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$137,322	\$6,971,433	-\$6,834,111
<i>Clothing Stores</i>	<i>\$137,322</i>	<i>\$4,680,961</i>	<i>-\$4,543,639</i>
<i>Shoe Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,160,043</i>	<i>-\$1,160,043</i>
<i>Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,130,429</i>	<i>-\$1,130,429</i>
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$420,449	\$4,607,248	-\$4,186,799
Food & Beverage Stores	\$12,941,338	\$32,751,225	-\$19,809,887
<i>Grocery Stores</i>	<i>\$12,023,076</i>	<i>\$30,219,756</i>	<i>-\$18,196,680</i>
<i>Specialty Food Stores</i>	<i>\$508,204</i>	<i>\$1,146,255</i>	<i>-\$638,051</i>
<i>Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores</i>	<i>\$410,058</i>	<i>\$1,385,214</i>	<i>-\$975,156</i>
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$2,757,606	\$17,365,208	-\$14,607,602
<i>Special Food Services</i>	<i>\$661,474</i>	<i>\$251,128</i>	<i>\$410,346</i>
<i>Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages</i>	<i>\$129,364</i>	<i>\$964,949</i>	<i>-\$835,585</i>
<i>Restaurants/Other Eating Places</i>	<i>\$1,966,768</i>	<i>\$16,149,131</i>	<i>-\$14,182,363</i>
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$2,212,517	\$5,746,469	-\$3,533,952
<i>Furniture Stores</i>	<i>\$2,212,517</i>	<i>\$3,663,861</i>	<i>-\$1,451,344</i>
<i>Home Furnishings Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$2,082,608</i>	<i>-\$2,082,608</i>

NAISC Industry	Retail Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Demand (Retail Potential)	Retail Gap
Gasoline Stations	\$35,258,555	\$23,924,402	\$11,334,153
General Merchandise Stores	\$4,919,369	\$29,210,755	-\$24,291,386
<i>Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$21,012,653</i>	<i>-\$21,012,653</i>
<i>Other General Merchandise Stores</i>	<i>\$4,919,369</i>	<i>\$8,198,102</i>	<i>-\$3,278,733</i>
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$1,520,141	\$12,903,399	-\$11,383,258
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$521,023	\$7,815,224	-\$7,294,201
<i>Florists</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$227,829</i>	<i>-\$227,829</i>
<i>Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores</i>	<i>\$103,497</i>	<i>\$1,375,240</i>	<i>-\$1,271,743</i>
<i>Used Merchandise Stores</i>	<i>\$222,108</i>	<i>\$701,735</i>	<i>-\$479,627</i>
<i>Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers</i>	<i>\$195,418</i>	<i>\$5,510,420</i>	<i>-\$5,315,002</i>
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$3,239,615	\$45,196,079	-\$41,956,464
<i>Automobile Dealers</i>	<i>\$2,048,697</i>	<i>\$36,872,361</i>	<i>-\$34,823,664</i>
<i>Other Motor Vehicle Dealers</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$4,226,343</i>	<i>-\$4,226,343</i>
<i>Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores</i>	<i>\$1,190,918</i>	<i>\$4,097,375</i>	<i>-\$2,906,457</i>
Nonstore Retailers	\$0	\$3,011,666	-\$3,011,666
<i>Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,852,544</i>	<i>-\$1,852,544</i>
<i>Vending Machine Operators</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$114,222</i>	<i>-\$114,222</i>
<i>Direct Selling Establishments</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$1,044,900</i>	<i>-\$1,044,900</i>
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	\$249,650	\$4,711,657	-\$4,462,007
<i>Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores</i>	<i>\$249,650</i>	<i>\$4,082,285</i>	<i>-\$3,832,635</i>
<i>Book, Periodical & Music Stores</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$629,372</i>	<i>-\$629,372</i>



SWOT ANALYSIS

Through input from the Town of St. Stephen Planning Commission, Town Council, feedback from the Community and analysis of existing conditions the following strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats were identified.

STRENGTHS

- Natural and cultural assets
- Small-town character, quiet and peaceful
- Strong community engagement
- Partnership and support from Berkeley County
- Flexibility within Town leadership and stakeholders
- Defined town center
- Available industrial land with direct access to rail
- Located in fast-growing Berkeley County and Charleston region
- Affordability in comparison to region
- Proximity to infrastructure, Highway 52, I-26, rail and Port of Charleston

WEAKNESSES

- Access to affordable, high-quality child care
- Lack of jobs and economic opportunities
- Deterioration of buildings, especially in the Town Center
- Access to capital and resources for small businesses, entrepreneurs
- Transportation and transit options
- Negative perceptions of Town by residents
- Limited awareness among residents about the processes and timelines involved in enacting change
- Distance to employment opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase the number of restaurants, retail and grocery stores
- City beautification, blight remediation and building facade improvements
- Revitalization of Town Center
- Additional park & recreation facilities & programs
- Increased healthcare services
- Addressing barriers to employment for residents such as child care, transportation, education and training
- Promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities, driving tourism and related industries
- Attract remote and hybrid workers, tourists, retirees
- Expansion of broadband capacity and cellular coverage better connecting residents and businesses
- Implementation of Comprehensive Plan and Economic Development Strategy

THREATS

- Loss of community character, natural and cultural assets
- Proximity to towns that are primarily growing through suburban sprawl and annexation
- Dependence on only large industry for job creation
- Lack of economic diversity
- Growth in job opportunities that are not accessible to current residents
- Decreasing housing affordability
- Sprawling suburban development that doesn't center commercial activity in the Town.
- Economic and natural disruptions such as recessions, supply-chain disruptions, hurricanes, tornadoes and fires

Economic Development Strategies

The following economic development strategies are designed to proactively address identified challenges and leverage the strengths highlighted in the existing conditions and SWOT analysis. Additionally, they reflect the vision expressed by the community through public open houses and survey. These strategies aim to establish a robust framework for sustainable growth, fostering economic resilience and prosperity while capitalizing on St. Stephen's unique assets and opportunities.

The strategies are organized into three distinct economic priorities: "Empower" the residents of St. Stephen to fully benefit from economic development, "Revitalize" the Town Center to enhance its vibrancy, and "Prosper" by fostering sustainable growth.

Empower

These strategies aim to address the obstacles to employment, education, and training that hinder St. Stephen's residents from fully engaging in the region's economic growth. They are designed to foster a sustainable and equitable economic landscape, ensuring all residents have access to opportunities that enhance their economic well-being and quality of life.

Goal E1: Enhance access to high-quality educational and workforce training opportunities

During the public open house, residents emphasized that access to high-quality educational and workforce training opportunities would significantly improve their economic well-being. Recognizing this need, it is imperative to prioritize initiatives that equip residents with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment in the evolving job market. Although the Town may not directly provide these services, it plays a crucial role in connecting residents to the existing training opportunities available. To achieve this, the following strategies are recommended:

Objective E1.1 - Increase regional collaboration:

Forge strategic partnerships to accurately assess current and future workforce demands and align workforce development efforts with these needs to ensure the development of a highly skilled, locally-relevant workforce. Key partners include:

- Berkeley County Economic Development
- SC Works Trident
- Trident Technical College
- Local employers
- Industry Association's



SC Career Coach

The SC Career Coach extends SC Works centers to rural areas, aiding job placement, disaster response, and providing resume, computer, and interview training.



Photo/SC Works Trident

Objective E1.2 - Increase opportunities, awareness and participation in apprenticeship, internship and work-based learning opportunities:

- Collaborate with local businesses to create internships and co-op programs for local students and job seekers, providing valuable real-world experience and fostering career development.
- Support and promote apprenticeship programs that offer practical, hands-on training in various skilled trades and industries, enhancing employability and preparing participants for successful careers.

Example of apprenticeship, internship and work-based learning opportunities include:

- **Trident Technical College** offers both youth and adult apprenticeship and internship opportunities.
- **Berkeley County School District Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE)** offers work-based learning classes and opportunities to work and learn in professional environments.
- **SC Works WIOA Youth program** is designed to educate, train and support young adults, ages 16 – 24, for a career in one of the region's leading career pathways.



Photo/Berkeley County School District Office of Career and Technical Education

Objective E1.3 - Utilize town space for workforce development:

- Identify town properties and facilities as venues for workforce development initiatives. These spaces can host training programs, vocational workshops, as well as job fairs, providing accessible locations for residents to gain new skills and enhance their employability.
- Collaborate with local educational institutions and training providers to deliver on-site programs in these town spaces, ensuring alignment with local employer needs and industry trends.
- After Town Hall moves to a new facility, utilize the existing Town Hall building for the community including space dedicated for workforce development initiatives.



Photo/BCDCOG

Objective E1.4 - Enhance digital infrastructure and literacy:

- Collaborate with Internet Service Providers, Berkeley County, and the S.C. Broadband Office to ensure all residents have access to high-speed internet. This connectivity is essential for facilitating online training and enabling remote work opportunities
- Partner with Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce to establish a Community Resource Hub in St. Stephen to provide computer workspaces and free Wi-Fi. Establishing this Hub will support workforce training, telehealth services, online education, substance abuse resources, and digital literacy training, providing residents with crucial access to technology and services.
- Work with Lowcountry Digital Equity Coalition to provide digital literacy training and participate in their computer laptop donation project to provide refurbished devices for resident's in need.



Photo/Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce

Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce opens first Community Resource Hub

The first of five initial Community Resource Hub's opened on May 23, 2024 at the Keith School Museum on Clements Ferry Road. The remaining four will be located at Cross Community Center, Tri-Community Center, Alvin Recreation Center, and Wassamassaw Recreation Center. These hubs welcome all and can be utilized by St. Stephen area resident's until a similar resource can be established in the St. Stephen area.

Empower

Goal E2: Foster an entrepreneurial environment and support small businesses

Supporting entrepreneurship and small businesses in St. Stephen creates economic opportunities for residents and a pathway for them to directly benefit from the community's growth. This approach also encourages local spending which helps retain money within the community. These strategies are designed to offer the necessary resources, financial support, and guidance to help businesses thrive.

Objective E2.1 - Encourage business incubators and accelerator spaces and programming:

- Coordinate with regional organizations with existing business accelerator and incubator programs including Harbor Entrepreneur Center, SCACED, Charleston Metro Chamber's Minority Business Accelerator and Lowcountry Local First to host workshops in St. Stephen or establish satellite locations.
- Identify available town or county-owned space, and encourage the development or repurposing of space, that can be utilized for business incubators and accelerators and workshops to be held.



The recently renovated American Legion Hut, as pictured during the Comp Plan Public Open House, provides ample space ideal for hosting entrepreneurship and small business workshops. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Objective E2.2 - Enhance resident awareness of business support services:

- Forge partnerships with organizations such as the South Carolina Small Business Development Center and SCORE to ensure widespread access to essential business support services, including assistance with business planning, legal matters, and financial expertise.
- Work with these partners to organize networking events and forums where local entrepreneurs can connect with mentors and peers to exchange ideas and gain practical insights into business operations.
- Link the Town website to online resources that guide residents through the process of starting and managing a business.

Objective E2.3 - Ensure businesses are aware of ways to access capital:

- Increase awareness of non-traditional financing options such as The Climb Fund, S.C. Community Loan Fund, and BCDCOG's Revolving Loan Fund, especially for businesses that have had challenges securing capital through traditional banks.
- Partner with organizations like Increasing H.O.P.E. to host financial literacy workshops locally and promote their webinars and online resources to empower St. Stephen's business owners with critical financial knowledge and tools.

Websites for organizations focused on entrepreneurship and small businesses

BCDCOG: bcdcog.com

Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce Lowcountry Minority Business Accelerator: charlestonchamber.org/lowcountry-minority-business-accelerator/

CLIMB Fund: climbfund.org

Harbor Entrepreneur Center: harborec.com

Increasing H.O.P.E.: increasinghope.org

Lowcountry Local First: lowcountrylocalfirst.org

S.C. Association for Community Economic Development (SCACED): scaced.org

S.C. Community Loan Fund: sccommunityloanfund.org

S.C. Small Business Development Center: scsbdc.com

SCORE: www.score.org/charlestonsc

Goal E3: Enhance workforce accessibility by removing barriers to employment

Objective E3.1 - Increase access to affordable, high-quality childcare:

- Collaborate with Berkeley County Economic Development and the S.C. Department of Commerce to incentivize incoming and existing industries to provide their employees with monthly childcare stipends or on-site childcare services.
- Review and potentially revise zoning regulations and licensing requirements and streamline the permit process to make it easier for new child care providers to set up operations.
- Explore the use of public facilities like schools or community centers for child care services during non-school hours or during the summer.

Collaborative childcare strategies: The role of industry and government

As employers seek to attract and retain their workforce amidst ongoing challenges, many are turning to childcare benefits for employees. Governments are also stepping up with incentives to support this trend. Notable examples include:

- **Volvo Cars:** Offers employees a \$3,000 annual stipend for childcare, facilitated by a tax break from the State of South Carolina.
- **Scout Motors:** Currently building a \$2 billion facility in Blythewood, S.C., was provided land for a childcare center and offered property tax credits to reimburse employees for childcare costs.

Source: South Carolina Daily Gazette, "More SC companies offering child care benefits to attract workers." Nov. 14, 2023



Photo/Volvo Cars

Objective E3.2 - Increase connectivity to alleviate transportation as a barrier to employment

- Encourage local employers to establish transportation programs, such as employer-sponsored shuttles or vanpools, to help employees commute to work.
- Encourage telecommuting and flexible work arrangements to reduce the need for daily commuting.
- Communicate with TriCounty Link to ensure service and routes are optimized to connect residents with employment centers and essential services
- Promote ridesharing, carpooling and the availability of Lowcountry Go Vanpool.

Lowcountry Go program: Addressing transportation barriers to employment

Lowcountry Go is a regional partnership of the BCDCOG, the South Carolina Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and employers and stakeholders in the Tri-County region. The Lowcountry Go Vanpool Program provides eligible groups of four or more commuters with a 7 or 15 passenger van to use to commute to and from work. The month-to-month lease includes the vehicle, insurance, maintenance, gas, and an Emergency Ride Home.

For more information go to: bcdcog.com/vanpool



Photo/BCDCOG

Revitalize

St. Stephen benefits from a designated Town Center with a Main Street Corridor in close proximity to Hwy 52. However, this corridor has been in economic decline with many of the buildings in a deteriorated condition. The revitalization of this area is key to attracting investment, residents and visitors back to the Town Center. It should be noted that revitalization is also a priority within the Comprehensive Plan and is discussed in detail from a land use perspective and should be referenced in tandem with the following goals and strategies.



Goal R1: Attract new businesses, job opportunities and investment in Town Center

Throughout the public survey, open house and discussions with St. Stephen Planning Commission and Town Council the highest priority was the increasing economic activity and opportunity. This will provide resident's access to businesses and services they desire as well as increase both employment options and entrepreneurial opportunities. This also enables the Town to captures more of the dollars resident's are spending throughout the Greater St. Stephen area.

Objective R1.1 - Allow for higher density residential and mixed use buildings in the Town Center creating a foundation of clientele for businesses in the Town Center

- Implement recommendations from Comprehensive Plan focused on land use and zoning to create a live, work, play atmosphere in the Town Center.

Objective R1.2 - Ensure Town is supportive of businesses looking to invest

- Maintain useful information on Town website for potential entrepreneurs to understand the process to open a business.

- Streamline business permitting process to shorten time for a business to open.
- Create a business directory on website featuring locally-owned and operated businesses.
- Connect larger employers to local businesses offering services they may need.

Objective R1.3 - Enhance collaboration with regional economic development partners

- Leverage positive partnership with Berkeley County Economic Development to align St. Stephen's economic development efforts with broader county and regional goals
- Regularly engage with economic development partners to identify potential business attraction opportunities, share resources, and leverage regional marketing efforts to draw investment and job creation to the Town Center.

Objective R1.4 - Utilize retail analysis on pages 26-29 to identify and promote industry sectors with potential for success that align with community vision

- Adopt a targeted approach to retail recruitment

to recruit businesses that meet the needs and enhance the quality of life of the community.

- Share this information with economic development partners to align strategies

Objective R 1.5 - Strengthen code enforcement and compliance

- Enforce penalties for non-compliance to ensure that property owners adhere to local building codes and regulations, prioritizing public safety and community well-being.
- Establish a communication plan specifically for absentee property owners, including regular updates on code requirements and potential penalties for non-compliance.
- Pursue grant funding to enhance code enforcement activity through funding opportunities such as Community Development Block Grants and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants

Goal R2: Rehabilitate buildings and infrastructure to create and attractive and vibrant

Objective R2.1 - Enroll and actively participate in the Municipal Association of South Carolina's (MASC) Main Street SC program:

- Main Street SC is a technical assistance program that assists communities as they revitalize their historic downtowns, encouraging economic development and historic preservation.
- Join at one of the three levels of membership for municipalities allowing the Town to begin participating with minimal cost and staff time.
- Leverage historic, cultural and architectural assets, as well as local enterprises and community pride to advance the revitalization of Main Street corridors.
- **Website:** www.masc.sc/main-street-south-carolina
Contact: Jenny Boulware, jboulware@masc.sc

Objective R2.2 - Attract and support investors focused on the rehabilitation of buildings and infill development in the Town Center

- Become versed in economic development incentives that encourage investment including: S.C. State Historic Tax Credit, Federal New Markets Tax Credit, S.C. State Abandoned Building Credit, Bailey Bill Property Tax Incentive.
- Consider creating a Tax Increment Finance District (TIF) in the Town Center to increase property tax revenue from rising values to fund public improvements, stimulating economic development without raising taxes.

Main Street SC impact

Program impact in S.C., 1983 - 2022

\$864M
Public & Private Sector
Investment

2,132
Rehabilitation, Construction
& Public Works Projects

1,367
New Small Business
Opened

6,559
New Full and Part Time
Jobs Created

Source: Main Street South Carolina

- Establish design guidelines for Town Center construction and building rehabilitation, covering aspects such as exterior appearance, new building design, additions, and streetscape enhancements to preserve the character and scale of existing buildings, promoting cohesive development, and enhancing the overall aesthetic of the area.
- Invest in streetscaping, lighting, and pedestrian-friendly features in commercial areas to create inviting public spaces that attract foot traffic and support local businesses. These enhancements can also help strengthen the Town's small-town identity while promoting economic development.

Learning from Main Street Kingstree's success



Main Street Kingstree leads revitalization efforts to enhance economic opportunities through streetscaping, rehabilitating buildings, and hosting community events. Their efforts boost property values, reduce vacancies, and preserve the town's unique history and traditions. St. Stephen should connect with this organization to learn how their organization was founded and how it operates.

Objective R2.3 - Leverage the EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant for strategic redevelopment

- Utilize funding to evaluate properties in prime commercial areas within the Town, unlocking their potential for redevelopment.
- Actively seek further grants and funding opportunities to sustain momentum, allowing the Town to continue remediation and redevelopment efforts for properties that have been assessed.
- Engage with private developers and investors to turn assessed Brownfield sites into vibrant economic hubs, aligning redevelopment with the Town's vision.

Revitalize

Goal R3: Attract clientele to Town Center

Objective R3.1 - Create a pedestrian-friendly Town Center

- Increase pedestrian safety by installing crosswalks, walk/bike paths, pedestrian signage, bike racks.
- Bury utility lines on Main Street to increase room for pedestrians and enhance aesthetics.
- Improve separation between Main Street and train tracks by installing safety railings and/or natural separation with addition of landscaping to beautify.
- Invest in public open spaces for people to safely congregate and activate areas with events

Objective R3.2 - Promote the Town Center

- Capitalize on travelers of U.S. Hwy. 52 by installing wayfinding signage promoting the amenities found in Town Center including businesses and historical and cultural assets.
- Develop strong branding for the Town that highlights amenities, historical and cultural assets, small town charm and outdoor recreation potential.
- Develop a digital marketing campaign to promote the Town Center as a shopping and dining destination to residents of Greater St. Stephen and nearby areas.
- Encourage local businesses to participate in joint marketing initiatives that highlight the diversity and uniqueness of the Town Center's offerings.

BEFORE INVESTMENT



Photo/City of North Charleston

AUGUST 2024



Photo/BCDCOG

BEFORE INVESTMENT



Photo/City of North Charleston

AUGUST 2024



Photo/BCDCOG

Revitalizing East Montague Ave: Streetscaping Sparks Park Circle's Economic Rebirth

An example of the positive outcomes of municipal investment in streetscaping and pedestrian improvements can be seen on East Montague Avenue in the Park Circle neighborhood of North Charleston. The area between Park Circle and Virginia Avenue was refurbished in 2004. Following this initial investment, the corridor quickly began to reemerge as a vibrant main street, featuring shops, restaurants, and offices. In more recent years, significant investment has continued with the construction of Ingevity's corporate headquarters and multiple apartment complexes. The relocation of the offices of both the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce and Charleston County Economic Development further illustrates how this once-depressed area has become a focal point for regional economic development.

Prosper

The number one priority voiced by the residents of St. Stephen was attracting new industry and job to St. Stephen. To accomplish this and build a resilient economy that ensures long-term prosperity, St. Stephen must attract diverse range of industrial sectors that brings high-wage jobs close to residents. This must be done while retaining the small town character which current residents enjoy and will be a key asset in attracting future residents and investments.



Goal P1: Attract industry while preserving small town identity and natural environment

Objective P1.1 - Coordinate with Berkeley County Economic Development on industry recruitment

- Focus recruitment on sectors that align with the Town's values, leverage its resources, and complement existing infrastructure, while also supporting the County's broader economic goals.
- Prioritize recruiting a diverse range of industrial sectors to build a resilient economic base, reducing the risk of over-dependence on a single employer.
- Work with Berkeley County to design and implement incentive programs to attract industries aligned with both the Town's and County's long-term development strategies.

Objective P1.2 - Invest in infrastructure improvements that support economic growth

- Work with Berkeley County Water & Sanitation to develop a wastewater allocation policy for the remaining capacity at the St. Stephen Wastewater Treatment Plant ensuring that capacity is balanced between residential housing developments and industrial/commercial growth. This policy should support the Town's long-term vision while preventing overextension of resources.
- Utilize Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and recommendations to invest in commercial areas of the Town to enhance their economic potential with a focus on areas with high visibility, accessibility, and proximity to existing or planned infrastructure.
- Focus on road improvements, signage, and access management to facilitate smoother traffic flow and increase the attractiveness of St. Stephen for new businesses.
- Collaborate with telecommunications providers, S.C. Broadband Office and Lowcountry Digital Equity Coalition to extend high-speed internet access to underserved areas within the Town, prioritizing commercial zones. Improved broadband infrastructure will support business operations, attract tech-driven industries, and enhance the overall quality of life for residents.
- Partner with entities such as Berkeley County, BCDCOG, utility providers and others to develop projects for grant funding from entities such as U.S. Economic Development Administration, Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority.

Unlocking Funding Opportunities through the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission

The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission (SCRC) is a federal and state partnership focused on fostering sustainable communities and driving economic growth across the Southeast Region. The SCRC's State Economic and Infrastructure Development (SEID) funding can be utilized by towns like St. Stephen to support critical projects. For example, the City of Abbeville received \$350,000 in SEID funding for a downtown revitalization project that tackles housing shortages, low household incomes, and outdated infrastructure.

By aligning St. Stephen's projects with SCRC's funding priorities, the Town could gain access to similar financial resources, supporting key initiatives such as industrial site development, infrastructure upgrades, or the revitalization of the Town Center. This would help drive local job creation, attract new investment, and strengthen St. Stephen's overall economic foundation. The BCDCOG is the designated Local Developer District for the SCRC and can assist in project development and grant applications.



Attendees to the public open house on May 16, 2024 at the American Legion Hut. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Objective P1.3 - Encourage community involvement in decision-making processes

- Capitalize on the strength of the community engagement shown by residents by having meetings and events to facilitate discussions on potential developments to gain their input and increase understanding of projects and their potential to benefit to the community.

Objective P1.4 - Designate and preserve green spaces

- Work with regional conservation organizations and Berkeley County to designate protected zones within the Town that preserve critical natural areas. This could include establishing nature reserves, parks, or conservation easements.
- Ensure that new development projects integrate green spaces, parks, and natural buffers to maintain the small-town atmosphere.
- Apply for state, federal, and private conservation grants to fund the acquisition, protection, and maintenance of green spaces and natural areas within St. Stephen.

Goal P2: Preserve and enhance affordable housing options

The affordability of St. Stephen compared to Berkeley County is currently a strength in attracting new residents. These objectives aim to maintain this advantage and prevent rapid housing price increases:

Objective P2.1 - Preserve naturally occurring affordable housing

- Collaborate with local, state, and federal agencies to obtain funding for the preservation and rehabilitation of existing affordable housing units. Explore specific programs such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and the establishment of a Revolving Loan Fund.

Objective P2.2 - Encourage development of new affordable housing

- Provide incentives, such as density bonuses or tax abatements, to developers who include affordable housing units in new residential projects.
- Collaborate with private developers to create mixed-income housing developments that integrate affordable units. Foster early and ongoing dialogue with these partners to align goals and resources.

Goal P3: Attract remote and hybrid workers to St. Stephen

Many companies continue to offer remote and hybrid working options to their employees. A hybrid employee may be more likely to live farther from their job due to the less frequent commutes. St. Stephen could position itself to capitalize on these individuals. Including enhancing the digital infrastructure which has been previously discussed St. Stephen should pursue the following strategies:

Objective P3.1 - Build a remote work-friendly ecosystem

- Develop or support the creation of co-working spaces equipped with high-speed internet, meeting rooms, and comfortable workstations.
- Promote the town's benefits such as affordability, natural beauty, and community atmosphere through targeted marketing campaigns including information on website
- Share testimonials and case studies from remote workers who have successfully relocated to St. Stephen to inspire others.
- Encourage the organization of events for remote and hybrid workers to connect with one another creating a sense of community.



St. Stephen Episcopal Church. (Photo/BCDCOG)

Goal P4: Utilize historical, cultural and natural assets to attract tourists

Objective P4.1 - Promote St. Stephen's historical, cultural and natural assets

- Develop and install informative signage and digital marketing materials highlighting the town's key historical landmarks.
- Engage Explore Charleston (www.CharlestonCVB.com) on how the Town can capitalize on the Charleston region's reputation as a world-renowned tourist destination.
- Target residents of the urbanized areas of Charleston promoting St. Stephen's small town characteristics as an escape from city life only a short drive away.

Objective P4.2 - Establish St. Stephen as a destination for eco and agri-tourism

- Create an advisory council focused on aligning, promoting, and expanding eco and agri-tourism offerings within the St. Stephen area.
- Market St. Stephen as an accessible alternative to mountain getaways, offering coastal residents opportunities to experience nature, outdoor activities, and small town charm.
- Work with local farmers, outdoor recreation businesses, and conservation groups to develop experiences that attract visitors interested in the area's natural beauty and agricultural heritage.

Goal P5: Attract and retain retirees and seniors by strengthen support systems

Objective P5.1 - Improve access to essential services and amenities

- Partner with local healthcare providers to improve access to comprehensive medical services.
- Collaborate with Tri-County Link to expand and improve public transit and ridesharing options specifically for seniors.
- Ensure community centers and recreational facilities offer a diverse range of senior-focused activities, such as fitness classes, social events, and educational programs.
- Promote the development of a variety of housing options tailored to retirees, including independent living communities and assisted living facilities.
- Market St. Stephen as a quiet, small-town community offering a lower cost of living and high quality of life, ideal for retirees seeking an affordable alternative to the urbanized areas of Charleston, with close proximity to coastal amenities and cultural attractions.

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TOWN OF ST. STEPHEN | SANTEE COOPER

BERKELEY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**BERKELEY-CHARLESTON-DORCHESTER
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (BCDCOG)**