



SINCE THE ORIGINAL 2008 CASE STUDY, ALLENDALE REMAINS FOCUSED ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE OFFERS A VARIETY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO CURRENT AND FUTURE LEADERS IN ALLENDALE AND THE SURROUNDING REGION. THE TOWN HAS ALSO FOCUSED ON ATTRACTING EMPLOYERS IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY TO CREATE JOBS AND SUPPORT THE ECONOMY.

Challenges

In 2019, there were just over 3,000 people living in Allendale with a median household income of \$19,463. This is a decrease from \$22,946 in 2013. This is also lower than the median household income in Allendale County which is \$27,185. The proportion of people living below the poverty line in Allendale is 34.5% - higher than the national average of 12.3%.¹

In the years since the original case study, Allendale has been impacted by the rural brain drain, a phenomenon in which young, educated people leave rural towns in favor of urban areas. The town struggles to attract workers and relies heavily on government aid to support its economy.

The Leadership Institute

The University of Salkehatchie Leadership Institute serves a seven-county area in South Carolina known as the Salkehatchie region. This area includes Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Colleton, Jasper, Beaufort, and Hampton counties. In 2008, the Institute had six full-time employees and four focus areas: leadership development, community development, economic/business development, and governmental awareness/civic engagement. However, the Institute has faced challenges over the years as state funding for the program ran out and staff gradually left the program. Now, the Institute only has one full time staff member – its director, Jackson Alexander. He says the Institute’s primary

¹ U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Allendale County, South Carolina. (n.d.). Census Bureau QuickFacts. Retrieved April 23, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/allendalecountysouthcarolina?>

focus is business and economic development, but he hopes to grow the program to include the original focus areas as well.²



The Leadership Institute currently offers two main programs: Leadership Salkehatchie, and the Youth Leadership Program. Leadership Salkehatchie offers leadership development to a new cohort of adult leaders each year. Individuals must be nominated and submit an application to be reviewed by a selection committee. The most recent cohort consists of 16 professionals from businesses and organizations within the region. The participants attend monthly sessions covering topics such as leadership development, community engagement, economic development, and the judicial system. These sessions are designed to motivate participants to develop ideas to move the Salkehatchie region forward.³ Leadership Salkehatchie is sponsored by the Southern Carolina

Regional Development Alliance, a nonprofit whose mission is to attract companies and create jobs throughout South Carolina.

The other pillar program of the Leadership Institute is the Youth Leadership Program. This program has not been running in the past couple years, but is being revamped in 2022. It will be modeled after the adult program to target youth throughout the region. The plan is to give participants an overview of what is available to them in the Salkehatchie region. They will learn how to get an education in the region and what jobs are available with that education. They will also tour various industries in the region. This program is intended to combat the rural brain drain. By showing young people education and employment opportunities in their region, and educating them on how to become leaders in the community, the institute hopes to motivate young people to stay in the region after college.

In 2021, South Carolina's Governor, Henry McMaster awarded \$6 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) to the University of South Carolina. The University system plans to distribute the funds to colleges to establish eight state-of-the-art computer labs furnished with Apple products, including one on the USC Salkehatchie campus in Allendale. Jackson Alexander says in addition to being available for students, the lab will be a business incubation hub. In 2022, UofSC Salkehatchie submitted an application for a USDA rural development grant to bring in small business owners and consultants who will be available at the incubator to teach local entrepreneurs about business development. This incubator will be geared

² Interview with Jackson Alexander. 3 March, 2022.

³ https://www.sc.edu/about/system_and_campuses/salkehatchie/about/news/2021/leadership-newclass.php

towards new entrepreneurs who have an idea for a business, but don't have the capital to open one up. Additionally, the incubator will target existing small businesses in Allendale to help them build capacity.

Shifting from Tourism to Manufacturing

The original case study discussed the decline of tourism when I-95 was built, when travelers no longer stopped in Allendale. Since then, the town has been trying to attract businesses in the manufacturing sector. Now, the town is an optimal location for manufacturers that need state of the art facilities, access to rail, and sea ports. The county has 20 rail-on-site facilities and 29 sites without rail, most under a two-hour drive from the Ports of Charleston and Savannah. The Town of Allendale is home to 6 of these sites, the largest being the 1,091-acre Ulmer Site, which has rail access and is 85 minutes from the Port of Savannah.⁴ By leveraging its assets such as rail access, proximity to major ports, and low operating costs, Allendale has positioned itself as an attractive option for manufacturing businesses. Allendale County is now home to many small manufacturers in forest products, agribusiness, and other manufacturing sectors as well as large worldwide manufacturers such as West Fraser, Scotsman, and Archroma.⁵



According to the Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance (SCA), the forest products sector is key to the economy in the southern region of South Carolina.⁶ In 2021, West Fraser Timber Co. Ltd. acquired a 760 million square foot Oriented Strand Board facility from Georgia Pacific for \$280 million. The facility, built in 2007, is located near Allendale and was run by Georgia Pacific until 2019. West Fraser plans to invest an additional \$70 million to optimize and upgrade the facility. Once this is complete, it is expected to employ 135 people. Another company in Allendale, Collum's Lumber Products, has an advanced lumber mill where they produce lumber, poles, and wood chips. Collum's Lumber Products is family-owned and has more than 200 employees, making it the largest employer in Allendale.⁷

4 Sites and Industrial Parks | Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance. (n.d.). SCA Regional Development Alliance. Retrieved May 6, 2022, from <https://southerncarolina.org/properties/sites>

5 Homegrown Tools. (2008). Homegrown Tools. Retrieved April 23, 2022, from <https://homegrowntools.unc.edu/index.php/studies/allendale/>

6 Key Sectors | Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance. (n.d.). Southerncarolina.org. Retrieved April 22, 2022, from <https://southerncarolina.org/key-sectors>

7 Data Axle Reference Solutions. (2022, February). Collum's Lumber Products LLC [Business Data]. Data Axle Reference Solutions.

Lessons Learned

INCLUDE YOUTH IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Leaders in Allendale have realized that the rural brain drain is limiting the town's ability to grow and develop. The leadership institute has begun to combat this by prioritizing youth in economic development through the youth leadership program. This program aims to motivate young people to stay and invest in the area by showing them that education opportunities and jobs are available in the region.

ANTICIPATING INDUSTRY IMPACTS OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

When I-95 was built and tourists no longer stopped in Allendale, the economic development impact was devastating. The town was forced to react and diversify its economy to include manufacturing, but it has not recovered to the booming town it once was. By pivoting the focus to manufacturing, and offering competitive advantages to businesses in this industry, Allendale has helped secure a stable source of economic resiliency. Proactive planning promoting a diverse range of industries can help communities prepare for impacts of larger scale change, such as changes in transportation infrastructure.

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