

Chapter 1

Observations

Jasper County lies within the “Lowcountry” Region of South Carolina, with its western boundary formed by the Savannah River and the eastern border primarily composed of the Coosawhatchie, Broad, New, and Pocatigo Rivers (Map 1). The County covers approximately 650 square miles, of which over 22 percent are wetlands. The land surface is generally level, broken by numerous streams and swamp areas, with extensive saltwater marshlands covering the lower portion of the County.

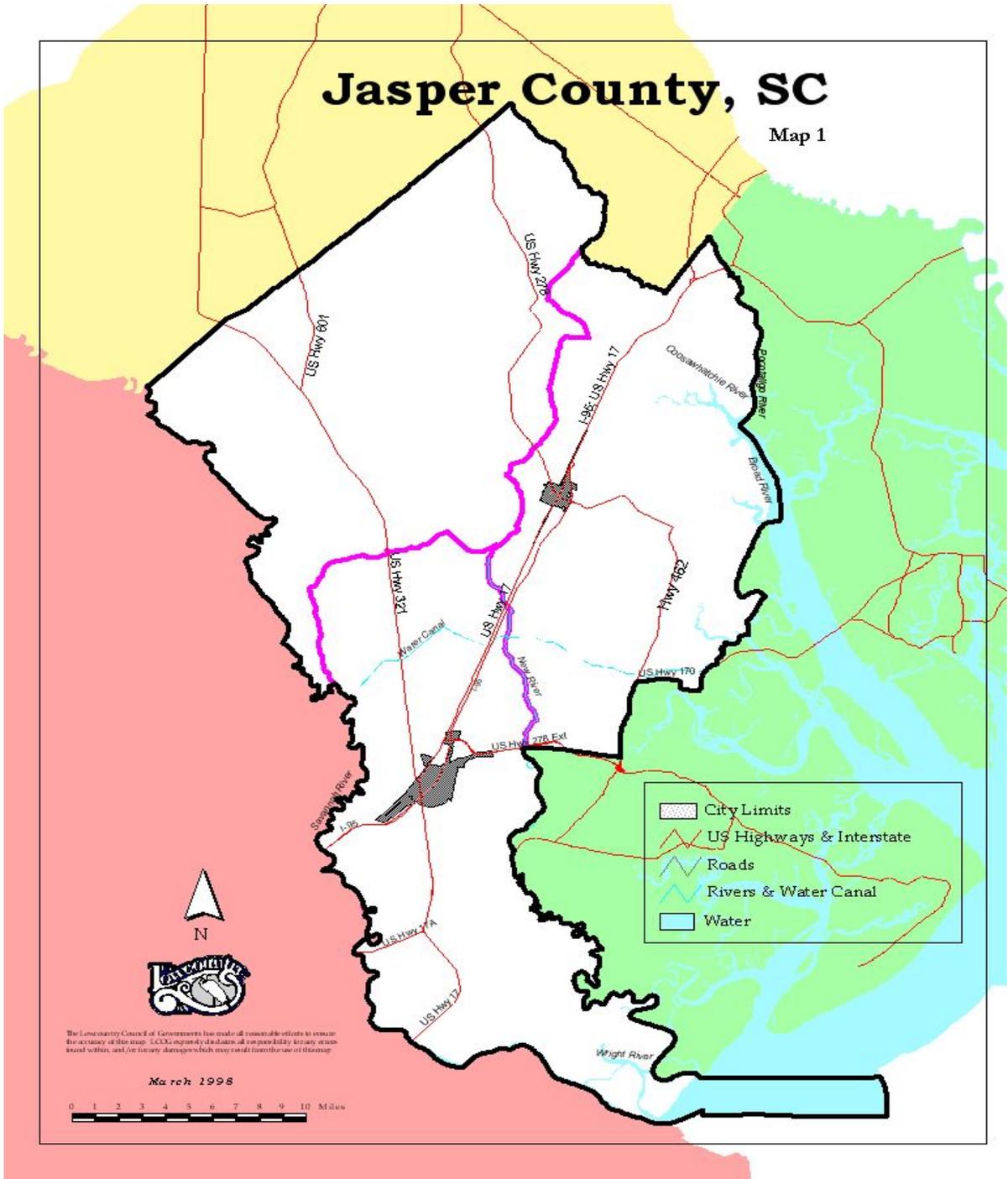


Jasper County is critically located between two rapidly growing communities: Savannah, Georgia, and Southern Beaufort County including Hilton Head-Bluffton. Interstate 95 and US Highway 17 link Jasper County to Savannah and provide the primary transportation routes to heavily visited recreation destinations in southern Beaufort County and, in terms of future economic development; these are key freight transportation connectors for the planned deepwater port in Jasper County and between the two existing deepwater ports in Savannah and Charleston.

The County is still generally rural in character, with most of the land in agricultural and forest uses. There are two existing municipalities as well as an increasingly “suburbanized” area along the Beaufort County border. Ridgeland, the County seat, is located in the central part of Jasper County, approximately 30 miles west of Beaufort and 35 miles northeast of Savannah, Georgia. Hardeeville, located in the southern part of the County, approximately 20 miles north of Savannah, is projected to be the most rapidly growing portion of the County over the next 20 years. Underscoring this point is phenomenal ten-fold growth the area of Hardeeville over the last two years—from 5 sq. miles to 50 square miles and growing.

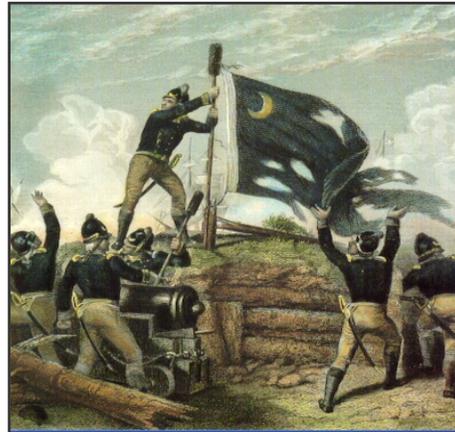
Jasper County enjoys mild winters and warm summers. The growing season over the past 30 years has averaged 223 days. The average winter daytime temperature is 63 degrees and 89 degrees in summer, with a mean temperature of 77 degrees. Average precipitation is 48 inches per year.

Map 1: Locator Map



1.1 EARLY HISTORY

Shortly after the English settled Carolina, during the times of the Lords Proprietors, the area which now encompasses Jasper County was designated as part of Granville County. This area included the “Indian Lands” stretching from the Combahee River to the Savannah River. Legend has it that the first courthouse and jail in Granville County consisted of a log building near a causeway across Black Swamp, a tributary of the Savannah River along the banks of which lived the Pallachuccola tribe. Remnants of an old fort named for the tribe can still be seen in the swamp today.



In the late 1700's, the area was known as the “back country” of the Beaufort District, which was organized under the Court Act of 1769. The seat of government was placed on the coast in Beaufort, but access was a major problem due to the numerous tidal streams and marshes between the “back country” and the coast. In 1788, Coosawhatchie, nine miles north of present Ridgeland, became the government seat. In 1840, the courthouse was moved to higher ground in Gillisonville, where it remained until it burned in 1865. In 1868, Beaufort once more became the government seat.

In 1878, Hampton County was created, cutting sections from the old Court Act districts of Beaufort and Barnwell. The area formerly comprising most of Granville County became the separate counties of Hampton and Beaufort, from which Jasper County was created in 1912. Named for a Revolutionary War hero, Sgt. William Jasper, Jasper County is one of South Carolina's youngest counties.



1.2 POPULATION

POPULATION GROWTH

Between 1990 and 2012, Jasper County's rate of growth was second only to that of Beaufort County in the **Lowcountry Region** (the fastest growing in the state) with an average annual rate of nearly four percent, which is relatively high. Jasper County has experienced consistent growth since 1990, adding approximately 5,000 residents in each decade. While growth has slowed during the recent recessionary period, it is anticipating that moderate growth will continue in the coming years. Population projections developed by Clemson University forecast a significantly greater rate of growth over the next twenty years found in Table 1.3.

Table 1.1: Population and Population Estimates: Region

	Census 1990 Population	Census 2000 Population	Census 2010 Population	ACS 2011 Population	July 1, 2012 Population	% Change (1990- 2012)
Beaufort County	86,425	120,937	162,223	164,419	168,049	94.44%
Colleton County	34,377	38,264	38,892	38,429	38,153	10.98%
Hampton County	18,191	21,386	21,090	20,759	20,726	13.94%
Jasper County	15,487	20,678	24,777	25,330	25,833	66.68%
Lowcountry Total	154,480	201,265	246,982	248,937	252,761	63.62%

Source: State Data Center, US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

[Note: Ridgeland's growth between 1990 and 2000 included the addition of a 1,203 inmate population at the SC Ridgeland Correctional Institution. Without the inmates Ridgeland's population would be 1,409, for an increase of 31.56% between 1990 and 2004; the total County population would be 19,990, for an increase of 29.08% between 1990 and 2004.]

Table 1.2: Population and Population Estimates: Jasper County and Municipalities

	Census 1990 Population	Census 2000 Population	Census 2010 Population	ACS 2011 Population	% Change (1990- 2011)
Jasper County	15,487	20,678	24,777	25,330	63.56%
Hardeeville City	1,583	1,793	2,952	2,997	89.32%
Ridgeland Town	1,071	2,610	4,036	4,104	283.19%
Balance of Jasper County	12,833	16,275	17,789	18,229	42.05%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

POPULATION FORECASTS TO 2025

Within Jasper County growth rates varied, as shown in Table 1.3 and 1.4 below. Jasper County has recently experienced growth and anticipates considerably more. Only time will tell which of the extremely diverse population projections is closest—the lower projections of the State Data Center or the much higher projections of the “Clemson Report”. For purposes of the Comprehensive Plan, the County must anticipate long term overall population growth projections and modify its policies and capital investments considering this potential, but acknowledge the pace of development is slower than anticipated by the Clemson Report (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Jasper County Population Projections 2000-2026, Clemson Report

**Projected Population of Ridgeland, Hardeeville and
Unincorporated Jasper County, 2007-2026**

Year	Ridgeland	Hardeeville	Unincorporated Areas	Total
2007	3,191	8,063	17,556	28,810
2008	3,791	14,313	18,556	36,660
2009	4,391	20,563	19,556	44,510
2010	4,991	26,813	20,556	52,360
2011	5,591	33,063	21,556	60,210
2012	6,191	39,313	22,556	68,060
2013	6,791	45,563	23,556	75,910
2014	7,391	51,813	24,556	83,760
2015	7,991	58,063	25,556	91,610
2016	8,591	64,313	26,556	99,460
2017	9,191	70,563	27,556	107,310
2018	9,791	76,813	28,556	115,160
2019	10,391	83,063	29,556	123,010
2020	10,991	89,313	30,556	130,860
2021	11,591	95,563	31,556	138,710
2022	12,191	101,813	32,556	146,560
2023	12,791	108,063	33,556	154,410
2024	13,391	114,313	34,556	162,260
2025	13,991	120,563	35,556	170,110
2026	14,591	126,813	36,556	177,960

Aside from the larger number of county residents, the growth depicted in Table 1 will change the character of Jasper County. At present almost 80 percent of County residents live within the unincorporated areas of Jasper County under this growth scenario, Jasper County will become a more urbanized county with only 20 percent of county residents residing within the unincorporated areas in 2026. Approximately 70 percent of Jasper County residents will reside within the Hardeeville City limits. This growth scenario also results in a county that has different characteristics than the typical large county in present day South Carolina. In the largest South Carolina counties today, most residents – approximately 60 percent – live within unincorporated areas.

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Source: Table 1, Pg. 12, Fiscal Impact Analysis: Jasper County, South Carolina, Hardeeville, South Carolina and Ridgeland, South Carolina (January 2006).

There are many economic and social variables that impact future population figures, such as births, deaths, migration and the general state of the economy. Based on the historic growth of Jasper County, a variety of projections forecast a consistent increase in population throughout the term of the Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to considering the Clemson Report projections, the South Carolina Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics provides population projections based on assumptions about the continuation of birth, death and migration trends measured from two census points into the future. The accuracy of projections depends on the extent to which future events unfold in a manner that mirrors past observations. The population trends from 2000 to 2010 include the collapse of the housing market in 2008 and the lingering effects of the worst economic crisis since the 1930's. Population growth will likely be at very low levels for the next few years, but there is a lack of data available to measure the impact current economic trends will have on population growth.

Population is projected to be 27,680 in 2025. As Jasper County and its municipalities have approved development agreements allowing an excess of 80,000 new dwelling units, it is clear that issues of entitlement and growth management will not impede potential population and development growth. While County and municipal growth management is one variable to consider, population will be most significantly influenced by the economy and other social factors considered by the Office of Research and Statistics. Significant entitlements and approvals alone will have little bearing on the future County population. However, as a policy for planning for future facilities, the County should plan for higher projections as local public policies currently prioritize and incentivize growth and development.

Table 1.4: South Carolina Data Center Projections

	Census	Census	Projection	Projection	Projection
	1-Apr	1-Apr	1-Jul	1-Jul	1-Jul
COUNTY	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025
Beaufort	120,937	162,223	166,190	180,390	194,570
Colleton	38,264	38,892	43,180	44,850	46,520
Hampton	21,386	21,090	23,300	24,170	25,040
Jasper	20,678	24,777	24,480	26,080	27,680

INCOMES AND POVERTY

Median household income, a reflection of middle class income, has increased by almost 22% between 2000 and 2010 in the County as a whole. However, The Town of Ridgeland experienced a significant median income increase, by almost 85% over the 10-year period. While the County median income remains below the state amount, the increase during the period was higher (Table 1.5). Considering 2011 data, Jasper County’s rate of increase was lower than the state and was the lowest in the Lowcountry Region (Table 1.5).

While median household income remains positive and growing, although a slower rate than neighboring Counties in 2011, a negative statistic is an increasing percent of individuals living below the poverty level. While the percentage dropped in the Town of Ridgeland, the overall number of individuals below the poverty level increased almost four percent in Jasper County and almost 18% in the City of Hardeeville (Table 1.5).

Jasper County residents have higher incomes than **previous years**. However, in 2010, a larger **portion** of the population is living below the poverty level than in 2000.

Table 1.5: Jasper County Income and Poverty Levels

Jasper County Income and Poverty Levels

	Median Household Income		% Change 2000-2010	% Individuals Below Poverty Level		% Change 2000-2010
	2000	2010		2000	2010	
Ridgeland	\$27,679	\$51,094	84.59%	20.00%	18.90%	-5.50%
Hardeeville	\$28,977	\$33,088	14.19%	27.70%	32.60%	17.69%
Jasper County	\$30,727	\$37,393	21.69%	20.70%	21.50%	3.86%
South Carolina	\$37,082	\$43,939	18.49%	14.10%	16.40%	16.31%

Table 1.6: Jasper County Median Household Income

Median Household Income

	2000	2010	2011	% Change 2000-2011
Beaufort County	\$46,992	\$55,286	\$64,973	38.26%
Colleton County	\$29,733	\$33,263	\$41,691	40.22%
Hampton County	\$28,771	\$34,846	\$41,194	43.18%
Jasper County	\$30,727	\$37,393	\$40,221	30.90%
State Average	\$37,082	\$43,939	\$53,345	43.86%

The increase in income and increase in individuals below the poverty line shows a mixed picture of the financial state of the residents in Jasper County. However, for the first time in recent years, the unemployment rate in Jasper County is the lowest in the Region and also lower than the state and national average (Table 1.7).

Table 1.7: Regional Unemployment Rates

	Jul-12	Aug-12	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13
Beaufort County	8.5	8.2	7.1	7.2	7.2	7.3	7.6	7.2	6.5	6.1	6.8	7.9	7.3
Colleton County	12.1	11.5	10.7	10.8	10.4	10.9	11.6	11.0	10.3	9.5	10.0	10.8	10.2
Hampton County	12.6	12.7	11.6	12.3	11.3	11.8	12.6	11.9	11.0	10.2	10.7	11.4	10.9
Jasper County	9.0	8.5	7.9	7.9	7.6	8.2	8.6	8.0	7.4	6.8	6.9	8.1	7.2
South Carolina	9.2	9.1	8.9	8.8	8.6	8.6	8.7	8.6	8.4	8.0	8.0	8.1	8.1
US	8.2	8.1	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.6	8.5	8.1	7.6	7.1	7.3	7.8	7.7

AGE GROUPS

As the following table illustrates, population age groups have strongly reflected trends exhibited by the state of South Carolina. School-aged children between the ages of 6 – 17 years declined between the 2000 and 2010 Census by over 2%. Another group with decline was the 25 to 44 year old cohort which decreased by nearly 3% between the two censuses.

Table 1.8: Age Group Composition

Age Group Composition: Percent of Population

	0-5 years old		6-17 years old		18 - 24 years		25 - 44 years		45 - 64 years		65 years +	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Ridgeland	5.9%	7.3%	9.0%	13.8%	16.6%	14.4%	44.5%	37.2%	15.8%	20.4%	8.2%	8.5%
Hardeeville	9.3%	8.6%	21.6%	16.8%	11.4%	15.9%	30.3%	28.9%	16.3%	22.0%	10.9%	7.9%
Jasper County	7.2%	7.5%	19.5%	17.1%	10.3%	10.9%	30.7%	27.9%	21.2%	25.3%	11.0%	11.2%
Lowcountry Total	7.0%	5.4%	17.9%	32.1%	10.7%	7.9%	27.8%	19.2%	22.5%	20.8%	14.2%	14.5%
South Carolina	6.6%	6.5%	18.6%	16.9%	10.2%	10.3%	29.6%	25.8%	23.0%	26.9%	12.1%	13.7%

ETHNICITY

African-Americans make up the majority of the County's citizens in recent history. However, the growth rate of the White and Hispanic population is higher. In recent years, there has been a truly notable increase in the Hispanic population of the Lowcountry, with Jasper County's rates of increase truly the most dramatic. This same trend continued into 2012 which saw the Hispanic population increase over by over 200%. Over a long term, this has the potential for altering the historic balance between the African-American and white segments of the population (Table 1.9).

Table 1.9: Ethnicity

		2000	2010	% Change 2000-2010	2012	% Change 2000-2012
BEAUFORT	Total Population	120,937	155,550	28.62%	168,049	38.96%
	White	85,451	115,239	34.86%	111,822	30.86%
	Black	29,005	31,006	6.90%	31,451	8.43%
	Hispanic	8,208	19,567	138.39%	19,833	141.63%
COLLETON	Total Population	38,264	38,833	1.49%	38,153	-0.29%
	White	21,245	22,632	6.53%	21,398	0.72%
	Black	16,140	15,535	-3.75%	14,723	-8.78%
	Hispanic	551	1,094	98.55%	1,087	97.28%
HAMPTON	Total Population	21,386	21,173	-1.00%	20,726	-3.09%
	White	9,173	9,002	-1.86%	8,600	-6.25%
	Black	11,906	11,415	-4.12%	10,958	-7.96%
	Hispanic	547	744	36.01%	799	46.07%
JASPER	Total Population	20,678	23,634	14.30%	25,833	24.93%
	White	8,766	9,239	5.40%	10,002	14.10%
	Black	10,895	11,208	2.87%	11,663	7.05%
	Hispanic	1,190	3,752	215.29%	3,701	211.01%

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In spite of the several positive socio-economic indicators, Jasper County's levels of educational attainment, including the percentage of adults who have graduated from high school, the percentage of adults over 25 years old with at least a high school graduation still falls below the state percentage. Just over half of the population has earned a high school diploma, however, it falls below the state percentage of 55%. A very positive note is that Jasper County's percentage has increased from approximately 46% to 51% during the 10-year period (Table 1.10). While the percentage of adults with either two-year or four-year degrees has also increased from approximately 10 to 11.5% during the same time period, the percentage still falls well below the state (23.8%).

Table 1.10: Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment for Population over 25 Years Old

	Less than 9th Grade		Some High School		High School Grad		Associate Degree		Bachelor Degree	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
Ridgeland	14.6%	4.6%	25.7%	25.3%	34.1%	37.4%	1.4%	4.4%	6.5%	5.5%
Hardeeville	19.8%	8.7%	24.7%	23.9%	32.9%	43.6%	2.3%	1.9%	2.7%	5.9%
Jasper County	12.4%	8.9%	22.5%	16.2%	35.9%	39.6%	3.7%	4.8%	6.2%	6.7%
Lowcountry Total	6.9%	5.1%	13.2%	9.5%	29.2%	29.5%	6.0%	7.0%	15.8%	18.1%
South Carolina	8.3%	5.9%	15.4%	11.1%	30.0%	31.2%	6.7%	8.3%	13.5%	15.5%