



Demetrius Brown, an employee of Carolina Visuals in Colleton County

South Carolina Promise Zone

Strategic Action Plan, Executive Summary



Opportunity is here.

A Project led by SouthernCarolina Regional Development Alliance



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20
YEARS
1996-2016



Vernita F. Dore, USDA Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture, addresses the crowd of Promise Zone partners at the kick-off luncheon in Allendale

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MISSION

The mission of the South Carolina Promise Zone is to reduce poverty in Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper Counties by working collaboratively to take advantage of priority federal grant opportunities. Partners and supporters of the Promise Zone are focusing efforts to improve the quality of life of residents by growing jobs, leveraging private capital for economic prosperity, improving education, reducing crime, expanding health care and creating more affordable housing.

HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This Strategic Action Plan has two overall uses. First, it is a long-term map that outlines transformational ideas and projects developed over six months through extensive collaborative efforts. The plan focuses on ways to make dramatic changes to accomplish the Promise Zone goal of reducing poverty in the region.

The plan is also a tool for organizations applying for grants through the Promise Zone process. The plan provides specific documentation in an easy-to-use format to reference big ideas, projects and specific goals in submitting any applications for funding. If grant applicants need more specific details from strategic planning sessions, they can find additional documentation in the longer Strategic Action Framework (available online at www.scpromisezone.org) from which this action plan was developed.

PROMISE ZONE TEAM

The Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance is the lead organization coordinating Promise Zone efforts through eight targeted workgroups, which meet regularly to evaluate progress in meeting overall goals, update team members and review collaborative efforts on major projects.

The Promise Zone effort has generated **broad community support** since July 2015:

- More than 650 people attended six county-wide town hall meetings to explore Promise Zone opportunities.
- Partners and supporters met collectively and in eight workgroup sessions to develop collaborative strategies to yield transformational change in the Promise Zone.
- Top elected and appointed leaders from the six counties met with the lead organization to offer substantive input on big projects that can make a major difference to people in the region.
- In January 2016, a dozen regional and national leaders in rural and community development convened to review the Strategic Action Plan and made substantive suggestions to facilitate implementation. Involving outside thinkers, in an advisory capacity, was unprecedented among Promise Zones.
- The South Carolina Promise Zone provides continuing outreach to communities through in-person meetings and a rich Internet presence to keep stakeholders engaged and aware of opportunities for funding and assistance.



County officials met with national leaders during the ThinkBig conference



More than 650 people gathered for town hall meetings held in all six counties

STRATEGIC VALUES

The Promise Zone team is committed to making the most of grant and funding opportunities based on these strategic values:

- **Collaboration.** Efforts must be collaborative and seek to ensure broad success by tapping available resources offered by government, non-profit, business and faith-based organizations.
- **Creative.** While collaboration is a key to success of major projects, partners and supporters must also be creative and assertive to identify, develop and launch individual projects, and apply for grants to implement them.
- **Community-driven.** Work must be driven by a focus on compelling, real needs of communities; developing leadership and community development skills and resources.
- **Regionally-focused.** At the same time, projects should be regionally-focused and comprehensive to effectively drive the efforts to reduce poverty.
- **Asset-based.** Activities must build on the Promise Zone's existing assets.
- **Sustainable and transformative.** Team efforts will focus on making sustainable and transformative change in communities across the Promise Zone region.
- **Accountable.** Efforts must be focused on measurable, continuous improvements in an environment of accountability and transparency.

LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATIONAL IDEAS

The Strategic Action Plan includes dozens of big ideas that Promise Zone partners and supporters can work on to inspire change in the region. There are, however, a few transformational, long-term possibilities that could, if implemented across workgroups, generate big changes. By their nature, these ideas are broad and are included in components of specific projects outlined in the two sections that follow. As those projects mature, it's important to keep big, transformational goals in mind too:

IDEA 1: Develop regional high-speed, **broadband Internet networks** that provide access to citizens throughout the Promise Zone. Having these networks will help achieve economic development and community development goals (Goals 1, 3) by making the region more attractive to business growth, thereby reducing poverty and creating more community opportunities.

IDEA 2: Attract public and private investment to develop a **shovel-ready mega-site** for industrial development in the aeronautics, automotive, logistics manufacturing or technology clusters, and focus on broadening the impact by attracting related suppliers. Boosting investment would further goals to increase economic development (Goal 3) and leverage private capital (Goal 7) for major changes to grow jobs and reduce poverty.

IDEA 3: Build a **sustainability culture** throughout the Promise Zone that takes advantage of regional assets, particularly in fields related to agriculture, technology, tourism and energy. Pushing this culture throughout the Promise Zone should raise standards of living by promoting community development (Goal 1), economic development and jobs (Goal 3), adding more affordable housing (Goal 6) and attracting private investment (Goal 7).

IDEA 4: Transform **public education and health care** through innovation, collaboration and hard work. Tackling projects in these areas will reduce poverty and help to achieve goals to improve educational outcomes (Goal 4) and health outcomes (Goal 5).



Andy Brack, Center for a Better South President, addresses the Promise Zone partners

NEAR-TERM TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECTS

As a way to jump-start efforts to lead transformational change throughout the Promise Zone, SouthernCarolina, partners and supporters are focusing efforts on six major regional projects to seek to achieve near-term success in supporting the mission of the Promise Zone. Projects include:

A. Expanding high-speed **broadband Internet** across the Promise Zone. As outlined above, such networks would help reduce poverty by growing jobs through community development (Goal 1) and economic development (Goal 3).

B. Investing in a **Forensics Lab and Training Center** to focus on crime-reduction efforts through a regional focus. This investment should make the Promise Zone safer, which would achieve goals related to reducing crime (Goal 2).

C. Developing a **mega-site** in the region to attract a large industrial or manufacturing enterprise. Property has been identified with outstanding transportation access. A shovel-ready mega-site will have a transformational impact on the Promise Zone because it will attract major industries to invest and bring hundreds of new jobs, which is a major component of Goal 3. SouthernCarolina is the initial lead advisor.

D. Creating a broad **Learning/Vocational Center of Excellence** to serve regional education and workforce training needs. By improving education for K-12 students and bettering workforce training opportunities for adults, the Promise Zone will become more attractive for job growth. This initiative will help to accomplish Goals 4 (education and child development) and 8 (workforce development). SouthernCarolina is working in consultation with the S.C. Technical College System.

E. Building a **Medical Center of Excellence** to deliver more accessible, high-quality medical services, including regional telemedicine services. Better medical services should lower healthcare costs and improve the long-term health of Promise Zone residents, a major component of Goal 5.

F. Establishing a **Technology Village and Landing Pad** for emerging foreign companies in a central location in partnership with Clemson University serving as a regional technology headquarters with satellites across the Promise Zone. Creating this partnership will grow jobs and promote a sustainability culture in the region by promoting several goals in community development (1), economic development (3), private capital (7) and workforce development (8).



Vernita F. Dore addresses the Promise Zone partners

INNOVATION PROJECTS

Throughout the strategic planning process, partners, supporters and community members identified many other innovative projects that could transform the lives of people who live in the Promise Zone. These projects merit special mention because they outline the type of innovative, game-changing initiatives that could augment the transformational ideas and projects outlined above.

As these and other projects get off the ground, there should be an added spin-off impact; people in the Promise Zone will take more pride in their region and adopt an ongoing attitude of success, which should breed more success with other projects. In the years ahead, as conditions change, these Innovation Projects likely will move toward reality:

- Create more affordable **housing** (Goals 1.3, 6).
- Grow the green **economy** (Goals 1.1, 1.2, 3.2, 6.2, 7.4).
- Continue to boost **infrastructure** improvements (Goals 1.4, 2.1, 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 4.4, 5.3, 5.4, 6, 8.1).
- Develop the **Jasper port** (Goal 3.7).
- Create impactful **community centers** (Goals 1.5, 5.4).
- Attract more **teachers** (Goal 4.2).
- Improve **health** networks (Goal 5).
- Improve **vocational training** (Goal 8).

WORKGROUP GOALS

Eight workgroups will coordinate the vast majority of work by identifying and coordinating grant applications to reduce poverty in two ways. First, partners and supporters, each of which is expected to serve on at least one workgroup, will identify and develop grant applications for projects that they will administer to achieve internal and Promise Zone goals. Second, workgroups will collaborate on broader projects and make coordinated grant applications to achieve broader, transformational goals. Below is an outline of each workgroup, its members and major goals. More detailed information and discussion can be found in the Promise Zone's Strategic Action Framework.

1: Community Development goals: Reduce poverty by focusing on development of Promise Zone communities, including improvement and beautification of neighborhoods, and expansion of shopping, entertainment and recreational opportunities.

- **1.1:** Develop eco-tourism opportunities.
- **1.2:** Expand agricultural resources to develop an agricultural food hub.
- **1.3:** Remove blight and expand affordable housing.
- **1.4:** Improve existing water, sewer and road infrastructure.
- **1.5:** Construct or improve recreational facilities and community centers.
- **1.6:** Strengthen the community development infrastructure in Promise Zone communities by engaging and training diverse leaders and volunteers through programs that focus on leadership development, asset development and other community growth skills.



Kirk Randazzo, Director of the Carolina Leadership Initiative, facilitated eight strategic planning sessions

2: Crime Prevention and Law Enforcement goals: Reduce poverty by cutting crime, increasing public safety and developing a regional and holistic approach to crime prevention.

- 2.1: Work with local, state and federal officials to develop a multipurpose forensics lab and training facility.
- 2.2: Develop programs to give incentives to citizens for law enforcement careers, including ways to forgive student debt.
- 2.3: Fund regional prosecutors and intelligence-based law enforcement programs.
- 2.4: Seek support for additional law enforcement training programs.

3: Economic Development goals: Reduce poverty by developing business and attracting public and private investment to grow jobs and decrease unemployment.

- 3.1: Create widespread regional access to high-speed, broadband Internet.
- 3.2: Establish a “Technology Village and Landing Pad” to attract high-tech investment and jobs.
- 3.3: Develop competitive industrial sites and buildings, particularly those focusing on communications, technology, distribution, energy and telecommunications. Efforts should include development of a mega-site to attract large industries.
- 3.4: Work with state and federal officials to provide additional business incentives targeted to rural communities.
- 3.5: Expand transportation infrastructure, including expansion of runways to accommodate jets and connecting existing rail lines to more transportation opportunities.
- 3.6: Improve existing water, sewer, road and airport infrastructure.
- 3.7: Establish the Jasper port.
- 3.8: Establish a regional wetlands bank.

4: K-12 Education and Early Childhood Development goals: Reduce poverty through a holistic approach to education at all levels that prepares citizens for 21st century careers.

- 4.1: Establish comprehensive training centers in high schools to connect educational and training opportunities directly to business.
- 4.2: Establish a “Teacher Village” that develops strategies and programs to provide teachers with affordable housing as a way to attract more people into the region.
- 4.3: Work with state and local officials to develop world-class programs for local schools.
- 4.4: Renovate or construct state-of-the-art school facilities throughout the region.

5: Health Care goals: Reduce poverty by ensuring all people have access to affordable health care services, by promoting healthy living and by reducing chronic health problems.

- 5.1: Establish a regional medical center of excellence, including emergency treatment facilities in each county.
- 5.2: Establishing regional mobile health units to reach people where they live for treatment and health education.
- 5.3: Build and renovate facilities to ensure effective and efficient health care delivery throughout the region.
- 5.4: Expand community health centers and networks, including vigorous use of telemedicine services.
- 5.5: Promote healthier living and lifestyles.
- 5.6: Increase access to healthcare by attracting providers to the region.

6: Housing goals: Reduce poverty by providing more affordable housing, renovating existing homes and reducing blight to foster community pride.

- 6.1: Establish a regional trust fund to support home-buyers and encourage private investment.
- 6.2: Establish a broad home revitalization program focusing on renovation, energy efficiency and development of sustainable local jobs in housing.
- 6.3: Develop a home co-op or facility to allow the construction industry to take advantage of local materials and talent.
- 6.4: Provide transitional housing support and services.

7: Private Capital goals: Reduce poverty by leveraging private capital, attracting private investments, and encouraging local engagement and ownership of local markets to create jobs and provide self-employment opportunities.

- 7.1: Establish a Promise Zone Investment Fund or “Enterprise Bank” to encourage and support private investment in the region.
- 7.2: Develop a major regional attraction to transform the region into a destination.
- 7.3: Establish programs and relationships to attract international investment.
- 7.4: Invest agricultural projects in a coordinated way to develop a food hub.

8: Workforce Development goals: Reduce poverty by providing sustainable employment with competitive wages and by educating area citizens to meet industry needs.

- 8.1: Establish a dual Learning/Vocational Center of Excellence as a one-stop shop to provide education and training needed by existing and new industry.
- 8.2: Establish links for vocational training in high schools with post-secondary technical training through shared facilities and programs.
- 8.3: Develop a broad employability program to support youth apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, drug-prevention programs, summer camps for skills, prison rehabilitation and training program.

PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

- Allendale County ALIVE
- Center for a Better South
- Coastal Conservation League
- The Corporation for Community and Economic Development United, Inc.
- Denmark Technical College
- Electrical Cooperatives of S.C.
- EdVenture Children’s Museum
- Envision South Carolina
- Family Solutions of the Lowcountry
- GrowFood Carolina
- Local law enforcement agencies
- Lowcountry Area Health Education Center
- Lowcountry Council of Governments
- Lower Savannah Council of Governments
- Palmetto Agribusiness Council
- Palmetto Project
- Savannah River Rural Health Network
- SCANA
- Several private banks
- S.C. Arts Commission
- S.C. Association of Community Economic Development
- S.C. Community Loan Fund
- S.C. Council on Competitiveness
- S.C. Department of Agriculture
- S.C. Department of Commerce
- S.C. Department of Education
- S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control
- S.C. Power Team
- S.C. Regional Housing Authority #3
- S.C. Sustainability Institute
- S.C. Technical College System
- S.C. Victim Assistance Network
- State of S.C. 2nd Circuit Solicitor’s Office
- State of S.C. 14th Circuit Solicitor’s Office
- SouthernCarolina Regional Development Alliance
- Technical College of the Lowcountry
- Transform S.C.
- USC Office of Economic Engagement
- USC Salkehatchie
- USC Salkehatchie Leadership Institute
- Voorhees College

(as of March 1st 2016)



Promise Zone partners attended a kick-off luncheon



Eight strategic planning sessions were held among the partners



Vernita F. Dore, USDA Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Agriculture, addresses the crowd at SCA's Annual Celebration in May, 2015



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CONTACT

If you want more information or have questions about the South Carolina Promise Zone visit the website www.SCPromiseZone.org



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