

## Chapter 3.5 Population Element

### Element Goal

A socioeconomically diverse and growing population will be accommodated by Charleston County in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner with particular attention to low to moderate income residents.

#### 3.5.1: OVERVIEW

##### Purpose and Intent

*Analysis of historic, current, and future population trends included in this Element identifies the changing needs and preferences of residents of the County. This information is intended to help shape the Future Land Use Plan, and identify future service needs of the population which can be addressed through the Comprehensive Plan.*

#### 3.5.2: BACKGROUND AND INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

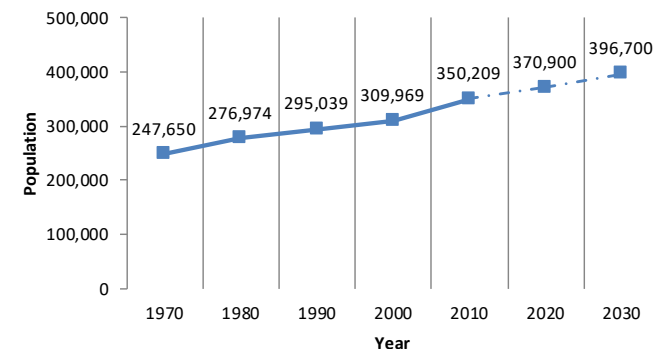
Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update in 2008, changing conditions have greatly impacted the nation. In late 2008, some financial institutions collapsed, and the housing market was drastically affected as home foreclosure and eviction rates skyrocketed. Unemployment rates and poverty levels increased due to prolonged uncertainty in the market. While the financial crisis affected all groups of people and all parts of the country, data since the crisis indicates much of the country is now experiencing a slow and steady economic recovery.

In 2015, a Five-Year review of the Plan was completed and included data from the 2010 Decennial Census and the 2007-2011 Five-Year Estimates from the American Community Survey. This data indicates large shifts in racial diversity and age trends at local, state, and national levels. These demographic trends are further verified with the 2011-2015 American Community Survey data used in this current update to the Comprehensive Plan and should be examined to better accommodate and plan for the needs and impacts of our current and future residents.

##### Population Estimates, Trends, and Forecasts

Of all the regions in the United States, the South has consistently seen the most growth in recent decades. Population growth in the Southeast has been more than twice as fast since

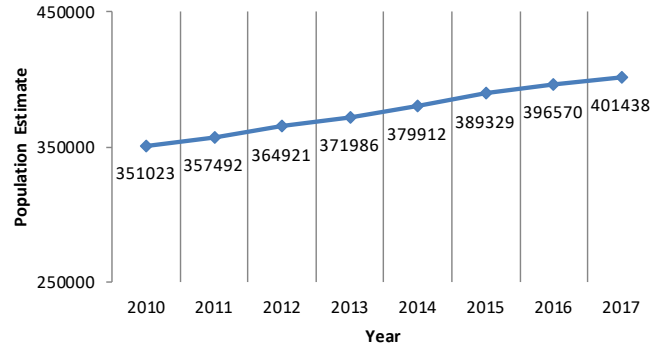
FIGURE 3.5.1: COUNTYWIDE POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS, 1970-2030



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010; South Carolina Department of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs, South Carolina Population and Population Projections 2000-2030.

2001 as in the Northeast, a trend that is projected to continue into the next decade. While the U.S. Census Bureau does not provide population projections at the county level, the South Carolina Department of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs provides county population projections through the year 2030, as shown in *Figure 3.5.1: Countywide Population Trends and Projections, 1970 - 2030*. This chart shows that from 2000 to 2010, the population increased by 13 percent (40,240 new residents), and from 2010 to 2030, the County's population is projected to increase by 13.3 percent to 396,700 residents (46,491 new residents). It should be noted that the U.S. Census Bureau does provide county population estimates, as shown in *Figure 3.5.2, Charleston County Annual Estimates of Resident Population*. These estimates differ greatly from

FIGURE 3.5.2: CHARLESTON COUNTY ANNUAL ESTIMATES OF RESIDENT POPULATION



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

the population projections shown in *Figure 3.5.1*, and the disparity is clearly illustrated by the U.S. Census Bureau estimate of 401,438 Charleston County residents for year 2017 compared to the South Carolina Department of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs estimate of 396,700 Charleston County residents for the year 2030.

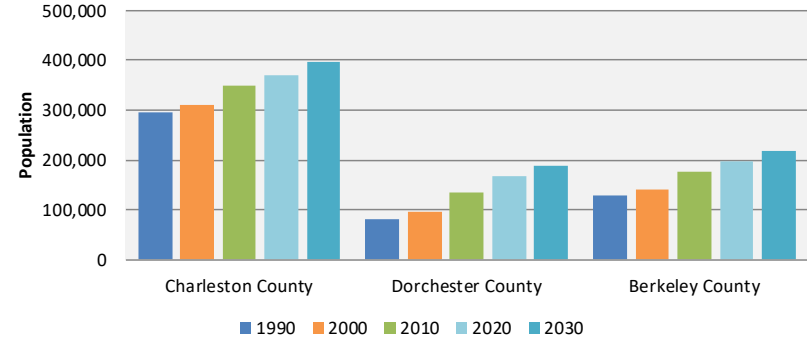
Similar to Charleston County, Berkeley and Dorchester Counties' populations have continued to increase and are projected to increase into 2030, as demonstrated in *Figure 3.5.3: Tri-County Populations, 1990-2030*. *Figure 3.5.4: Municipal Populations, 1980-2015*, shows the steady population growth that has occurred within the county's three largest municipalities over the last 30 years. The resulting annual growth rate for the City of Charleston, Town of Mt. Pleasant and City of North Charleston, is 2.1 percent, 9.2 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively.

**Municipal Growth Rates**

Since the 1970s, municipalities within Charleston County have experienced not only natural population growth, but also substantial growth from the expansion of municipal boundaries by annexation.

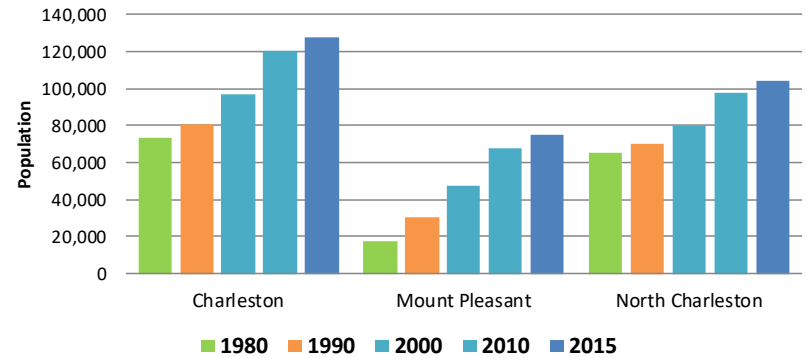
*Figure 3.5.5: Charleston County Land Area* demonstrates the proportions of unincorporated and incorporated land in the County. As evidenced, 68 percent of the County's land area (approximately 708 square miles) is unincorporated, and the majority of the unincorporated portion is located in the Rural Area. *Figure 3.5.6: Municipal Growth* indicates the growth of municipalities as a result of annexation since 2003. The Cities of Charleston and North Charleston, as well as the Town of Mount Pleasant are illustrated, as they are the largest municipalities in the County with more vigorous annexation policies.

FIGURE 3.5.3: TRI-COUNTY POPULATIONS, 1990-2030



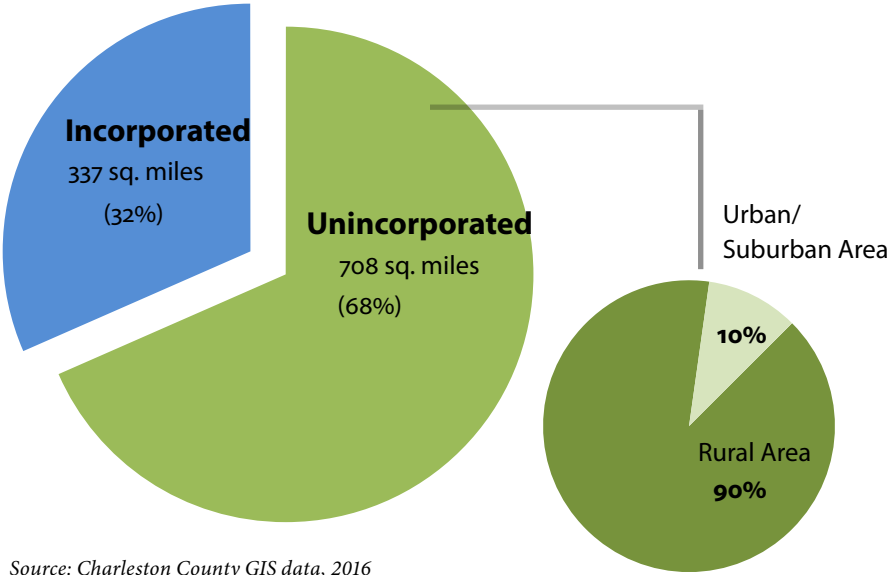
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010; South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control - Vital Records Department, Population Counts and Projections 2000 - 2030.

FIGURE 3.5.4: MUNICIPAL POPULATIONS, 1980-2015



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

FIGURE 3.5.5: CHARLESTON COUNTY LAND AREA, 2016



Source: Charleston County GIS data, 2016

**Population Composition**

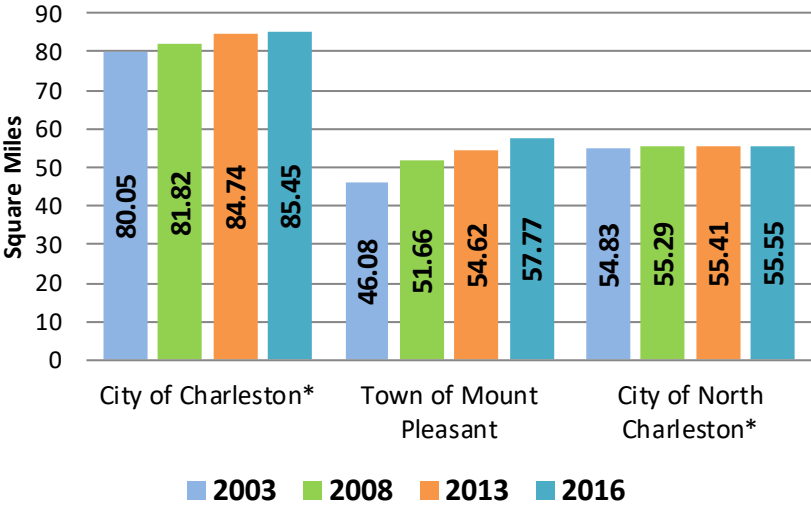
Recent Census Bureau data revealed that the United States population is diversifying in many ways. Racial and ethnic groups are increasing; generational gaps are more prominent; and lifestyle changes are resulting in more heterogeneous households. The County’s population continues to diversify as well, and the shifting demographics will affect County policies and change the provision of services. The following sections illustrate the County’s changing population.

**Age Distribution**

Charleston County’s population is aging, a trend also seen in other parts of the country, as illustrated in *Figure 3.5.7: Charleston County Age Profile*. From 2000 to 2015, the percentage of residents age 45 years and older increased from 34 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2015 (by 43,704 residents). To plan for an increasing proportion of older residents, the County should be aware of changing transportation and housing needs. Access to public transportation and housing that is affordable to those on a fixed income and close to services will be crucial to serving this age group.

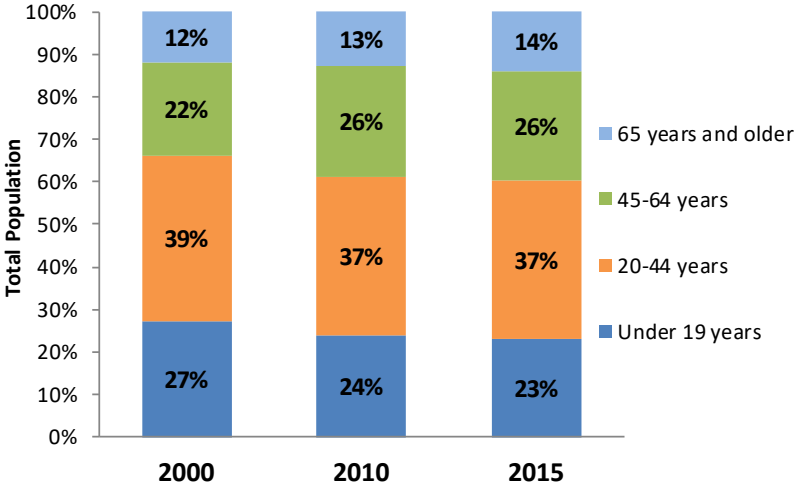
In 2015, 37 percent (138,298 residents) of the County’s population was between the ages of 20 and 44 years. This younger group, mostly Millennials (those born between the early 1980s and early 2000s) and Generation Xers (those born between the early 1960s and early 1980s), contains more college-educated residents. Charleston County’s growth

FIGURE 3.5.6: MUNICIPAL GROWTH OF LARGEST THREE MUNICIPALITIES



Source: Charleston County GIS data, 2016  
\*Note: Municipal size is reflective of portions of jurisdictions located within Charleston County only.

FIGURE 3.5.7: CHARLESTON COUNTY AGE PROFILE



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

in knowledge-based industries will continue to draw younger generations to the Lowcountry. Lifestyle preferences are distinct among younger residents, as many prefer dense urban and suburban settings with opportunities for walkable communities and public transportation, which has implications for land use planning. Much of the overall population now prefers to communicate in different ways. The County should identify new mechanisms (such as social media outlets and innovative community workshops) to engage the overall population in the community planning process.

In 2015, 23 percent (85,824 residents) of the County’s population was under the age of 20. Educational and employment opportunities should continue to be available for the County’s youth, as the County strives to retain its young residents.

**Racial Composition**

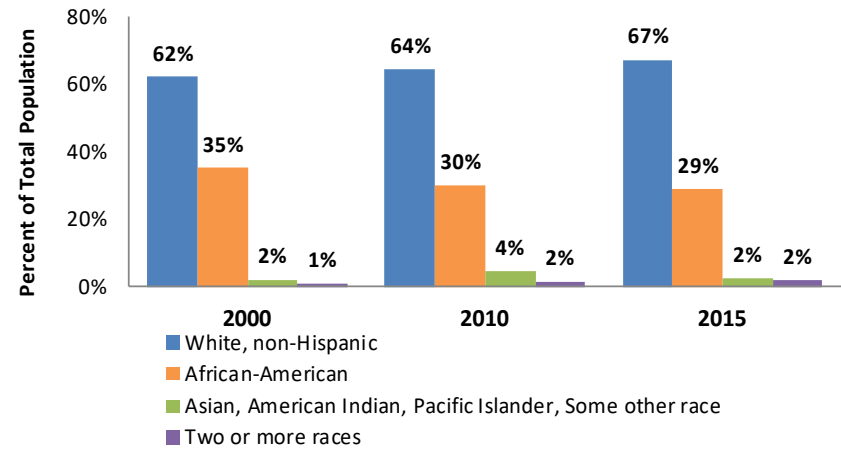
Figure 3.5.8 displays the historic racial composition of the County. From 2000 to 2015, the African-American race category decreased six percent, the Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander race categories collectively remained about the same, and the multiracial category increased by one percent. The White, non-Hispanic race category increased five percent from 2000 to 2015. It is worth noting that this demographic shift in the White, non-Hispanic race category does not parallel the national trend.

Figure 3.5.9 depicts the demographic shift in the Hispanic population. Minority populations, specifically the Hispanic population, are expected to increase more rapidly in future years due to higher birth rates among this group and declining birth rates among the White population. The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2043 there will actually be no majority race in the United States. The older population will continue to be predominately non-Hispanic white; however, by 2018 it is projected that minorities will make up more than half of the children under 18 in the United States.

**Gender**

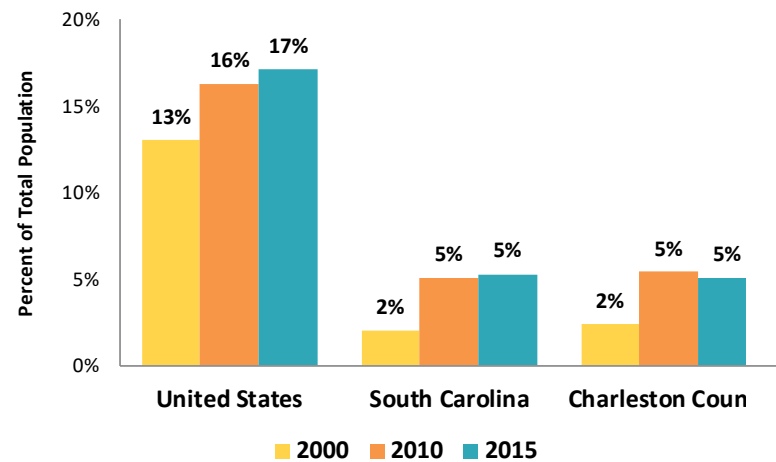
In 2000 the county population contained 3.3 percent more females than males, and this gap narrowed to 2.9 percent in 2010. According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, in 2015 females continued to outnumber males in the County, comprising approximately 52 percent of the population.

FIGURE 3.5.8: CHARLESTON COUNTY RACIAL PROFILE, 2000-2015



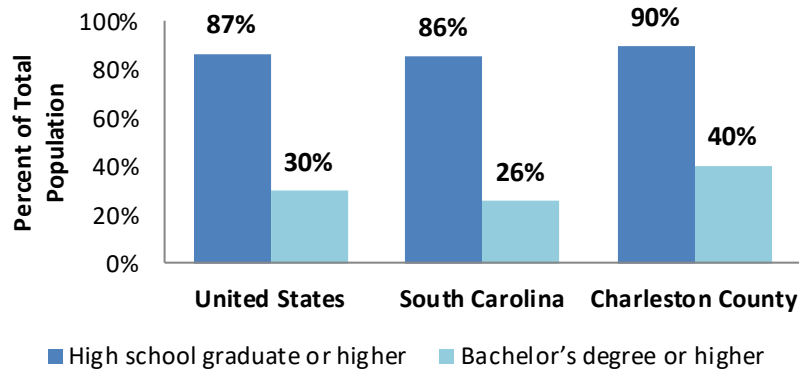
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

FIGURE 3.5.9: HISPANIC POPULATION IN CHARLESTON COUNTY, 2000-2015



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

FIGURE 3.5.10: CHARLESTON COUNTY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (OVER 25 YEARS OF AGE), 2015

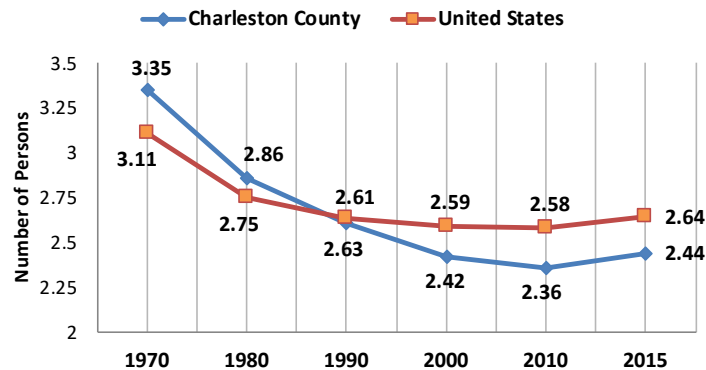


Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

**Education**

The Charleston County population has generally achieved a higher level of education when compared to other counties in South Carolina. In 2015, approximately 90 percent of the population in the County over 25 years of age were high school graduates while approximately 40 percent of the population in the County over 25 years of age held a bachelor's degree or higher, as illustrated in *Figure 3.5.10*. The larger population of educated residents could be attributed to the influx of new residents drawn to knowledge-based career opportunities as well as the many higher educational institutions that are located in the region. A significant proportion of the County's population is actively working towards meeting educational goals. In 2015, the total enrollment for all higher education institutions in the region was over 40,000 students. In addition, in 2015, the Charleston County School District enrolled nearly 50,000 students in public schools, with an additional 13,000 school-aged children in the County either attending private school or being home-schooled. For more enrollment figures, please see *Table 3.8.1* in the Community Facilities Element.

FIGURE 3.5.11: AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE, 1970-2015

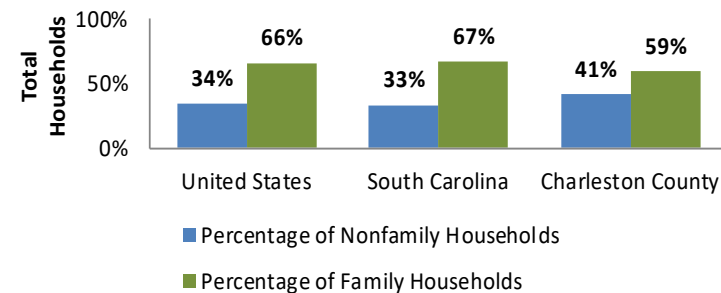


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970-2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

**Household Size & Composition**

As reflected in *Figure 3.5.11*, while Charleston County's average household size has shown a consistent decrease from 1970 to 2010, more recent data shows a slight rebound in household size. In 2015, the average household size had increased to 2.44 persons per household from 2.36 persons per household in 2010. *Figure 3.5.12* shows that family households (defined as a married couple or single parent and at least one child) comprised approximately 59 percent of the total households. The remaining 41 percent were non-family households, defined as single-person households or households of multiple unrelated individuals.

FIGURE 3.5.12: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, 2015



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2025, single-person households will equal family households nationally, and by 2050, they will exceed the number of family households. Changing household sizes will have long-term implications on housing unit size, type, and location. Smaller, more energy-efficient homes may be more preferential.

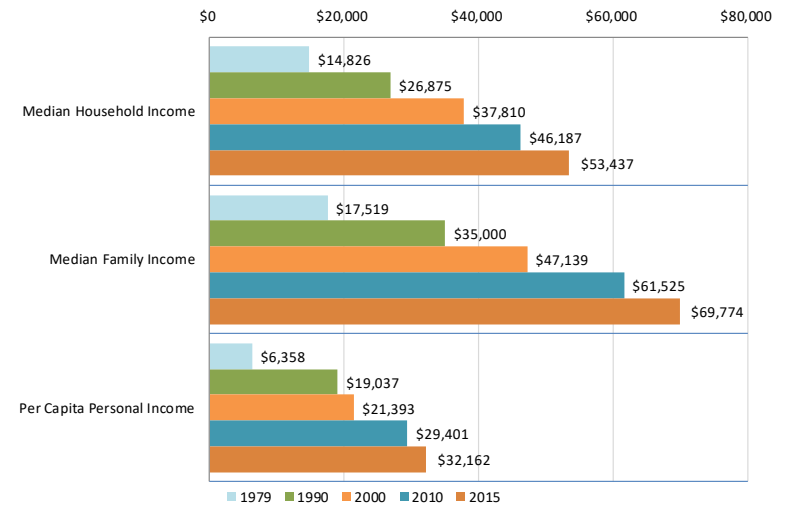
**Income Levels**

Since 2008, the local economy has been recovering from one of the worst recessions in recent years when unemployment rates increased nationwide, and the housing and financial markets collapsed. Charleston County experienced a slowing of the local economy; however, employment growth remained somewhat steady compared to other parts of the state and nation, as illustrated in the Economic Development Element. To better understand the income levels of the County’s residents, *Figure 3.5.13* illustrates the Median Household Income, Median Family Income, and Per Capita Personal Income. *Figure 3.5.14* compares the change in Median Household Income from 1990 to 2015 for Charleston County, South Carolina, and the United States. *Table 3.5.1* indicates the median household income for Charleston County adjusted for inflation.

**Poverty Levels**

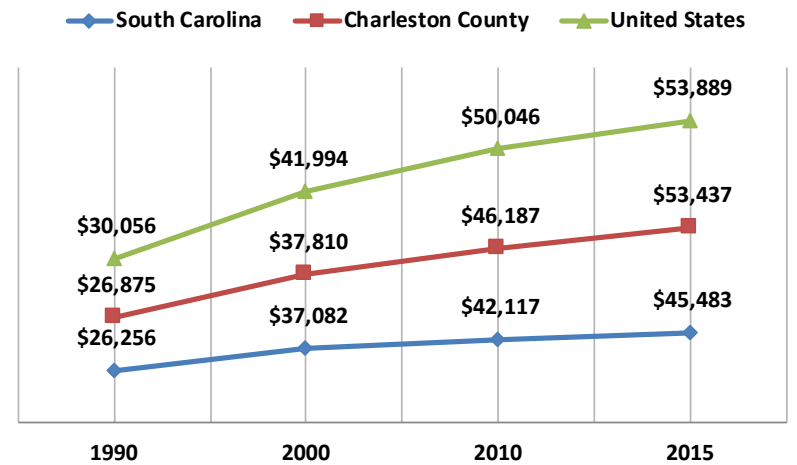
In 2015, the poverty guideline for a family of three was \$20,090, as determined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Based on this guideline, nearly 15 percent of the families in Charleston County (approximately 21,758 families) had incomes below the poverty level, and nearly 17 percent of all people in Charleston County (approximately 64,139 people) had incomes below the poverty level. The majority of the poorest residents in Charleston County live in the unincorporated areas of the County. *Figure 3.5.15* illustrates the income ranges of households in the County in 2000, 2010, and 2015, and indicates that wages are growing in the County. The Charleston Regional

FIGURE 3.5.13: CHARLESTON COUNTY INCOME CHARACTERISTICS, 1979-2015



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1979, 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015. Note: Household and family income includes the incomes of everyone in the household or family 15 years and older. The measurement for the Census Bureau’s per capita personal income is based on household surveys. These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

FIGURE 3.5.14: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, 1990-2015



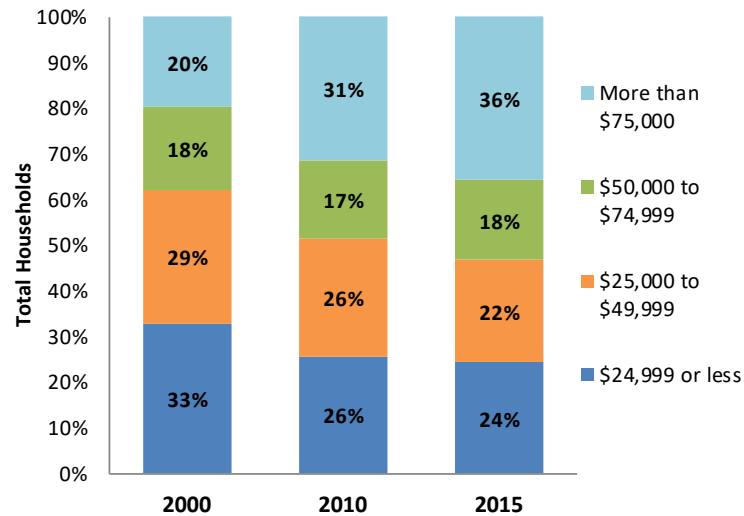
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015. These figures have not been adjusted for inflation.

TABLE 3.5.1: MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME, CHARLESTON COUNTY, 1990-2015 (IN 2015 DOLLARS)

|                           | 1990      | 2000      | 2010      | 2015      |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Median Household Income   | \$ 26,875 | \$ 37,810 | \$ 46,187 | \$ 53,437 |
| Inflation Adjusted (2015) | \$ 48,736 | \$ 52,042 | \$ 50,203 | \$ 53,437 |

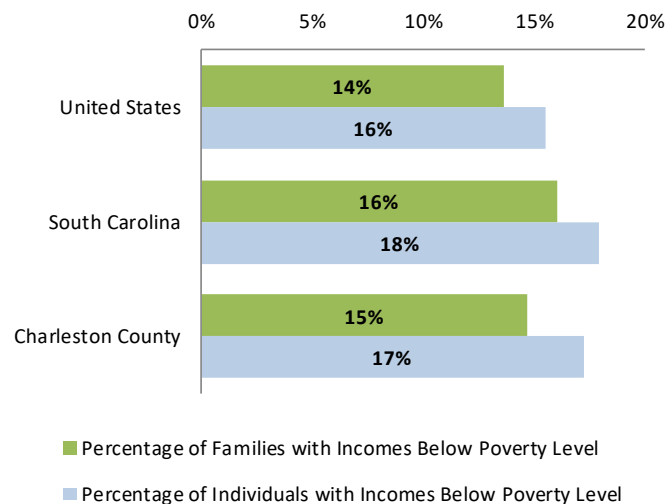
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

FIGURE 3.5.15: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME, CHARLESTON COUNTY, 2000-2015



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2010; American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

FIGURE 3.5.16: POVERTY LEVELS BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA, 2015



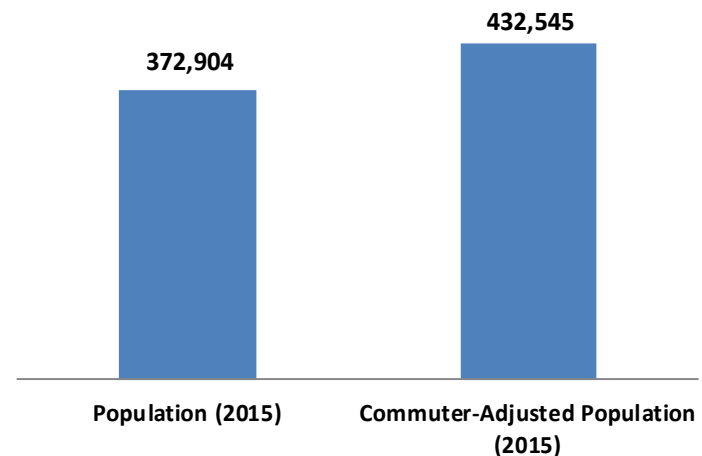
Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

Development Alliance (CRDA) reported in the 2015 *Economic Scorecard* that the region’s wages grew 32.3 percent from 2005 to 2015; however, the region’s wages are only 85 percent of the national average wage. If the region’s housing costs remain high, it will continue to be difficult for the County’s residents to afford to rent or buy homes. *Figure 3.5.16: Poverty Levels by Geographic Area* compares the percentage of individuals and families with incomes below the poverty level in Charleston County to both the state and nation. As illustrated, Charleston County has slightly fewer families with incomes below poverty level than South Carolina as a whole; however, poverty levels are higher for all individuals in Charleston County than the United States.

**Commuter-Adjusted and Transient Populations**

Because the County not only serves residents, but also visitors (daily commuters, tourists and students), it is important to understand how the County’s population is impacted by these populations. The concept of the commuter-adjusted population, also known as the “daytime population”, refers to the number of people who are present in an area during typical business hours, and this is in contrast to the “resident” population, which refers to people who reside in a given area and are typically present during the evening and nighttime hours. Since this number is calculated based on commuting (Journey to Work) data collected by the census bureau, it only reflects the daily influx of workers into the County. *Figure 3.5.17: Commuter-Adjusted Population* shows that for 2015, Charleston County’s daytime population of 432,545 is nearly 16 percent higher than the “resident population”, likely a reflection of the County’s role as a major employment center for the region. For example, the Charleston Regional Development

FIGURE 3.5.17: COMMUTER-ADJUSTED POPULATION, 2015



Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimate, 2011-2015

Agency's 2016 *Regional Economic Scorecard* notes a significant increase in STEM-intensive (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) Advanced Industries occupations, with these technical jobs encompassing aerospace and automotive manufacturing, healthcare services and technologies, and information technology.

In addition to the daytime population increase, Charleston County also has a large transient population. It is both a major tourist destination and home to many public and private higher education institutions. With regard to tourism, according to the College of Charleston Office of Tourism Analysis, "In 2015, the Charleston area welcomed an estimated 5.15 million visitors." These visitors, whether here for recreation or business, spent an average of \$211 per visitor per day in 2015, resulting in a total economic impact of over \$3.7 billion. Charleston County not only hosts vacationers and businesspersons, but students from all over the world attend school at the more than two dozen college and university campuses in the Charleston region. These important statistics based on commuter-adjusted and transient populations are useful for transportation planning, emergency planning, and other policy-making.



### 3.5.3: POPULATION ELEMENT GOAL

*A socioeconomically diverse and growing population will be accommodated by Charleston County in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner with particular attention to low to moderate income residents.*

### Population Element Needs

Population Element needs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Monitoring population and cultural shifts and national trends;
- Developing policies to meet the needs of the County's population; and
- Encouraging diversity within communities.

### 3.5.4: POPULATION ELEMENT STRATEGIES AND TIME FRAMES

The County should undertake the following strategic actions in support of the Vision and Goals of this Plan. These implementation strategies will be reviewed a minimum of every five years and updated every ten years from the date of adoption of this Plan.

- P 1. Monitor population growth trends and demographic shifts to guide future updates to the *Comprehensive Plan*.
- P 2. Develop land use strategies and implementation measures for more resilient communities.
- P 3. Support a diverse population through land development regulations that accommodate a range of housing, transportation, and employment opportunities.
- P 4. Adopt innovative planning and zoning techniques such as Form-Based Zoning and Multiple Use Overlay Zoning District regulations that encourage diverse communities and respect culture and history.
- P 5. Continue to identify new mechanisms (such as social media outlets and innovative community workshops) to engage the citizens in the community planning process.

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