

PLACEHOLDER COVER PAGE

PLANNING COMMISSION
NOV DRAFT

Appendix A - Existing Conditions

Population & Housing.....1

Natural Resources & Resiliency 10

Cultural Resources18

Community Facilities.....20

Economic Development23

Transportation Inventory.....30

Land Use Analysis.....33

PLANNING COMMISSION
NOV DRAFT

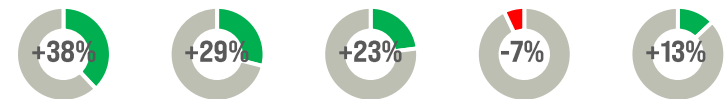
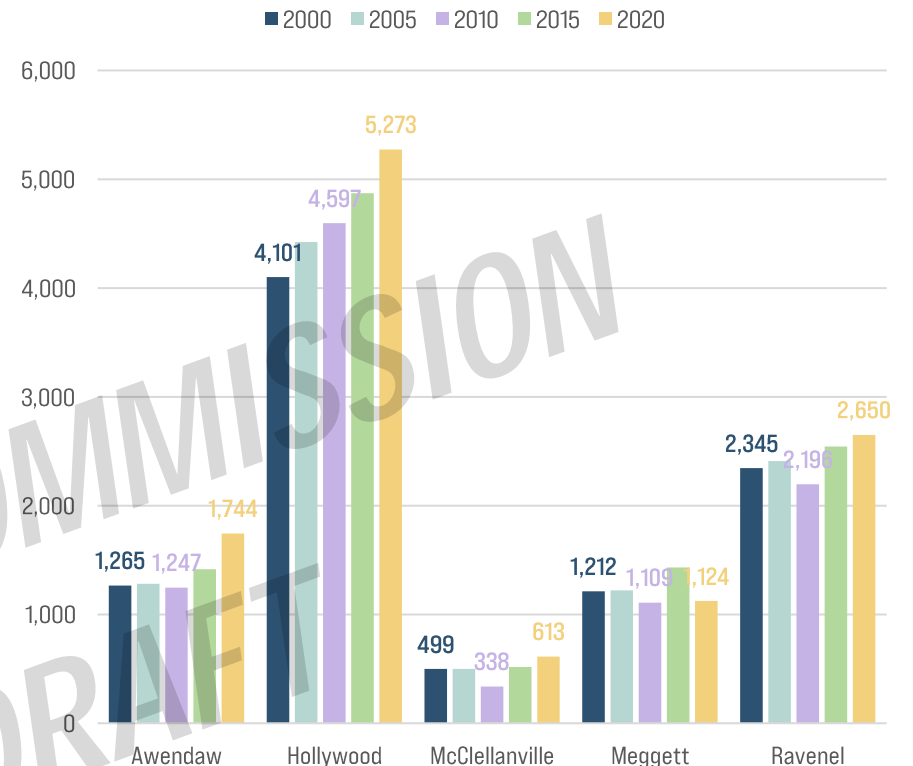
POPULATION & HOUSING

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Town of Awendaw has faced increased pressure to accommodate for some of the population and housing demands of the region. While Awendaw has historically remained a mostly rural community, urban sprawl and suburbanization have catapulted the Town into adapting to these regional pressures. This has caused shifts in the local demographic makeup and housing stocks. This Element will analyze population and housing data, identify any potential patterns or trends, and discuss any likely implications that may have occurred. Demographic and housing trends discussed in the Element can then be used to better inform and guide policy, monetary, and infrastructure decisions in the future.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, all data referenced in context or shown in any figures or tables are from the US Census/American Community Survey (ACS). Also, for comparative purposes, Awendaw will frequently be compared to other similarly sized municipalities in Charleston County, such as the Town of Hollywood, the Town of McClellanville, the Town of Meggett, and the Town of Ravenel, as well as Charleston County itself.

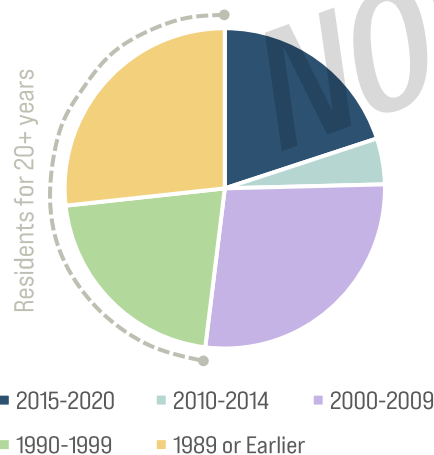
The Town of Awendaw experienced a 38% population growth between 2000 and 2020, from an estimated 1,265 residents to 1,744 residents. This was the largest percent increase among similarly sized municipalities.

Figure 1: Total Population Comparison, 2000-2020



WHAT IS A LEGACY RESIDENT?

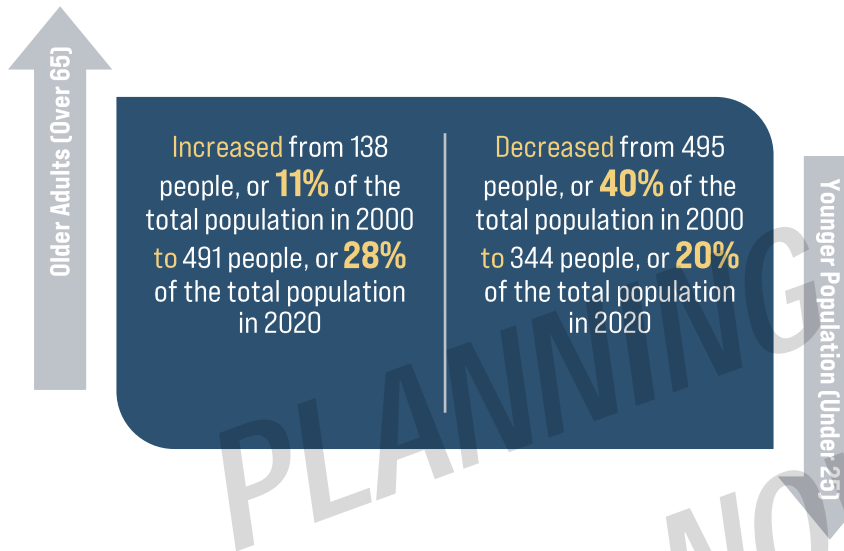
Nearly half of all Awendaw residents have resided in Town for 20+ years.



DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

In addition to an increasing population, the Town of Awendaw is also experiencing a rapidly aging population. In 2020, the median age in Awendaw was estimated at 53.3 years old, a 17-year increase since 2000. While Awendaw is not the only small town in Charleston County experiencing an aging population, the County itself remains relatively stable, as seen in Figure X. A detailed look into the age distribution of residents revealed two major trends.

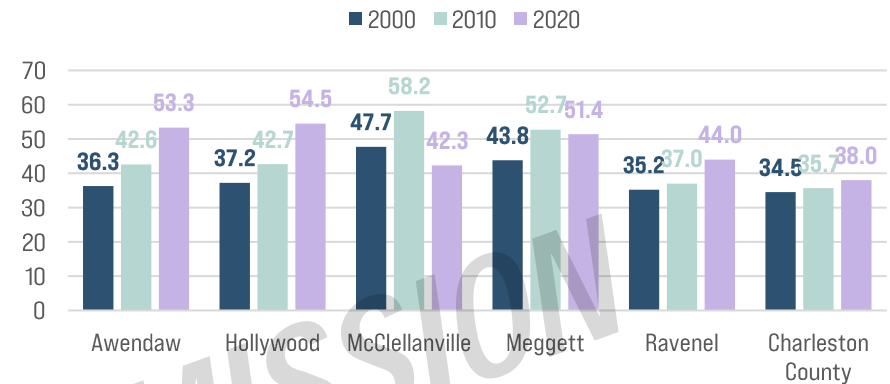
Between 2000 and 2020...



These changes indicate that the people who live in Awendaw, likely stay in Awendaw, as the percentage of legacy residents would suggest. It can also be assumed that people who moved to Awendaw in the past twenty years are likely similar in age to legacy residents since the population increase didn't significantly alter the median age.

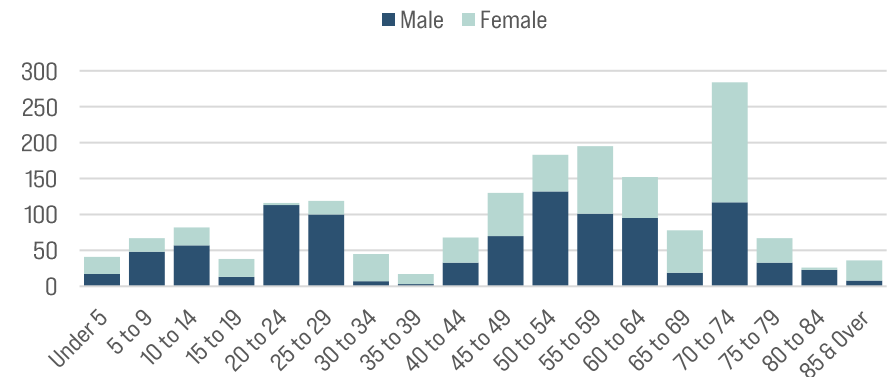
Naturally, these two age groups typically require different services and amenities to maintain their lifestyles, such as medical care, access to public transit, education, parks/recreation/programs, and consumer products. The rate at which the population is aging will present a challenge for the Town as they will have to adapt services and infrastructure to meet this growing demand.

Figure X: Median Age Comparison, 2000-2020



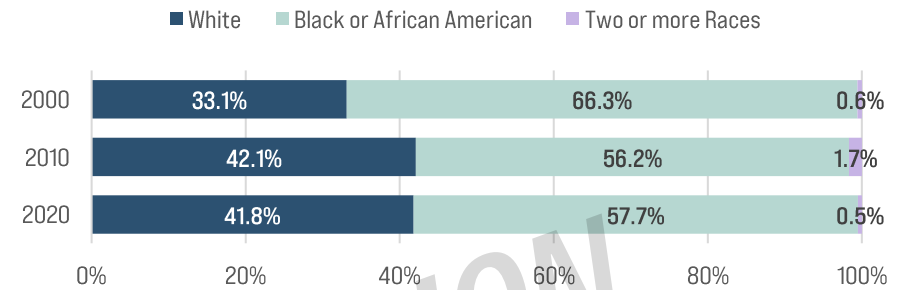
Furthermore, in 2020, nearly three-fourths of the younger population were male, equating to about 2.6 males for every female. This was double the Town's overall male-to-female ratio of 1.3. Concerningly, the large number of males ages 20-29 (and lack of females) and a large number of females ages 30-39 (and lack of males) suggests a lack of young families. Widening the pool of young males and females will help return the median age to County levels as well as provide numerous societal benefits, such as an increase in employment, greater community involvement, and an increase in property maintenance/value.

Figure X: Population Distribution by Age & Sex, 2020



Awendaw’s unique and culturally diverse history has led to the community being primarily inhabited by minorities, most notably Black or African Americans. A majority of residents continue to identify as Black or African American, however, between 2000 and 2020, the percentage of minorities in Awendaw decreased from 66% in 2000 to 58% in 2020, an eight-point decline. Interestingly, the number of residents identifying as White increased by 77% between 2000 and 2020 whereas the number of residents identifying as Black or African American only increased by 21%. This would suggest that most of the population growth in those twenty years identified as White. According to the 2020 ACS, there were no residents that identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Figure X: Change in Racial Makeup of Residents, 2000-2020



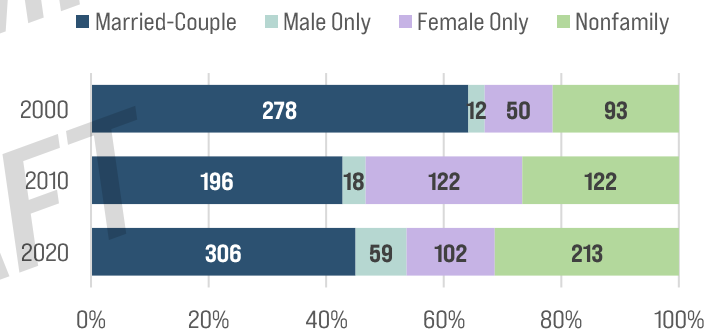
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD & FAMILY SIZES

The average household size in Awendaw in 2020 was 2.56 whereas the average family size was 3.19. These averages were both slightly lower than 2000 when the average household size was 2.86 and the average family size was 3.35, likely due to the decrease in households with children. However, both averages were slightly higher than Charleston County (2.42 average household size and 3.13 average family size) in 2020.

HOUSEHOLD & FAMILY TRENDS

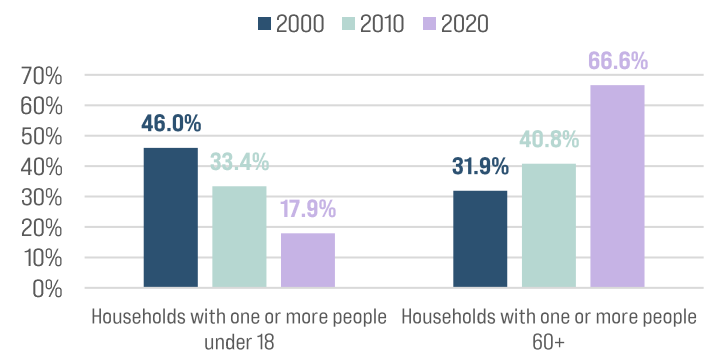
There were an estimated 680 total households in Awendaw in 2020, a 57% increase since 2000 when there were an estimated 433 total households. As seen in Figure X, about two-thirds of all households in 2020 were one of three family types (married-couples, male-only householder, and female-only householder) and the remaining being nonfamily-type households. This was a notable shift in the family versus nonfamily household ratio since 2000 when nonfamily households accounted for only about 21% in 2000 as opposed to 31% in 2020. While married-couple families continue to account for the largest percentage of households in Awendaw (despite decreasing from 64% in 2000 to 45% in 2020), all other households experienced significant changes between 2000 and 2020 as well.

Figure X: Number & Percent of Households by Family Type, 2000-2020



With an aging population, it is not unusual for nonfamily households to increase as parents become empty nesters, spouses die, divorce or separation, etc. In 2000, 32% of households had one or more people over the age of 65. By 2020, two-thirds of households had one or more people over the age of 60, effectively doubling since 2000. On the flip side, nearly half (46%) of households in 2000 had one or more people under the age of 18, decreasing to only 18% in 2020.

Figure X: Change in Households with Children and Older Adults



Note: 2000 Census reported households with one or more people 65+ instead of 60+.

INCOME & POVERTY

Income trends are commonly used in determining the economic and financial stability of a community. Comparing the income of households over a period of time can reveal the economic trends, potential purchasing power, and wealth accumulation among Awendaw households. The median household income (MHI), in particular, estimates the income levels of all households in Awendaw, including family and nonfamily type households. In communities with a more settled and established population base, like Awendaw, the ability for residents to accumulate wealth through income, property, stocks, and other investments is vital in enhancing the quality of life, standard of living, and economic freedom of residents. As seen in **Figure X**, Awendaw’s MHI increased from \$36,250 in 2000 to \$56,354 in 2000, a 60% increase. However, as illustrated in **Figure Y**, a majority of that growth occurred between 2010 and 2020.

In 2000, Awendaw’s MHI was comparable to other similarly sized municipalities and in line with Charleston County overall. However, by 2020, the MHI in Awendaw was well below the County (about \$11,000), likely due to the lack of growth in income (only 4%) between 2000 and 2010 whereas the MHI in the County and other municipalities grew anywhere from 33% to 57%. This is not overly concerning as it is natural for the local MHI to fluctuate over time due to more impactful shifts in demographics, household structures, and the national economy. With that being said, despite Awendaw experiencing a similar growth rate in MHI as Charleston County between 2010 and 2020, it is still important to regularly observe the annual growth rates to spot potential stagnant or recessionary trends in local household income levels.

Figure X: Median Household Income Comparison, 2000-2020

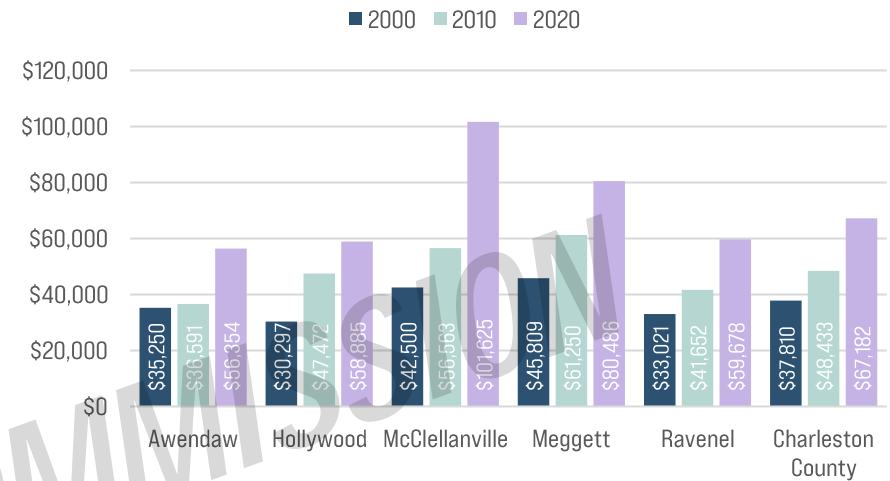
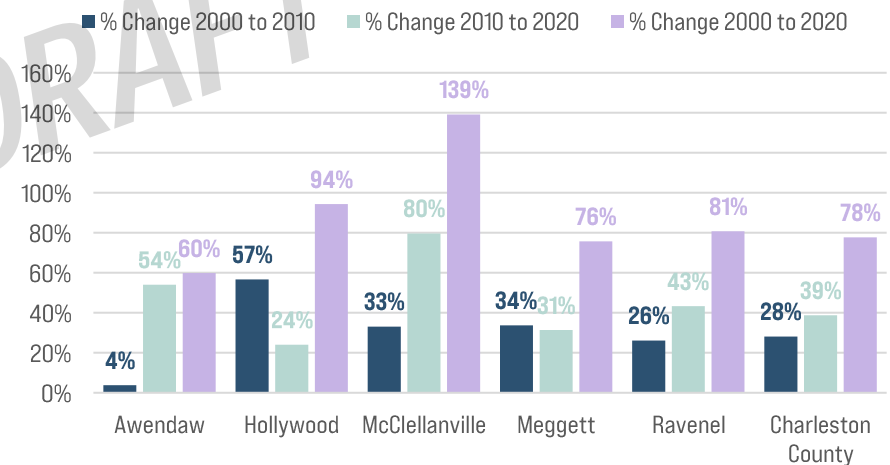


Figure Y: Percent Change in Median Household Income, 2000-2020



Note: Median household income (MHI) estimates the median income level of households, including households with no-, one-, two-, or three earners. Median earnings, which will be discussed in the Economic Development Chapter, estimate the median earnings of the individual person.

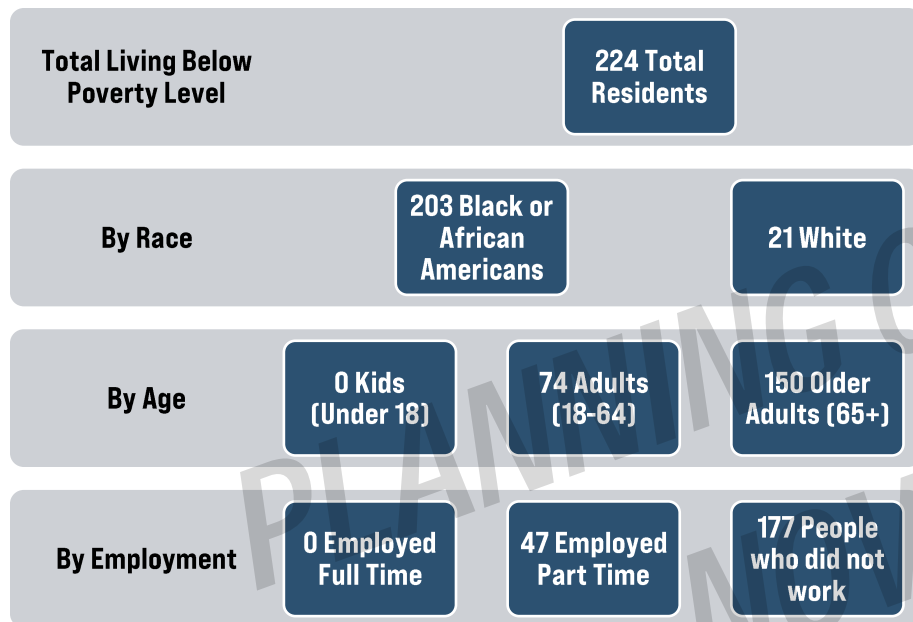
If you'll recall...

Awendaw experienced a sharp decline in married-couple households between 2000 and 2010 (Figure X), which were likely to be two-income households. This, paired with an increase in single income households, most notably female only families, likely contributed to the lack of growth in median household income between 2000 and 2010.

Poverty Status

In 2020, there were an estimated 224 people, or about 13% of Awendaw’s total population, living below the poverty level. **Figure X** breaks down the number of people living in poverty by race, age, and employment. With the similarity in the number of older adults and people that did not work live below the poverty level, it can be assumed that most of these people were retired, not unemployed.

Figure X: Breakdown of Residents Living Below Poverty Level in 2020



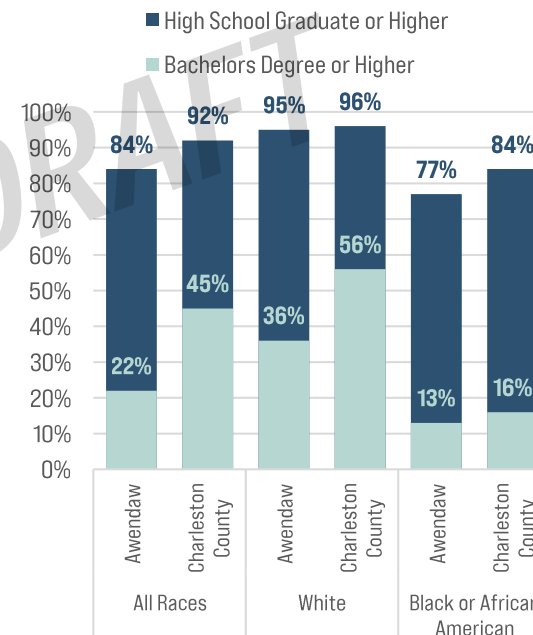
In 2020, approximately 30% of Awendaw residents over the age of 65 lived below the poverty level. This is significantly higher than the national average of 14%. Additionally, Black or African American residents were disproportionately represented among those living in poverty, with 90% of all residents below the poverty line identifying as Black of African American. This is in contrast to the overall population of Awendaw, which is 58% Black or African American.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment is an important indicator of a person’s likelihood or financial stability and well-being. While there are other methods of advancing one’s knowledge of a certain field or industry, such as trade school, internships or apprenticeships, and experience, education remains the most common and widely accepted pathway.

In 2020, 84% of residents 25 years and older had obtained a high school graduate degree or higher with 22% of residents obtaining a bachelor’s degree or higher. While these statistics were lower than Charleston County, this is expected for a more rural community with an aging population. Furthermore, due to Awendaw being a predominantly minority community, the discrepancy in educational attainment by race is noteworthy, as illustrated in Figure X.

Figure X: Educational Attainment by Race, 2020



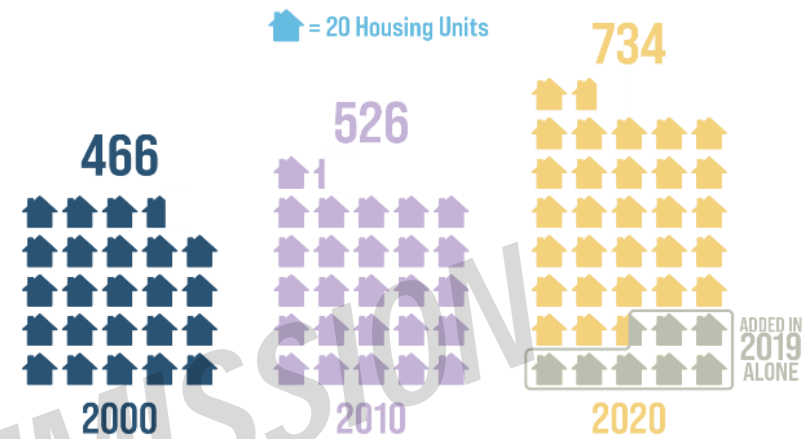
In 2000, **one-third** of residents hadn't graduated high school or later obtained their GED. While there is still room to improve, in 2020, **84%** of residents have graduated high school or obtained their GED.

HOUSING TRENDS & CHARACTERISTICS

Between 2000 and 2020, there were over 260 additional housing units in the Town of Awendaw, about 150 of which were added between 2019 and 2020 alone. This does not necessarily mean that 150 housing units were built in the span of one year but could also be the result of annexations, as evident in **Figure X** which shows that there were only an estimated 85 housing units built in that entire decade. **Figure X** also illustrates the housing boom that Awendaw, like most of the nation, experienced throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, followed by the sudden drop in newly constructed homes in the post-recession years (2010-2013).

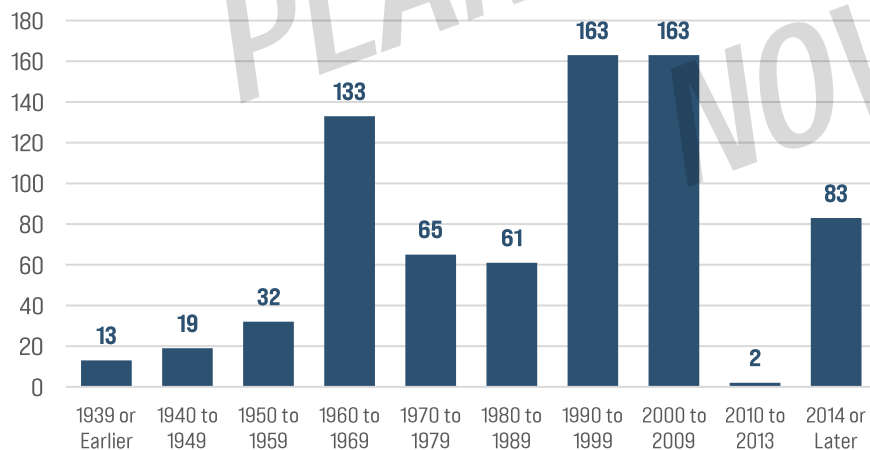
More recently, the economic uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic shook the local housing market once again. Economic hardships, such as inflation, labor shortage, price of materials, and interest rates, have likely deterred individual or small housing investments from occurring. This however is just an assumption as the long-term impacts of the pandemic have not yet been collected or reported. Overall, despite the volatile economy during and after the pandemic, the total number of housing units is likely to continue to increase as recently approved housing developments are constructed in the coming years.

Change in the Total Number of Housing Units, 2000-2020



In addition to the total number of housing units increasing, the makeup of housing units has also changed. Single-Family detached units remain the dominant housing type in Awendaw, however, the percent distribution shifted from 58% in 2000 to 59% in 2010 to 77% in 2020, a nearly 20-point increase overall. This would suggest that most of the homes built in the past decade were largely single-family units.

Figure X: Age of Hosuing Stock (Year Constructed), 2020



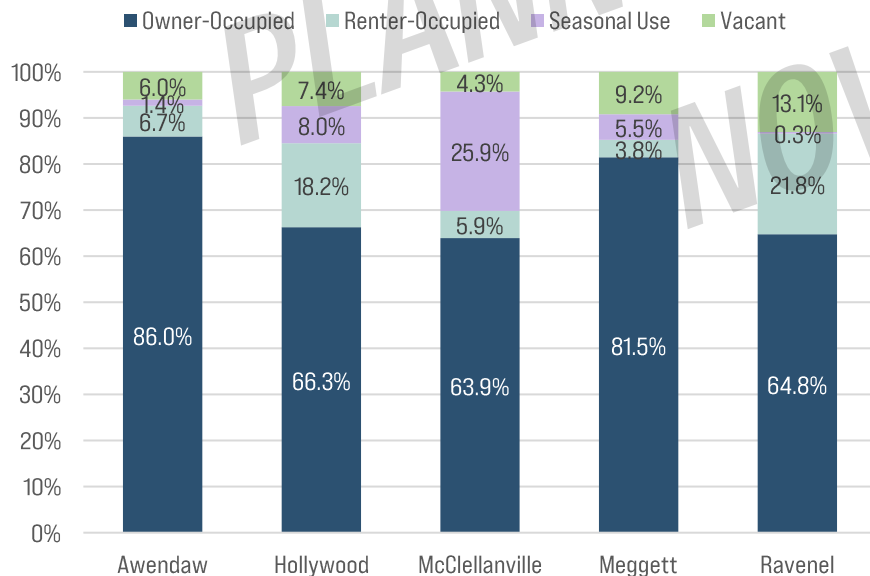
HOUSING OCCUPANCY & TENURE

Monitoring the occupancy and tenure of the local housing stock can provide important details on the supply and demand of homes in the area. In 2020, about 6% of the total housing stock was categorized as vacant, which was very similar to that in 2000. The addition of over 250 homes in Awendaw in these twenty years would suggest that homes in Awendaw are highly desirable and do not stay vacant or on the market for long.

The tenure of occupied housing units is broken into owner-occupied and renter-occupied. Homes in Awendaw continue to be predominantly owner-occupied, accounting for about 82% of the total units in 2000 and 86% in 2020. **Figure X** compares the housing occupancy and tenure of Awendaw with other similarly sized municipalities in Charleston County.

The Town’s distance to the region’s major population and employment centers hinders renter-occupied units compared to Hollywood and Ravenel. However, a community must have a well-balanced mixture of owner-occupied and renter-occupied units as rental units can help make the community more attainable for lower-to-middle income families or individuals which allows for more of a diversity of income, age, and family-types. Higher-density residential units like duplexes, townhomes, apartments, and other multi-family structures are more commonly rental units than single-family homes, therefore, the lack of diversity in housing types also plays a role in Awendaw’s lack of renter-occupied units. As more housing units are constructed in the coming years, most of which will be single-family homes, the percent of owner-occupied units likely continues to increase.

Figure X: Housing Occupancy & Tenure Comparison, 2020



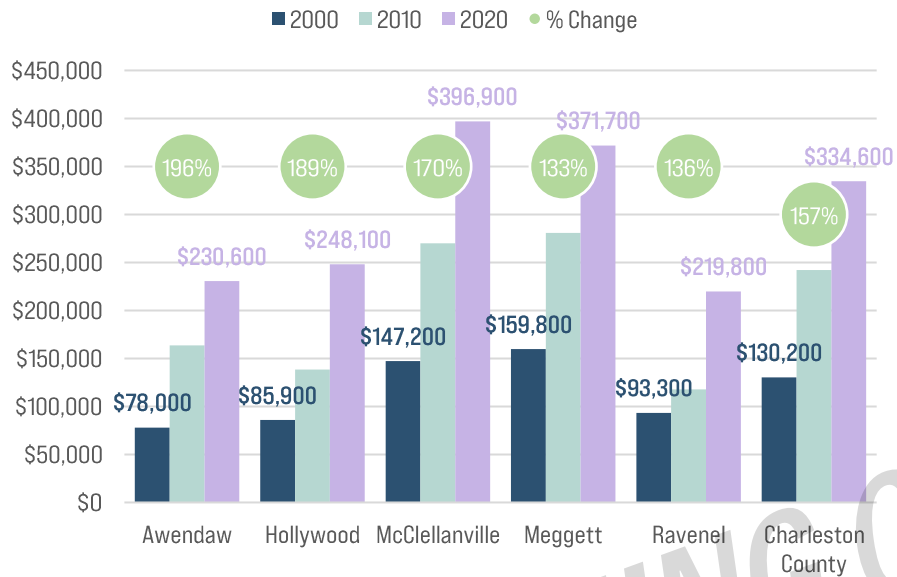
COST OF LIVING & AFFORDABILITY

The cost of living has become a forefront topic in Awendaw and the Charleston Region as property value, home prices, and monthly rents have soared since 2000. As evident by Awendaw’s median home value increasing by 196% (**Figure X**) between 2000 and 2020 while the median monthly rent increased by 69% (**Figure X**). Considering most of Awendaw’s housing stock in 2020 were owner-occupied units, the increase in the median home value is of particular concern as it cuts both ways.

The increase in Awendaw’s median home value likely benefited most existing property owners and homeowners as the value of their investment improved. However, the rise in value could also impact the affordability for existing homeowners as the annually tax value increases as well as deter potential first-time homebuyers, like new families and young adults, from being able to afford to live in Awendaw now and in the future. Some of the challenges that young adults and/or first-time homebuyers face when wanting to transition from renting to owning include the inability to qualify for a mortgage (i.e., poor credit score, too high of a debt-to-income ratio, no co-signer, etc.), difficulty saving for a down payment due to already high monthly costs, and often outcompeted by institutional investors or cash only offers. Furthermore, many of the recently approved residential developments will consist of more middle-to-upper income housing units, further widening the gap in affordability and attainability for young adults and new families.

The US Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) defines affordability based on a percentage of a household’s income rather than a specific dollar amount. Therefore, a home that costs the same amount can be both affordable and unaffordable depending on the income of the household. For a housing unit to be considered affordable, the monthly living expenses, like a mortgage, rent, taxes, utilities, insurance, etc., should not exceed 30% of a household’s combined monthly income. In the case that monthly living expenses do exceed the 30% threshold, these households are considered cost-burdened and are more likely to experience financial hardships and sacrifice other basic necessities such as food, transportation, and medical care.

Figure X: Median Home Value Comparison, 2000-2020



In 2020, 35% of households in Awendaw were considered cost-burdened, most of which were homeowners with a mortgage, as see in **Figure X**. The estimated median monthly costs for a homeowner with a mortgage in Awendaw was \$1,568 in 2020 compared to \$743 back in 2000. Furthermore, Figure X compares the average monthly costs of housing and transportation as a percentage of income. According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology, Awendaw households spend the largest percentage of their income on both housing and transportation costs when compared to other similarly sized municipalities.

Figure X: Percent of Cost Burdened Households, 2020

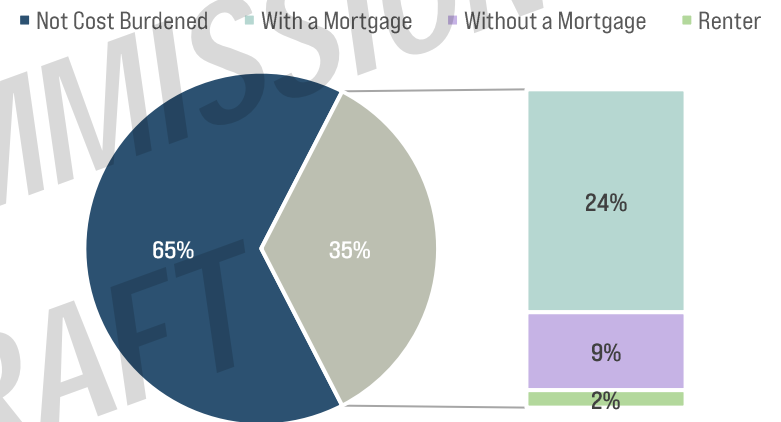
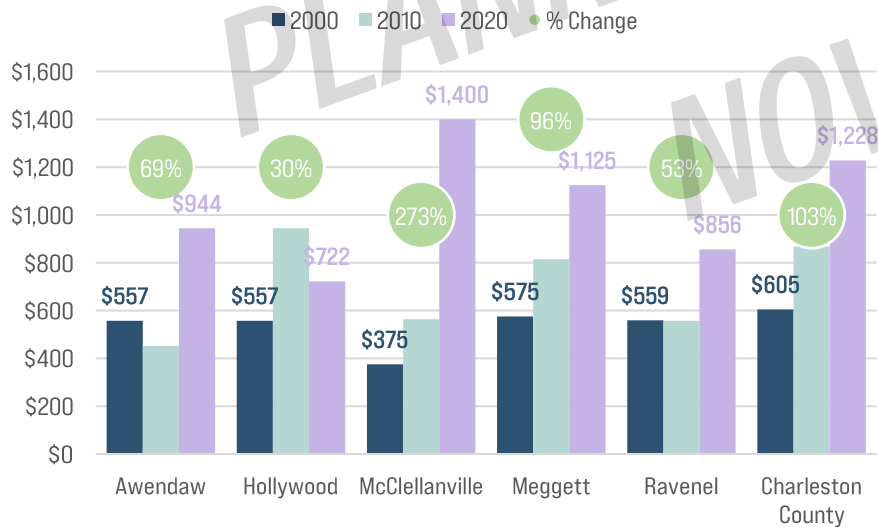
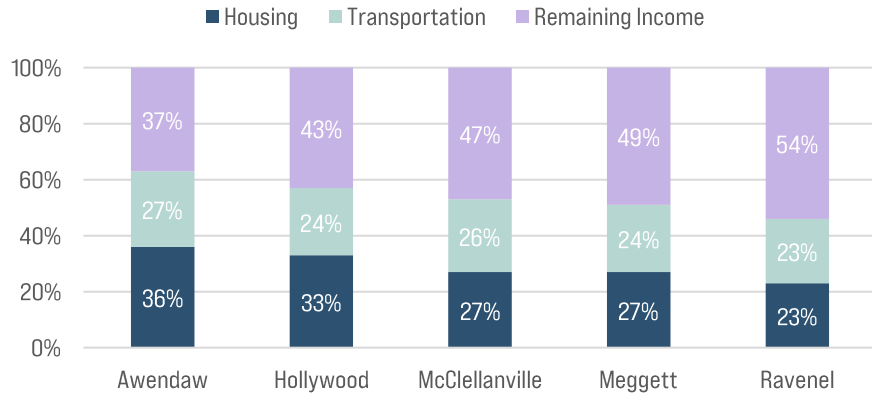


Figure X: Median Rent Comparison, 2000-2020



Note: Meggett's 2020 Median Rent uses data from 2021 as 2020 was null

Figure X: Average Housing & Transportation Costs as a Percentage of Income, 2023



Source: Center for Neighborhood Technology

PLANNING COMMISSION
NOV DRAFT

NATURAL RESOURCES & RESILIENCY

Low-lying land, saltwater marshes, and meandering coastal waterways are but a few of the natural resources that characterize the Lowcountry. Awendaw, like many other coastal communities, have an abundance of these resources which provide essential environmental functions and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors. Access to these natural resources have influenced the lifestyles of people living in the Awendaw area throughout history and continue to do so today, providing a wide range of cultural, economic, health, and recreational benefits. It is because of this that the consideration of natural resources be a critical component of Awendaw's comprehensive planning process, as it can influence all other aspects of this plan.

WATERSHEDS, STREAMS, & FLOODPLAINS

With Awendaw being a coastal community, the Town has an extensive network of hydrologic features including creeks, streams, and ponds, floodplains, inland and coastal wetlands or marshes, and shorelines. These features work in conjunction with one another to store, channel, filter, and absorb rainfall into a common outlet, commonly known as a watershed. Typically, a watershed does not follow any particular political boundary but rather relies on the land and topography. The Town of Awendaw lies within two watersheds, the Wando River and Bulls Bay.

The headwaters of the Wando River, which is one of the main rivers that flow into the Charleston Harbor, encompasses much of the area north of US 17. About 20% of the Town lies within this watershed, including most of the area around 15 Mile Landing Rd, Guerins Bridge Rd, and Porcher School Rd.

The remaining 80% of the Town lies within the Bulls Bay watershed, which flows directly into Bulls Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Because of this, there have been growing environmental concerns over the large number of residential units approved and their needed septic systems. Major hydrologic features within the Bulls Bay watershed include the Atlantic Intercoastal Waterway (ICW), Awendaw Creek, Sewee Bay, and Bulls Bay, the Awendaw Creek being the only one that protrudes into the mainland.

FLOODPLAINS

Between the headwaters of the Wando River, the banks of the Awendaw Creek, and the shoreline of the ICW, much of the Awendaw area is within a floodplain and therefore vulnerable to flooding. A floodplain is an important naturally occurring hydrologic feature that is intended to temporarily store, filter, and process water within a watershed, providing an essential role in stormwater management. Floodplains are common in low-lying areas and are typically adjacent to other hydrologic features, such as creeks, streams, rivers, lakes, marshes, and the coast.

Flood Zones & the Impacts of Flooding

Flood Zones are specific classifications based on the location and severity of a potential flood whereas floodplain is more of a blanket term used to describe the overall natural feature. As part of FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program, the agency produces the National Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) which details the location of the various flood zones, including the 100-year (Zone A or High Risk) and 500-year (Zone B or Low-to-Moderate Risk) flood zones. Additionally, some coastal areas within the 100-year flood zone have an additional risk of flooding from storm surges deeming them a High-Risk Coastal Area (Zone V).

Note: A 100- or 500-year flood is not a flood that occurs every 100 or 500 years but rather a flood that has a 1% or 0.2% chance of occurring in a 100-year period. Several factors can impact the chance of a flood to occur, such as soil saturation, size of the watershed, duration of rainfall, storm intensity, slopes/topography, and land cover.

Just as floodplains are a naturally occurring hydrologic feature, flooding is a (mostly) naturally occurring process that can occur in both the natural and urban environment. In the case of Awendaw, a flood can occur when a stream, river, or coast overflows its banks onto the floodplain most commonly during or after heavy rainfall, high tides, or storm surges. Due to Awendaw's proximity to the coast, tidal flooding, which is flooding centered around low-lying coastal areas, is likely the most common type of flooding to occur, the other types being urban flooding and riverine flooding.

Flooding can have several physical, financial, societal, and environmental impacts on a community. Areas subject to flooding can experience building and/or property damage, loss in value, infrastructure and utility damage, the altering, loss or destruction of habitats, financial stress, water pollution, and the

erosion of land. The removal of natural vegetation, dredging wetlands, marshes or swamps, realigning streams or channels, and/or raising land elevation can alter the floodplain, causing unnatural flooding to occur and potentially adversely impacting the functionality of a watershed. Therefore, stormwater best management practices (BMPs) and watershed protection measures are crucial for maintaining a balanced, sustainable, and resilient natural and urban environment.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are another naturally occurring hydrologic feature commonly found in the Lowcountry. Wetlands, are areas of land where water covers the soil, or where water is present at or near the surface of the soil for extended periods of time during the year. The National Wetlands Inventory classifies wetlands based on landscape position, vegetation cover, and the movement of water. The five major wetland types include marine, estuarine, lacustrine, palustrine, and riverine.

Most of the wetlands in the Awendaw area are either estuarine or palustrine type wetlands. Estuarine wetlands consist of deepwater tidal habitats or marshes whereas palustrine wetlands typically include all nontidal wetlands dominated by trees, shrubs and other emergent vegetation. Most of the barrier islands near Awendaw, which are all part of Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, are estuarine wetlands. Large areas of palustrine wetlands north or inland from Awendaw make up the headwaters for the Wando River.

Similar to floodplains, wetlands too provide the essential function of storing and filtering excess stormwater within a watershed. Wetlands, however, play a more prominent role in the ecosystem than floodplains due to the persistence of water, saturated soils, and excess of nutrients. Numerous plants and wildlife species rely on wetlands as a source of food, water, shelter, and nesting grounds. Estuarine wetlands, in particular, serve as a spawning habitat and nursery for many wildlife species such as birds, fish, blue crabs, shrimp, oysters, turtles, and other shellfish. The biodiversity that wetlands provide is deeply connected to the historic, cultural, economic, and recreational background of Awendaw. Lastly, wetlands along the coast also provide the mainland protection from wind, storm surges, and erosion.

Fortunately, most of the wetlands in the Awendaw area are located either within the Francis Marion National Forest or the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and therefore are protected. However, in the areas not protected, additional conservation or mitigation measures should be considered to protect the functionality of these important natural resources.

COASTAL RESOURCES

Coastal resources like the tidal creeks and sandy beaches, have been entrenched in every aspect of life in the Lowcountry. Therefore, additional regulatory oversight was needed to protect and restore these resources, thus DHEC's Office for Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) was established. Nearly all of Charleston County, including most of Awendaw, is located within OCRM's Critical Area Zone. These areas are deemed critical due to the presence of any one or more of the following: coastal waters, tidal creeks, saltwater marshes (estuarine wetlands), sand dunes, and beaches.

OCRM has direct permitting authority in the Critical Areas and state law mandates the regulation of proposed impacts to the coastal resources within these areas, which typically includes the building of docks, bulkheads, boat ramps, dredging and/or filling.

SOILS & OTHER LAND RESOURCES

In coastal areas, such as Awendaw, special considerations should be given to the properties and characteristics of the land and soils. Generally, soils are formed by the geography and topography of the area with the climate, slope, soil age, and parent material being some of the most important and influential factors in the formation and properties of soils. The properties of the land and soils can be highly influential in the areas ability to process and filter stormwater and wastewater (septic systems), protect the land from erosion, support natural vegetation and wildlife habitats, and sustain consistently productive agricultural lands. For that reason, understanding the soils in an area is an important factor when assessing the areas potential for agriculture, development, and/or conservation efforts.

Soils can be classified by several different factors, such as composition, texture, erodibility, agricultural productivity, saturation, runoff potential, and drainage class to name a few. Considering Awendaw's proximity to the coast, classifying

soils by hydrologic group, which takes drainage class, particle size (i.e., sand, silt, and clay), infiltration rate, and runoff potential into consideration, is ideal for the context of this discussion. According to the USDA's Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO), the seven hydrologic groups are as follows:

- **Group A** soils consist of deep, well drained sands or gravelly sands with high infiltration and low runoff rates.
- **Group B** soils consist of deep well drained soils with a moderately fine to moderately coarse texture and a moderate rate of infiltration and runoff.
- **Group C** soils consist of soils with a layer that impedes the downward movement of water or fine textured soils and a slow rate of infiltration.
- **Group D** soils consist of soils with a very slow infiltration rate and high runoff potential. This group is composed of clays that have a high shrink-swell potential, soils with a high-water table, soils that have a clay pan or clay layer at or near the surface, and soils that are shallow over nearly impervious material.
- **Group A/D** soils naturally have a very slow infiltration rate due to a high-water table but will have high infiltration and low runoff rates if drained.
- **Group B/D** soils naturally have a very slow infiltration rate due to a high-water table but will have a moderate rate of infiltration and runoff if drained.
- **Group C/D** soils naturally have a very slow infiltration rate due to a high-water table but will have a slow rate of infiltration if drained.

Most of the mainland in the Awendaw area is classified as either Group A or Group A/D whereas most of the barrier islands are Group C/D. Bulls Island, however, remains the exception as most of the island and coast is Group A, likely due to the island's history and recreation development. Overall, these classifications suggest that most of the Awendaw area has very slow infiltration rates with high runoff potential, therefore, increasing the areas risk for tidal flooding, flash floods, poor water quality, and habitat disruption (or even destruction).

Fortunately for Awendaw, large areas of the mainland and most of the barrier islands are protected lands which significantly reduces the amount of potential development in the area and the negative impacts to stormwater, flooding, and water quality that tend to follow. However, as mentioned previously, there has been a growing environmental concern with the number of residential units (and septic systems) that have been approved and slated for construction. According to SSURGO's Septic Tank Absorption Fields rating, nearly all of the Awendaw area has a septic absorption rating of Very Limited. This rating is based on soil

properties of soil 24-60 inches below the surface where effluent from a septic tank is distributed into the soil through subsurface tiles or perforated pipes. Again, due to Awendaw's proximity to the coast and the high-water table, major soil reclamation, special design, or expensive installation procedures are necessary for a septic system to function properly and safely in an area rated Very Limited.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & HABITAT CORES

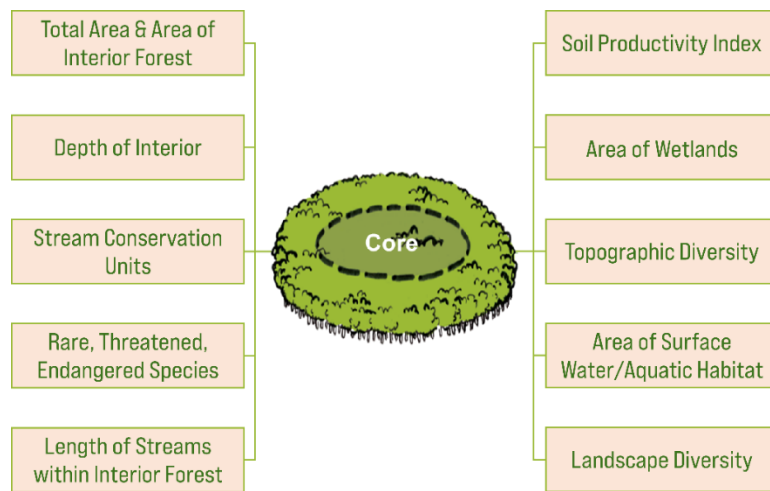
In 2023, the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) released the statewide Green Infrastructure Plan and associated data on habitat cores and forest fragments. This publication is intended to promote best management practices in and around these habitat core areas as well as help local, regional, and state planners, government officials, developers, and other interested parties prioritize the conservation of high-quality intact habitat cores. Using a weighted scoring system to assess the quality of the habitat cores, each core was given a rating of 1 (Lowest quality) to 5 (Highest quality) based on several ecological metrics (Figure X).

Based on GIC's ratings, Awendaw has a mixture of mostly mid-to-high quality habitat cores. Unsurprisingly, the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and areas surrounding the Awendaw Creek are rated the highest quality habitat core. However, it should be noted that the habitat cores north of US 17, most of which are within the Francis Marion National Forest, are rated as average or mid-quality. Furthermore, in some of the more developed areas, like near the US 17-Sewee Rd-Guerins Bridge Rd intersection and the US 17-Doar Rd intersection, there are a number of forest fragments which are areas separated from the larger habitat cores.

WHAT IS A HABITAT CORE?

According to GIC, habitat cores are intact areas of the landscape that provide adequate habitat to support native species. Habitat cores are forests, forested wetlands, and marshes at least 100 acres or more in size and are ranked using additional attributes such as water richness, topography, and the presence of rare, endangered, or threatened species.

Figure X: Ecological Metrics used to Rank the Habitat Cores



Source: Green Infrastructure Center, Inc.

HABITAT LOSS

The habitat cores in the Awendaw area are at most risk from development, sea level rise, and storm surges. Mitigation strategies can be put into place to help reduce the impacts that sea level rise and storm surges have on the natural and built environment. Unlike those naturally occurring phenomena's, the risk and impacts of development can be entirely managed by local policy makers by implementing zoning and land development regulations and guidelines.

PROTECTED LANDS

Throughout this plan, protected lands will be the focal point of several discussions relating to land use, historic, cultural, and natural resources, recreation, and economic development. Land protected by local, state, federal, or private entities, serve many different functions besides the protection of land, but work to preserve the natural resources, protect vulnerable plant and wildlife species, provide natural stormwater management infrastructure, offer a wide range of recreational opportunities, and support the local economy through tourism. With the abundance of environmentally sensitive resources in and around Awendaw, conservation efforts are likely to continue and should be encouraged.

The two major areas of protected lands are the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and the Francis Marion National Forest, both federally protected and managed lands. Other entities that protect land in the Awendaw area include The Nature Conservatory, LowCountry Land Trust, the Town of Awendaw, and Charleston County through the Charleston County Parks Foundation.

CAPE ROMAIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge is a 66,000 acre, federally protected, wildlife refuge owned, operated, and maintained by the US Fish & Wildlife Services (FWS). Originally established as a bird refuge in 1932, Cape Romain has expanded its primary objective over the years to include the protection of all rare, endangered, and threatened species, natural and coastal resource management, and providing active and passive recreational opportunities. The refuge, which consists of four main barrier islands and the adjacent saltwater marshlands, protects Awendaw and the surrounding ecosystems from the impacts of extreme weather events. Only a small portion of the refuge is located in the Town of Awendaw.

FRANCIS MARION NATIONAL FOREST

Established in 1936, the Francis Marion National Forest is one of several federally protected forests in the state of South Carolina. Created in the wake of the Great Depression from “mostly cut over” timberlands, the Civilian Conservation Corps was the primary entity in forest restoration efforts, combating wildfires, constructing forest management infrastructure, and developing recreation sites in the early years of the National Forest. Almost a century later, the US National Forest Service (NFS) now owns, operates, and maintains the nearly 259,000 acres of forestlands spanning across rural Berkeley and Charleston Counties as well as the various recreational, educational, maintenance, and other supporting infrastructure and facilities. There are a few tracts of land within the Town of Awendaw that are a part of the Francis Marion. These areas, however, are severely limited on the type and density of development that can occur (if any at all) so long as the NFS maintains ownership.

PLANT & WILDLIFE SPECIES & THEIR HABITAT

All throughout history, the abundance and diversity of wildlife has been an important asset and cultural identifier of the Lowcountry and continues to be so, particularly in Awendaw. Conservation efforts, whether by the USFWS, SCDNR, South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SCWF), The Nature Conservancy, the American Birds Conservancy, or by local jurisdictions, should be encouraged in the Awendaw area. In addition to the primary purpose of conserving habitats, many of these areas also improve air and water quality, provide passive recreational opportunities, and support the local economy through tourism. Education and interpretive sites are located throughout the Awendaw area to help inform and educate visitors on the importance of protecting these species and their natural habitats.

RARE, ENDANGERED, & THREATENED SPECIES

The Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 had two primary purposes: to protect certain plants, animals, birds, fishes, and their habitats from becoming extinct and to plan for the recovery of these species to the point where this act no longer applies. This legislation enabled federal and state agencies to survey and designate these certain species on a multi-tier scale which signifies the level of protection and recovery efforts needed for the species' survival. Federal listings are administered by the US Fish & Wildlife Services and National Marine Fisheries Service whereas state environmental or wildlife agencies, such as SCDNR, administer state listings.

In 2015, SCDNR published the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) which identified the species of greatest conservation need in the state. The species listed in this plan, which include terrestrial, freshwater, marine, and plant species, were given a priority ranking of either moderate, high, or highest. Species listed as either endangered or threatened at the federal or state level were instantly given at least a high priority in the SWAP listing. **Table X** lists all of the species on a federal and/or state listing. The SWAP also provides protection guidelines that can be retrofitted to help meet the needs of local municipalities.

Table X: List of Species listed on Federal and/or State Listings

Common Name	Species Class	Federal Listing or Protection	State Listing	SWAP Priority Ranking
Least Tern	Birds	MBTA: Migratory Bird Treaty Act	ST: State Threatened	Highest
Loggerhead Sea Turtle	Turtles	LT: Federally Threatened	ST: State Threatened	Highest
Piping Plover	Birds	LT: Federally Threatened	SE: State Endangered	Highest
Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat	Mammals	Not Applicable	SE: State Endangered	Highest
Red-cockaded Woodpecker	Birds	LE: Federally Endangered	SE: State Endangered	Highest
Shortnose Sturgeon	Fishes	LE: Federally Endangered	SE: State Endangered	Highest
Swallow-tailed Kite	Birds	MBTA: Migratory Bird Treaty Act	SE: State Endangered	Highest
Wood Stork	Birds	LT: Federally Threatened	SE: State Endangered	Highest
Bald Eagle	Birds	Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act	ST: State Threatened	High
Spotted Turtle	Turtles	ARS: At-Risk Species	ST: State Threatened	High
Yellow-bellied Slider	Turtles	Not Applicable	R: Regulated	High
Eastern Box Turtle	Turtles	Not Applicable	R: Regulated	Moderate

MIGRATORY & NON-MIGRATORY BIRDS

	Common Name	SWAP Priority Ranking
Additional legislation, namely the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and the Bald & Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA), are intended to further protect certain migratory and non-migratory birds and their habitats. Both, Cape Romain and the Francis Marion are critically important bird sanctuaries, for several rare, endangered, and threatened shorebirds, migratory birds and non-migratory birds.	Black Skimmer	Highest
	Common Tern	Highest
	Gull-billed Tern	Highest
	Little Blue Heron	Highest
	Painted Bunting	Highest
	Ruddy Turnstone	Highest
	Sandwich Tern	Highest
	Western Sandpiper	Highest
	White Ibis	Highest
	Acadian Flycatcher	High
	Brown Pelican	High
	Brown Thrasher	High
	Forster's Tern	High
	Prairie Warbler	High
	Royal Tern	High
Tricolored Heron	High	
Wood Thrush	High	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	High	

IMPORTANT HABITATS & WILDERNESS AREAS

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and the Francis Marion National Forest are among the largest, and perhaps most important, natural areas in the Lowcountry. The coastal Cape Romain and the terrestrial Francis Marion differ in many ways, most notably being the landscape, vegetation, and salinity levels. These differences drastically impact the biodiversity of each area as every species has a certain niche or set of environmental conditions that they need to survive. Cape Romain, being primarily saltwater marshes, maritime forests, intertidal mudflats & sandflats, and coastal waterways, host more marine and migratory bird species while the Francis Marion, being primarily pine forestlands and forested wetlands, host more mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and non-migratory birds. Awendaw, being uniquely positioned in between the Cape Romain and the Francis Marion, witness this wide range of wildlife species.

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge

Extending 22 miles along the coast, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge is one of several critically important bird refuges on the east coast. Although Cape Romain was originally established as a bird refuge in 1932, the refuge has also supported and maintained a wide range of other species including a variety of mammals, turtles, fish, crabs, and other shellfish, some of which are rare, endangered or threatened species. The flat and intertidal landscape, common of barrier islands, serve as important loafing and roosting areas for migratory and shorebirds while the abundance of other species provide an excellent source of food for a wide range of bird species. These important factors are what make the Cape Romain such a critically important ecological habitat.

The following are some of the accolades that the refuge has acquired over the years:

- 29,000/66,000 acres are designated as a Class 1 Wilderness Area
- One of three National Wildlife Refuges that make up the Carolinian-South Atlantic Biosphere Reserve
- Designated a Site of International Importance in 1995 by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN)
 - o WHSRN estimates that Cape Romain is a rest stop for 100,000 migratory shorebirds each year
- Nearly 300 different bird species can be found at the Refuge, including:
 - o the Piping Plover & Red Knot which are two of thirteen bird species considered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to be of conservation concern at the global level
 - o 25% of the state's nesting Wilson's Plovers
 - o 42% of the state's nesting American Oystercatchers
 - o 11% of the East & Gulf Coast's population of Short-billed Dowitchers
 - o More than 10% of the East & Gulf Coast's population of Semipalmated Plovers
- One of the largest rookeries for Brown Pelicans and Terns in the state
- Hosts other highest property species including Loggerhead Turtles, Bald Eagle, the White Ibis, Painted Bunting, and Least Tern.

Francis Marion National Forest

The 259,000 acres of the Francis Marion National Forest consists mostly of dense pine forests often with large meandering swamp lands beneath the tree canopy. The size, depth, density, and diversity of the National Forest has allowed for various species of plants and wildlife to thrive in the thousands of relatively undisturbed natural areas (aka habitat cores). The Francis Marion hosts around 400 different wildlife species including a variety of bats, mammals, various reptiles & turtle species, amphibians, crustaceans, fish, and a wide range of migratory and non-migratory birds. Some of the most notable species residing in the Francis Marion include:

- Northern-most concentration (50 pairs) of breeding Swallow-tailed Kites
- One of the largest populations in the world (approx. 350 breeding groups) of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker
- Approximately 100 pairs of Southeastern Kestrels
- Several pairs of Bald Eagles
- Populations of Wood Storks, Northern Long-eared Bats, Carolina Gopher Frogs, Spotted Turtles, and Frosted Flatwoods Salamanders

About 14,000 acres of the National Forest have been designated as Wilderness Areas and are part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. This further protects those areas from impactful activities such as mining or timber harvesting. These wilderness areas include Hell Hole Bay, Wambaw Creek, Wambaw Swamp, and Little Wambaw Swamp. Furthermore, the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy has designated the Francis Marion as an Important Bird Area which further signifies the ecological importance of the Francis Marion.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

After detailing Awendaw's diverse landscape and network of natural resources, it is now important to discuss the different environmental hazards that may impact the community and detail any potential mitigation strategies that can enhance the resiliency of the Town. Most environmental hazards are naturally occurring, like tropical storms and hurricanes, which makes mitigation efforts challenging. However, some are almost entirely manmade, like flooding and wildfires, and thus more preventable.

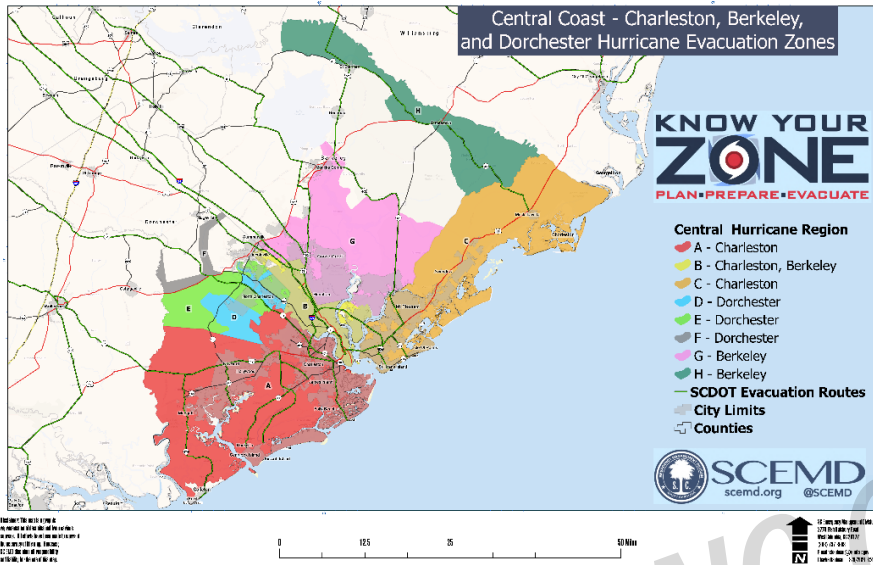
Awendaw's location along the coast and close proximity to large natural areas like Cape Romain and the Francis Marion, increase the Town's vulnerability to certain hazards. And, although every hazard impacts a community differently, a single event has the potential to cause mass evacuations, confine residents to their homes, disrupt basic public safety, health, and municipal services, damage property and/or buildings, cause injury or even loss of life. Local resiliency planning can aid the Town in mitigating the impacts to the physical, societal, financial, and ecological resources of the community. However, this planning effort is often most effective when conducted at the county or regional level to ensure all jurisdictions are working towards to same goals. Charleston County's Hazard Mitigation Plan provides more detailed information on all of the different hazards that can occur in the County as well as potential mitigation strategies.

HURRICANES

Tropical storms and hurricanes are the most intense and destructive hazard that can occur in the Awendaw area, and unfortunately, also the most common. Hurricanes are widely regarded as one of nature's most powerful natural disasters, bringing high speed winds, heavy rainfall, and damaging storm surges to coastal areas. These weather-related storm events are classified based on the system's maximum sustained surface wind speeds. The different classifications are as follows: tropical depression, tropical storm, and hurricane (Category 1– 5). The Atlantic Hurricane Season spans from June 1 to November 30, typically with August, September, and October being the most active months.

There have been seven hurricanes that have impacted the Awendaw area since 1970 which include: Hugo in 1989, Charley and Gaston in 2004, Matthew in 2016, Dorian in 2019, Isaias in 2020, and Ian in 2022. While all of Awendaw is susceptible to the high wind speeds and heavy rainfall, only areas along the Intercoastal Waterway and Awendaw Creek are vulnerable to storm surge. According to SC Emergency Management Division, Awendaw is in Zone C of the Central Hurricane Region, along with Mt. Pleasant, Sullivans Island, Isle of Palms, McClellanville, and the rest on Charleston County north of the harbor (**Figure X**). In the event of a hurricane, residents should follow the recommended safety and/or evacuation guidelines while local officials and emergency services should coordinate with SCEMD and adhere to state protocols.

Figure X: SCEMD Central Coast Hurricane Evacuation Zones



SEA LEVEL RISE

Rising sea levels has emerged as one of the most discussed topics in resiliency planning in the Lowcountry. Coastal areas in Awendaw, like properties abutting the Intercoastal Waterway and along the Awendaw Creek, are most susceptible to the impacts of sea level rise. Some of these impacts include more intense and destructive flood events and storm surges, higher tides, increase the loss of habitats, particularly coastal and intertidal habitats, and the erosion of beaches and shorelines.

According to NOAA, sea levels in the Charleston area increased by about 1.13 feet since 1900. Sea level is expected to continue to rise but at a much more rapid rate throughout the rest of the century. NOAA projects that by 2060, sea level rise in the Charleston area could increase by another 1.38 to 2.40 feet.

Although sea levels vary year-to-year, the overall increase will have a more permanent impact on a community than a flooding or storm surge event. Potential mitigation strategies could include adjusting zoning and building code ordinances to require further setbacks from the coast, increase the elevation of

buildings in vulnerable areas, plan more efficient development sites, and ensure the use of resilient building and construction material.

WILDFIRES

Wildfires present quite a significant risk to the Awendaw area due to the density of the surrounding forests and marshlands. According to the South Carolina Forestry Commission, a wildfire is “any forest fire, brush fire, grass fire, or any other outdoor fire that is not controlled and supervised.” While some wildfires can be started naturally (about 2% via lightning strikes annually), the most common cause of wildfires can be traced back to negligent human behavior.

A wildfire can cause immense damage to the natural and built environments, causing property damage, destroying habitats, displacing wildlife, and producing air and water pollution. Some of the major contributing factors that can strengthen or intensify a wildfire include a lack of precipitation or drought, wind currents, forest and/or brush density, proximity to sources of water, and poor management. Through a combination of education, regulations, enforcement, hazard reduction, and better resource management, most wildfires can be prevented or at least quickly mitigated.

The Awendaw-McClellanville Fire District (AMFD) serves as the primary emergency response team during a fire event. Potential wildfire mitigation measures were identified in the Charleston County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the Community Wildlife Protection Plan. Some of these strategies include ensuring zoning and building codes are in compliance with fire safety regulations, properly enforcing those codes and regulations, and providing fire safety and protection guides to homeowners.

OTHER HAZARDS

Although the Awendaw area may not be directly impacted by some of these other hazards, the BCD Region is vulnerable a wider range of environmental hazards. Some of which include tornadoes, earthquakes, the mismanagement of hazardous materials & waste, dam failure, drought, and extreme seasonal weather events. The Charleston County Hazard Mitigation Plan outlines the impacts and mitigation strategies for these hazards.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Awendaw is located in one of the most historically and culturally rich regions in the nation. With that being said, most of Awendaw's cultural resources actually stem from the area's abundance of natural resources rather than historical places or sites. Throughout history, the various groups of people to inhabit the Awendaw area, like the Sewee Indians and the early European settlers, utilized these natural resources to thrive as a society. This has led to a local identity centered around the harmonious relationship between man and nature. The cultural resources located in the Awendaw area showcase this relationship and contribute to the cultural output of the community, impacting the local economy through tourism and fostering a unique sense of place and community pride.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

There are several buildings, structures, and sites in Awendaw that are approaching a century old, however, most of these resources are not historically significant, just old. Of the few recognized historic sites in the Awendaw area, none are more well-known than the Sewee Shell Ring.

SEWEE SHELL RING

Some estimates date the Sewee Shell Ring as old as 4,000 years. This would indicate that the Awendaw area has been inhabited for millennia. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, the Sewee Shell Ring is one of 20 prehistoric shell rings located along the southern east coast. These shell rings present one of the earliest records of sedentary life among people who must have lived entirely by foraging as well as contain some of the earliest pottery known in North America. The Sewee Shell Ring site and boardwalk is owned and maintained by the US Forest Service and is part of the Francis Marion National Forest. Over time, the shell ring has been impacted by weathering, wildfires, and storm events, particularly Hurricane Hugo in 1989. The site offers interpretive trails and nature views.

OLD WAPPETAW CHURCH

When migrants from Salem, Massachusetts settled in the Awendaw area, they established the Wappetow Independent Congregational Church which the building was later razed by British troops during the Revolutionary War. There are two historical markers recognizing the Wappetaw (Wappetow) Church: a historical marker sign located along US 17 and a historic monument located 600 feet away along 15 Mile Landing Road.

EDUCATION & ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Due to Awendaw's location in between the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and the Francis Marion National Forest, there are several environmental resources that offer educational and interpretive activities. The Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center showcases the different ecosystems of the Cape Romain and Francis Marion while providing recreational and educational opportunities. The Avian Conservancy Center & Center for Birds of Prey provides medical care for injured birds of prey and shorebirds while also conducting educational, research and conservation initiatives. Furthermore, the William H. Alston Municipal Public Library (formerly the Awendaw Community Library) is one of two municipal public libraries in the state and is located at Town Hall at 6971 Doar Road.

CULTURAL EVENTS & FESTIVALS

AWENDAW BLUE CRAB FESTIVAL

Beginning in 1996, Awendaw has hosted the annual Awendaw Blue Crab Festival at the end of summer. The festival features local blue crabs and other shellfish caught in the waters outside of Town. Over the years, the festival has consistently been the Town's largest community event, drawing people from all over South Carolina. Since 2015, the Town has hosted the festival at the Town Park in Awendaw.

CULTURAL CORRIDORS

SOUTH CAROLINA NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Beginning just north of Awendaw in McClellanville, the African American Coastal Trail of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor runs along US 17 through the Lowcountry region. Designated by Congress as a National Heritage Area in 1996, the corridor recognizes the cultural, economic, and societal impacts that African Americans have had on the Lowcountry. The Heritage corridor is being developed by private citizens, governmental agencies, conservation groups, businesses, and communities to promote economic development in rural areas of South Carolina through heritage tourism.

GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Established by Congress in 2006, the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor recognizes the unique creole culture that was formed over generations by the enslaved Africans and their descendants (Gullah Geechee people) as well as the influence that these people had on the history of the Lowcountry. The Heritage Corridor extends along the coast from Wilmington, North Carolina to Jacksonville, Florida, including Awendaw and the entire South Carolina coast. The Gullah Geechee culture is heavily influenced by Central and West African heritages while also absorbing and adapting local influences of the Lowcountry.

NATURAL & SCENIC VISTAS

The scenic diversity of the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge and the Francis Marion National Forest provides an assortment of natural features and scenic vistas that embody the Lowcountry landscape. Awendaw's proximity to Cape Romain and the Francis Marion have allowed for the Town to serve as one of the major "gateways" or access points into these natural areas. The several historic, educational, and recreational resources located throughout the Awendaw area further diversifies and enhances the variety of natural and scenic vistas that are offered in Awendaw.

CAPE ROMAIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge consists of a mixture of natural features including saltwater marshes, sand dunes, beaches, maritime forests, intertidal mudflats & sandflats, and coastal ponds & waterways. There are several scenic, recreational, and educational opportunities offered throughout Cape Romain,

including the 1827 & 1857 Lighthouses, Bulls Island Recreation Area, Boneyard Beach, and the Sewee Visitor & Environmental Educational Center.

Bulls Island & Bulls Bay

Bulls Island, located about three miles off the mainland, is the largest of the barrier islands that make up the Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge. This 5,000-acre island is only accessible by boat via the Bulls Island Ferry & Dock. In addition to the natural scenery of the island, Bulls Island has a unique history involving Native Americans, European explorers, pirates, and wildlife conservancy, that today, has become an asset for tourism. The abundant and diverse wildlife make Bulls Island a desirable destination for birdwatching and wildlife observation. The Dave Clough Wildlife Viewing Platform and the Observation Tower are among the best locations for observing wildlife as well as the natural and scenic vistas.

Boneyard Beach

Located along the northeastern shore of Bulls Island, Boneyard Beach is a three-mile stretch of white sandy beach that features a variety of sun-bleached trees scattered along the shore. These trees are partially submerged by the beach due to the ever-changing landscape of the barrier island. This resembles a graveyard of bones, thus the name Boneyard Beach. The unique scenery along the beach makes it one of the most popular and photographed locations on Bulls Island.

FRANCIS MARION NATIONAL FOREST

Spanning nearly 259,000 acres, the sheer size of the Francis Marion National Forest sets itself apart from other natural and scenic areas in the Lowcountry. The National Forest's immense network of trails, recreation sites, and interpretive areas allows for one to experience a wide range of natural areas and scenic vistas deep into the Francis Marion. Several access points, such as I'on Swamp Road, Steed Creek Road, and the Palmetto Trail lead directly into the National Forest. The Sewee Shell Ring, Buck Hall Recreation Area, and Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center are other natural and scenic vista destinations located within the Awendaw area.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Town of Awendaw provides several community facilities that serve the Town and the surrounding area. However, due to the size of the town and rural nature of the area, there are several services that are provided in coordination with County, Regional and/or State agencies, such as public safety through the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, Planning & Zoning through the BCDCOG, education through Charleston County School District (CCSD), road maintenance through the SC Department of Transportation (SCDOT), and environmental review and enforcement through the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES & UTILITIES

The Awendaw Town Hall, located at 6971 Doar Rd, is the administrative center for all local governmental operations, including general administrative duties, taxes, planning & zoning, and water. The Town of Awendaw is governed by a Town Council consisting of six council members and the elected Mayor. The current elected Mayor is Ms. Miriam C. Green and the six Council Members are Robert Causey, Frank Frazier, Darrell Ketchens, Bryan McNeal Jr., Rodney Porcher, and Sheila Powell. Town Council meets on the first Thursday of every month at Town Hall.

Other boards or committees include the Planning Commission which meets in the third Monday of each month and the Board of Zoning Appeals which meets on the first Monday of each month, as needed.

The Town provides public water to about half of residents through a locally owned and operated water system consisting of XX miles of water lines, a X,XXX gallon water tank and well for extraction. This network provides water services to properties north along Doar Rd up to Wilson Cemetery Rd, south along Sewee Rd to US 17, and along portions of US 17 from the Post Office to Porcher School Rd. Long range plans include a well for the northern end of Town and extending waterlines along the remainder of Doar Rd and along US 17 serving the area around Awendaw Creek.

AWENDAW-McCLELLANVILLE FIRE DISTRICT

The Awendaw-McClellanville Fire District (AMFD) provides fire and life safety services to the Awendaw and McClellanville area, which spans about 365 square miles. AMFD has the potential to respond to a wide range of emergencies in several different environments, such as suburban and rural areas, forest lands, coastal marshes, and inland swamps, due to the size of the district. In 2020, the Insurance Services Office gave the Department a rating of 4, acknowledging the professional achievements of the district and therefore saving homeowners thousands of dollars in insurance premiums.

The three fire stations serving the Awendaw area include Station No. 1, located at 4286 N Hwy 17, Station No. 2, located at 6384 Maxville Rd, and as of 2020, Station No. 7, located at 1131 Guerins Bridge Rd.

EDUCATION

Like all other municipalities in Charleston County, students in Awendaw attend Charleston County public schools through the Charleston County School District (CCSD). Awendaw is located in District 1 which is served by St. James-Santee Elementary-Middle School (St. James-Santee) located between Awendaw and McClellanville at 8900 N. Highway 17. According to the CCSD dashboard, there were just over 230 students enrolled at St. James-Santee in the 2020-21 school year, over 80% of which were Black or African American. This was down by about 60 students compared to four years ago (2016-17 school year) when enrollment was nearly 300 students.

Students who attend and graduate from St. James-Santee then attend Wando High School, located at 1000 Warrior Way in Mt. Pleasant. Wando provides 9th through 12th grade services and has had over 3,000 students enrolled each school year. Furthermore, since its opening in 2004, Wando has consistently been one of the highest performing high schools in the state.

The school ranges from about 5 miles away in south Awendaw to over 15 miles away in north Awendaw and up to 25 miles away from McClellanville. Looking towards the future, the CCSD purchased a 107-acre property at Jenkins Hill Rd outside of Awendaw in 2021 with the intention to build a new middle-high school to serve students from Awednaw, McClellanville, and potentially Mt. Pleasant. This would significantly cut the travel time for students and parents living in the

Awendaw and McClellanville areas. The current CCSD Vision 2027 Strategic Plan does not mention any specific plans for the development of this new school.

PARKS & RECREATION

Although the Town is surrounded by an abundance of natural resources, very little land in or around Awendaw is specifically dedicated for parks, recreation, or open space. Currently there are only two publicly accessible parks and recreation facilities located in the Awendaw area, the Town Hall Park and the Thompson Hill Recreation Complex.

Town Hall Park, located adjacent to Town Hall at 6971 Doar Rd, has a fenced-in playground, a full-sized basketball court, and a large picnic shelter. In an attempt to further expand the Town’s parks and recreational services, the Town purchased a 300-acre tract of land along Doar Rd in 2015 with the intention of developing this into a municipal park. According to the conceptual Plan (**Figure X**), this park will have a 60-acre lake, walking/hiking trails, lookout/fishing areas, a gazebo and kayak launch, and several event spaces, including a pavilion and two amphitheatres. A majority of the park will work to conserve and restore wetland areas and forested lands while also providing several passive and active recreational opportunities, such as kayaking, hiking, photography, and bird watching.

Thompson Hill Recreation Complex, located at Roosevelt Rd along US 17, serves as the community park for Awendaw and McClellanville residents. Owned and operated by the Charleston County Parks Foundation, this 2.5-acre park facility provides several recreational amenities, such as a basketball court, a multi-purpose grass baseball/softball field, and a small picnic area.

Figure X: 2016 Draft Concept Plan of the Awendaw Municipal Park



In addition to Thompson Hill, the Charleston County Parks Foundation also owns a vacant 61-acre tract of land along Doar Rd. According to the Park Foundation’s 2012 Comprehensive Plan, this tract possesses deep water access via the Atlantic Intercoastal Waterway and three archeological sites that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Based on an analysis conducted in this plan, this tract of land would be suitable for the following uses: birding, fishing, picnicking, disc golf, primitive trail, fitness course, loop trail, water trail, water access, open turf, playground, cultural/historical/archeological resources, nature/history course, natural preserve area, educational experience, camping/campsites, RV camping/cabins, and event space/amphitheater. As the population of Awendaw continues to increase following the completion of several developments occurring over the next several years, it is possible that the Parks Foundation will begin planning for the development of this future park to accommodate for this influx in people.

BULLS ISLAND

Bulls Island has been the site of foraging and recreational activities, like hunting and fishing, since its occupancy by the Sewee Indians. Under the early stewardship of the US Fish & Wildlife Services (FWS), the Dominick House was

used as an inn for bird watchers, nature enthusiasts, fishermen, and hunters visiting the island. The FWS has continued to expand the recreational opportunities offered on the island to now include several active and passive activities including fishing, clamming, shrimping, oystering, and crabbing (all in accordance with State regulations), hunting, photography, birdwatching, wildlife observation, picnicking, hiking, and biking. Boating, kayaking, and canoeing are also offered at the Garris Landing Public Boat Ramp, which is adjacent to the Bulls Island Ferry Launch on the mainland.

Existing parks and recreation infrastructure includes the aforementioned Bulls Island Dock, Dave Clough Wildlife Viewing Platform, the Observation Tower, and picnicking area. Furthermore, there are over 15-miles of hiking/pedestrian trails including the 1.37-mile Turkey Walk Trail which is designated as a National Recreation Trail.

FRANCIS MARION NATIONAL FOREST

Since its establishment in 1936, the Francis Marion National Forest has capitalized on the nearly 259,000 acres of relatively undisturbed natural areas, offering a wide range of recreational opportunities for visitors to experience. When operating and maintaining the various trails, recreation facilities, education centers, historical sites, etc., the National Park Service strives to manage the land in such a way that maintenance and visitation will not change or impact the natural environment. With that being said, the Francis Marion utilizes the abundance of natural resources to inform and educate visitors on the history of the National Forest, the different plant and wildlife species, and the importance of conservation efforts.

Awendaw, being located along the periphery of the Francis Marion, has become an outdoor recreation destination. The National Forest supports a wide range of recreational activities including hiking, mountain biking, fishing, motorized and nonmotorized boating, target/sport shooting, camping, nature viewing, outdoor learning, and picnicking. Furthermore, there are several important recreational and/or educational facilities located in the Awendaw area, such as the Sewee Shell Ring, the Sewee Visitor & Environmental Education Center, and the Buck Hall Recreation Area.

Buck Hall Recreation Area, Boat Launch, & Trailhead

The Buck Hall Recreation Area, situated along the Atlantic Intercoastal Waterway at the site of the old Buck Hall Plantation, is part of the Francis Marion National Forest. Located at the end of Buckhall Landing Rd, this recreation area is about halfway between Awendaw and McClellanville. Maintained through the US National Park Service, the Buck Hall Recreation Area includes a trailhead for the Palmetto Trail, a motorized and nonmotorized boat launch, and a campground for trailer and/or tent camping with restrooms, parking, a picnic area, and a fishing pier available.

PALMETTO TRAIL

The Palmetto Trail is a planned 500-mile-long trail system intended for hiking and biking that connects the South Carolina coast to the Appalachian Mountains. Awendaw serves as the eastern or coastal terminus of this statewide trail. The Palmetto Trail intersects US 17 just north of the Awendaw Creek then continues on into the Francis Marion National Forest and Berkeley County.

EAST COAST GREENWAY

The East Coast Greenway (ECG) is a continuously evolving national walking and biking route comprised of on-road and off-road trails, footpaths, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc., that traverses the entire east coast. The current route for the ECG in Awendaw is along US 17 to Seewee Road to Doar Road then back along US 17. However, after the construction of the Wappetaw Trail, the ECG route will update the course to then follow along this trail.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Assessing the current state of the local economy and labor force are important components when planning for the future of a community. This can reveal the strengths, weaknesses, and areas of opportunity that the Town can then capitalize on. Awendaw, like many rural towns in the Lowcountry, have limited economic opportunities, perhaps by design. Regardless, the Town relies on these commercial businesses, however many, as an important source of revenue to help fund public services and utilities. Residents of Awendaw also rely on these businesses as they often provide much needed goods and services. Simply put, a healthy and resilient economy is crucial for upholding the quality of life of a community.

INCOME & EARNINGS

The income of households and earnings of an individual are important indicators of economic growth and wealth accumulation in a community, both of which are vital in maintaining a healthy economy and a quality standard of living.

Awendaw’s median household income (MHI) increased from \$35,250 in 2000 to \$56,354 in 2020, a 60% increase overall, albeit a majority of this occurred between 2010 and 2020. As noted in the Population & Housing Element, it is natural for the local MHI to experience greater fluctuations due to demographic, household, and economic shifts having more of an impact on the community’s medians. With that being said, **Figure X** illustrates the fluctuations in Awendaw’s MHI between 2010 and 2020 whereas Charleston County experienced a more gradual increase. It is likely that the MHI in Awendaw will continue to increase as most of the recently approved residential developments are more middle-to-upper income housing units.

MHI is commonly used to indicate the strength and wealth of a community, however, by comparing the MHI by income brackets, the behind-the-scenes trends in household incomes can be revealed. **Figure X** compares the distribution of household income between 2000 and 2020, however, the focus should be on the changes between 2010 and 2020 as a majority of change occurred within this time period. The most notable changes being the shifts from the lower-income brackets (<\$50,000) to the middle- and upper-income brackets (>\$50,000).

Figure X: Change in Median Household Income, 2010-2020

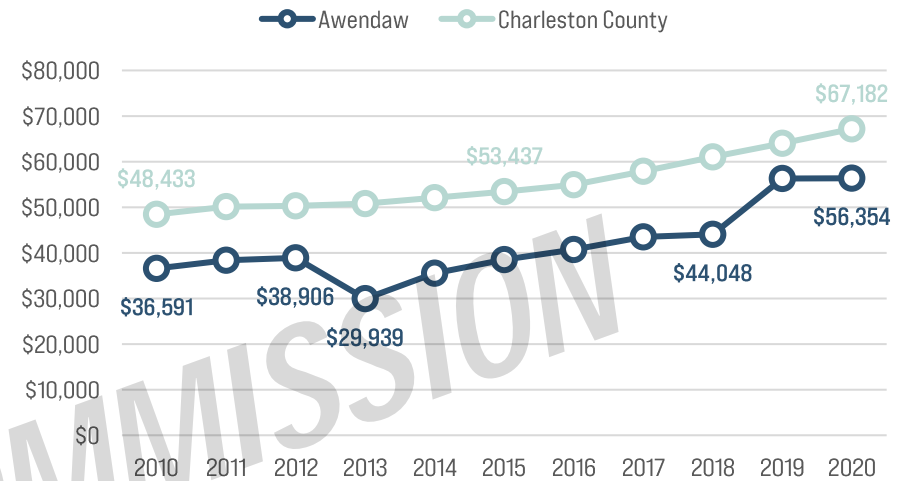
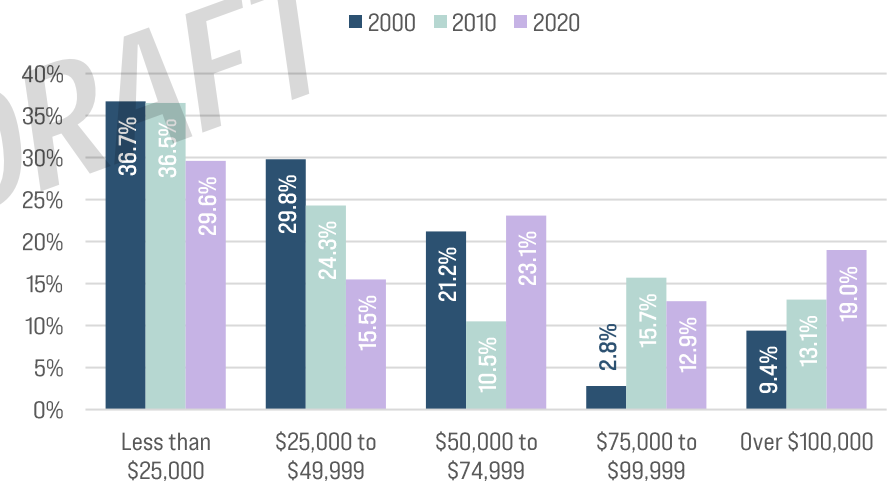


Figure X: Household Income by Income Brackets, 2000-2020



In contrast to MHI, which looks at the income of households, the median earnings reports on the individual worker’s earnings in a given year. The earnings of an employee are commonly influenced by the job type/occupation, educational attainment, work experience, or performance. Between 2010 and 2020, the median earnings of an individual ages 16+ had a net increase of about \$3,800, or about 14%, despite the drastic drop between 2010 and 2011 (Figure X). This decrease was likely the result of the 2008 recession. However, based on the relative lack of change between 2019 and 2020, it would appear that the economic impacts brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic did not influence Awendaw’s median earnings as much as the 2008 recession.

FUTURE INCOME PROJECTIONS

Using data from Esri’s Business Analyst tool, **Figure X** illustrates the median household income by age brackets in 2023 and future income in 2028. The typical working adult ranges from 25 years old to about 64 years old, however, middle-aged adults (35-54) tend to have the highest median household incomes likely due to a combination of factors including, longer career tenure, merit or experienced-based compensation, work ethic, etc. Continuing education, lack of experience, full-time vs part-time employment, and retirement are likely factors as to why the youngest (under 25) and oldest (over 75) age brackets have the lowest median household incomes. These age groups are commonly more dependent on other sources of income, such as social security, Medicaid, Medicare, student loan disbursements, etc., besides earnings from a job.

According to Esri’s report, almost half householders in 2023 fall within the middle-aged adult age group of 35 to 64 compared to about 42% of householders 65+ and less than 10% were under the age of 34. While these percentages do not change all that much between 2023 and 2028, the almost 30% decrease in number of working adults under the age of 34 is notable and reinforces the growing concern around Awendaw’s aging population. The report also forecasts that the MHI increases across nearly all age brackets.

Figure X: Change in Median Earnings, 2010-2020

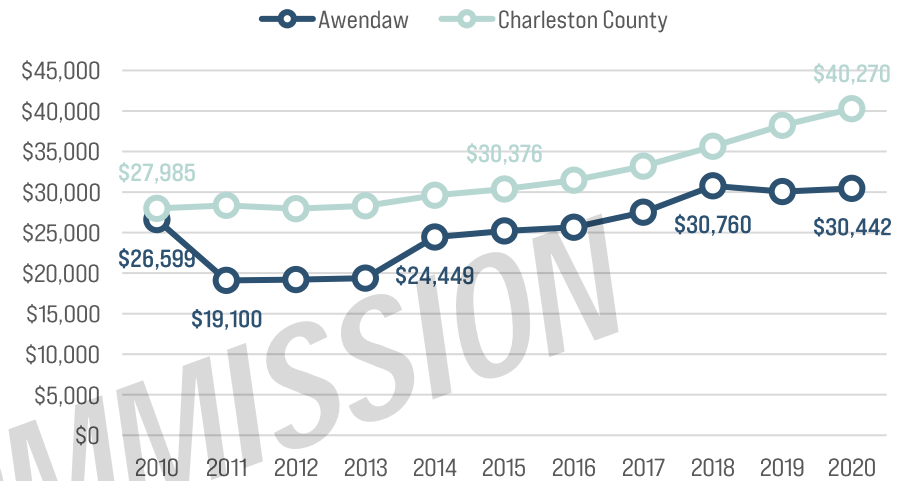
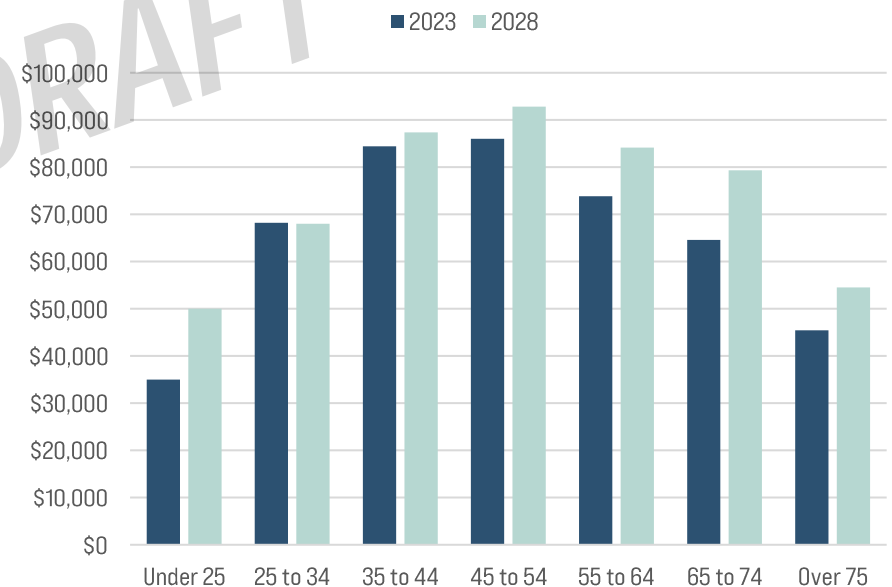


Figure X: Change in Median Household Income by Age Brackets, 2023-2028



Source: Esri’s Business Analyst Tool

LABOR FORCE TRENDS & CHARACTERISTICS

The US Census calculates the labor force as the total population ages 16 and over (16+) that are participating in the economy, either by being actively employed or actively seeking employment. The labor force can be analyzed in various ways, such as by employment status, full-time vs part-time, private vs public sector, etc., each providing a different insight on the makeup of Awendaw’s labor force. Typically, as the population of a community increases, as will the number of people participating in the labor force. As was the case in Awendaw as the total population 16+ increased by 61% between 2010 and 2020 while the labor force increased by 60%. It should be noted, however, that most of this increase occurred between 2019 and 2020, as see in **Figure X**. During that year alone, the total population 16+ increased by 41% (+448 people) while the labor force only increased by 18% (+137 people).

The participation rate in Awendaw gradually fluctuated between 2010 and 2019, largely due to the minor shifts in population 16+ that Awendaw experienced. However, what sets the year 2020 apart from the other years would be the size of the population shift that Awendaw experienced and the age and work status of those additional 448 people, as about half were adults ages 65 and over, most of whom were retired. This atypical influx of retirees between 2019 and 2020 likely caused the 11-point decline in the participation rate.

The impacts from the 2008 recession appeared to have had a delayed reaction in Awendaw as the unemployment rate gradually increased in the years after, peaking at 12% in 2013. Unlike the recession, the impact on unemployment from the COVID-19 pandemic was instant, as depicted in **Figure X**. This 11-point rise in unemployment was equivalent to about 100 additional people being unemployed in Awendaw, about 75% of which were middle-aged adults (ages 45-59).

Despite ongoing national and regional recovery efforts, the unemployment rate in Awendaw only decreased by about two-points in 2021 while the participation rate continued to decline. This would suggest that not only have more people unemployed in Awendaw in 2020 and 2021 than ever before, but it is likely that some people dropped out of the labor force all together, either by retiring early or by becoming unemployed and choosing not to return, hence the continuing decline in the participation rate.

Figure X: Change in Population 16+ Participating in the Labor Force, 2010-2020

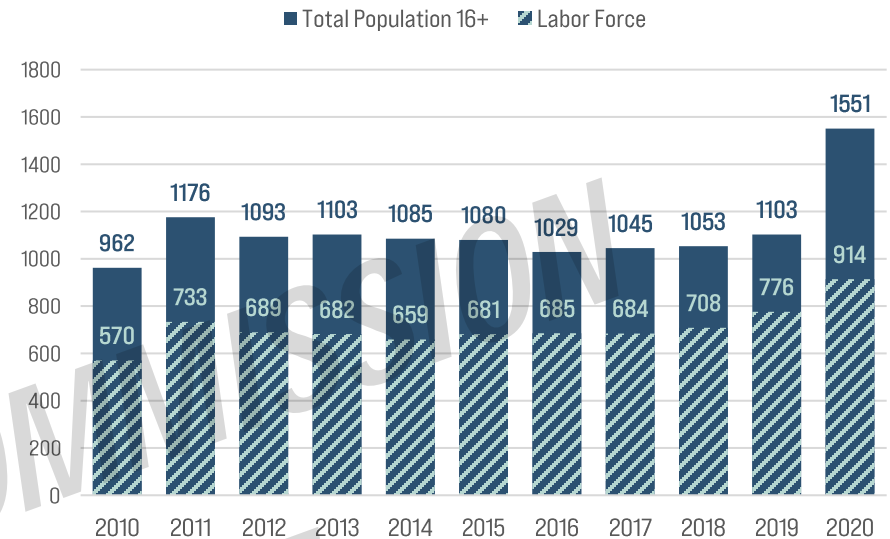
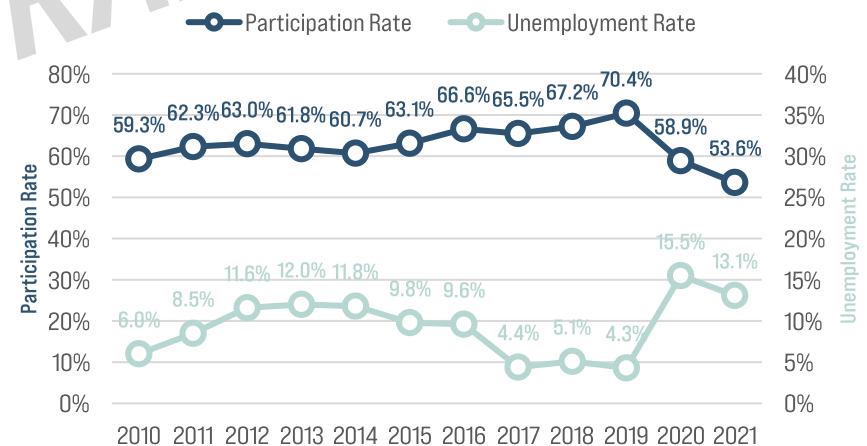


Figure X: Change in Participation & Unemployment Rates, 2010-2021



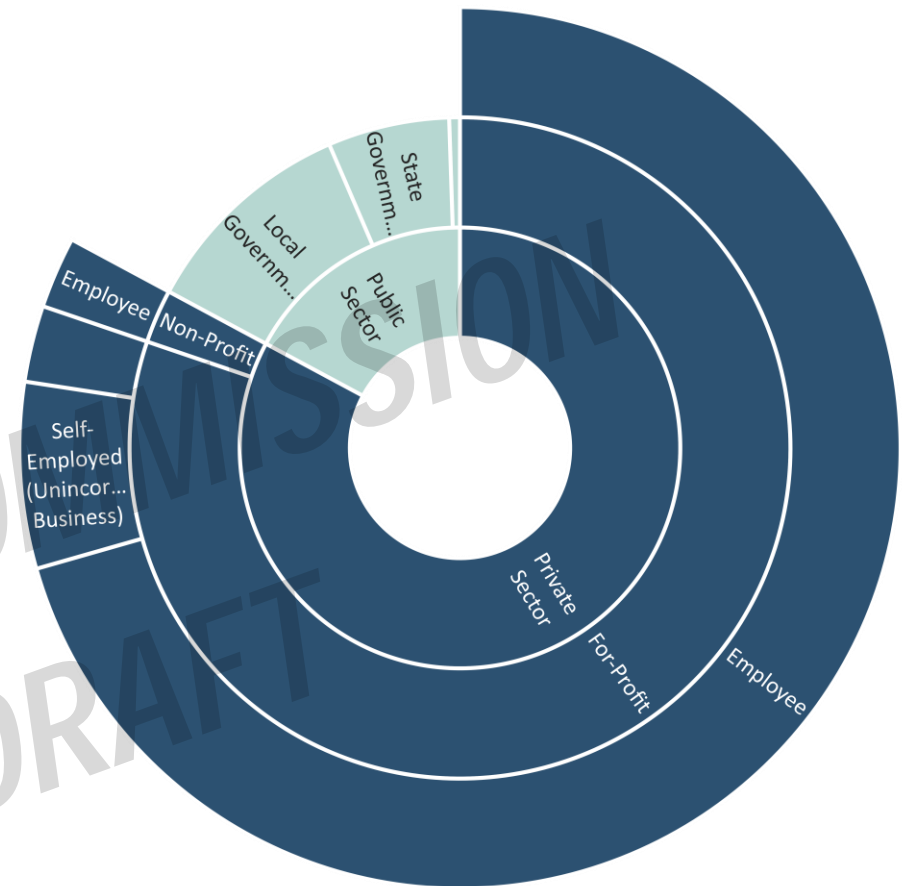
WORK STATUS & CLASS OF WORKER

In addition to the employment status of the labor force, it is also important to understand the characteristics of workers, like the work status, class of worker, and occupation, to maximize potential economic and workforce development opportunities. In 2020, there were an estimated 772 Awendaw residents who were actively employed, of which 571 people, or about 75%, were full-time, year-round (FT-YR) employees. Considering over one fourth of Awendaw’s population in 2020 were older adults (65+), this number was unexpectedly normal and on par with County and state averages, which suggests that most of the older adults that live or move to Awendaw are or will be fully retired, i.e., not working part-time while retired.

It is also common for an employee, or worker, to describe their job, business, or occupation as being part of the private or public sector of the economy, in other words, the class of worker. The public sector includes all local, state, and federal government agencies while the private sector includes all other businesses, non-profits, and organizations not owned or controlled by the government. Naturally, there are pros and cons to working in either sector of the economy with some of the main differences being in compensation (pay, raises, healthcare, retirement, etc.), flexibility in work hours, paid time off, and job stability. However, a healthy economy comprises of a balance between both sectors of the economy and the class of workers.

In 2020, there were 419 FT-YR people employed as private for-profit wage & salary workers, 16 of which were self-employed in their own incorporated business (entrepreneurs). On the flip side, there were 98 FT-YR people employed as government workers, most of which were local and state government employees. **Figure X** breaks down the 2020 total FT-YR employees by class of worker, illustrating the private-to-public sector ratio of Awendaw’s labor force being about 83:17, which was similar to Charleston County and South Carolina.

Figure X: Class of Worker of Full-Time, Year-Round Employees, 2020



OCCUPATIONS OF THE LABOR FORCE

Every employee, whether employed full-time or part-time and in the private or public sector, has a set of tasks or activities that they must perform as part of their job duty. When collecting and reporting on employment and occupational data, the US Census and US Bureau of Labor Statistics understands the individualistic role of each job while recognizing the similarities in tasks across different jobs. These similarities then define and form the basis for each occupational class. The Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system is commonly used to help simplify the nearly 900 different detailed occupations into 23 major groups. In the case of Awendaw, these major groups were simplified even further into even more broad occupational classes, as shown on Table X.

Awendaw has a well-balanced distribution across the five main occupational classes. As detailed on Table X, some of the largest occupational classes comprise of more working-class jobs, like in construction and building & grounds maintenance. These more manual labor-intensive occupations were dominated mostly by males while females dominated the more service-related occupations, such as in education, healthcare, personal care, and office & administrative support.

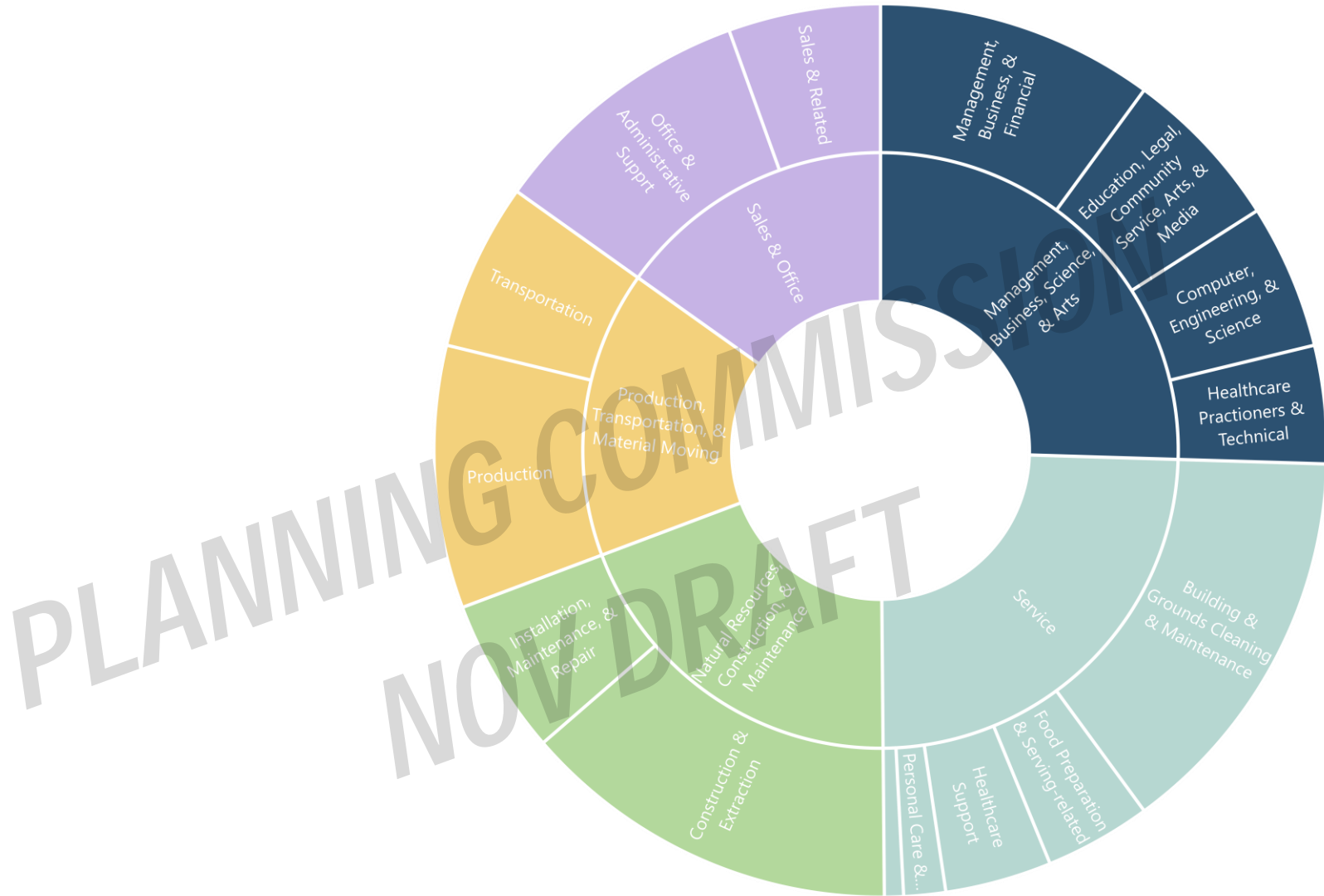
Table X also details the 2020 median earnings of FT-YR employees which measures the individual employees' earnings, as opposed to household or family income. Unsurprisingly, management, business, science, and arts occupations had the highest earnings across the different occupational classes as this group includes typically higher paying jobs like engineers, architects, lawyers, and doctors.

Table X: Occupations of All & Full-Time, Year-Round Employees in 2020

	FT-YR EMPLOYEES	% OF TOTAL	% MALE	% FEMALE	MEDIAN EARNINGS OF FT-YR EMPLOYEES
EMPLOYED POPULATION 16+ WITH EARNINGS	571	100%	60%	40%	\$ 30,524
Management, Business, Science, & Arts	152	26.6%	54%	46%	\$ 44,375
Management, Business, & Financial	59		44%	56%	\$ 52,750
Computer, Engineering, & Science	38		100%	0%	\$ 42,237
Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, & Media	27		22%	78%	\$ 29,896
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	28		43%	57%	\$ 57,083
Service	108	18.9%	42%	58%	\$ 21,083
Healthcare Support	22		0%	100%	\$ 30,167
Protective Service	5		20%	80%	-
Food Preparation & Serving Related	4		100%	0%	\$ 9,833
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	74		54%	46%	\$ 22,594
Personal Care & Service	3		0%	100%	\$ 14,750
Sales & Office	79	13.8%	22%	78%	\$ 32,000
Sales & Related	18		33%	67%	\$ 12,143
Office & Administrative Support	61		18%	82%	33,500
Natural Resources, Construction, & Maintenance	114	20%	100%	0%	\$ 26,563
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	0		-	-	-
Construction & Extraction	85		100%	0%	\$ 43,295
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	29		100%	0%	\$ 6,971
Production, Transportation, & Material Moving	118	20.7%	73%	27%	\$ 31,750
Production	45		49%	51%	\$ 27,014
Transportation	32		100%	0%	\$ 36,000
Material Moving	41		78%	22%	\$ 41,500

Note: The occupation of an employee may differ from the industry of their employer or business, an example being a janitor, nurse, and accountant all have different occupations but may all work at a hospital which is part of the health care industry.

Figure X: Distribution of the Labor Force by Occupation, 2020

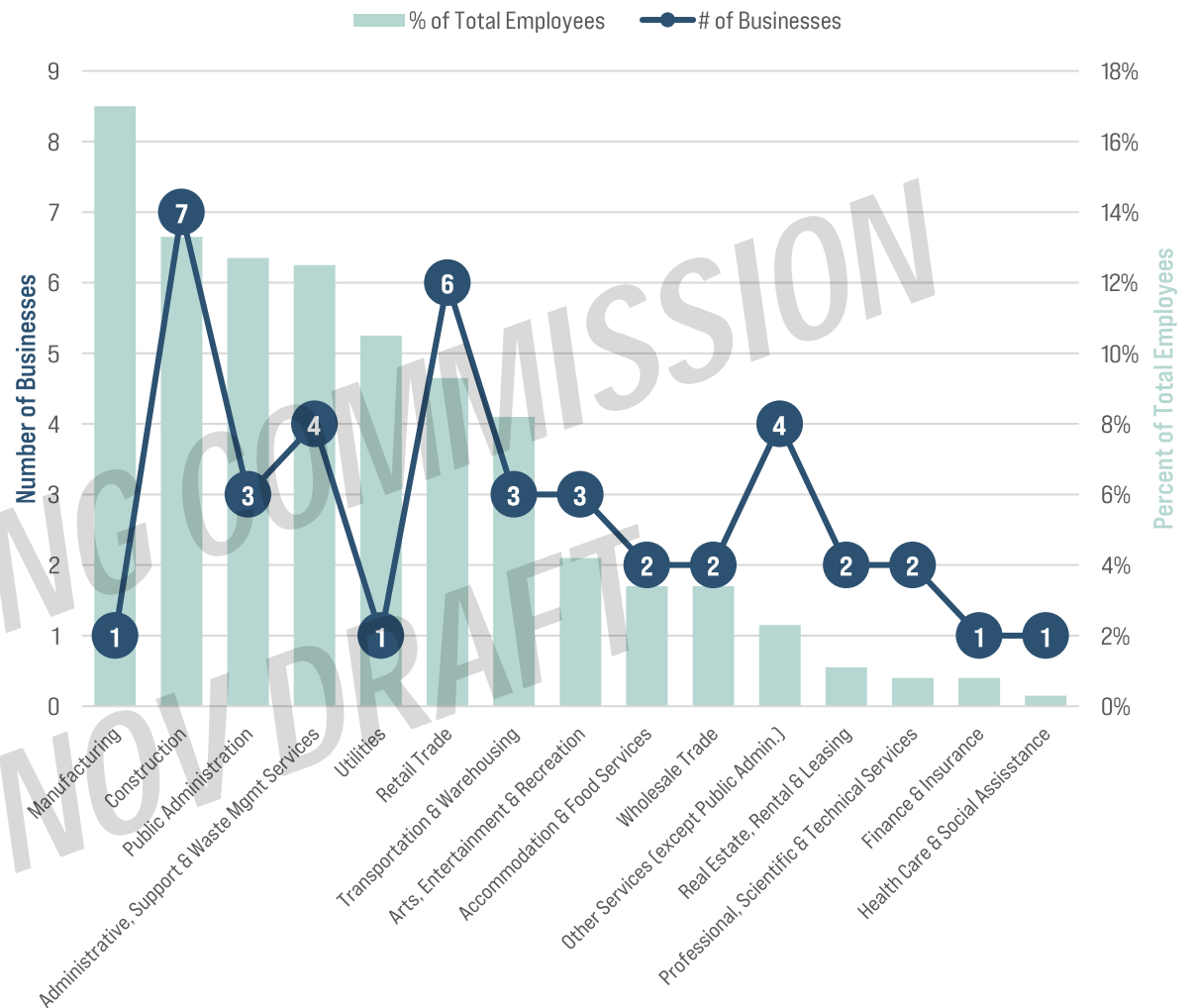


AWENDAW BUSINESSES & INDUSTRIES

Commercial businesses are essential in securing and maintaining financial responsibility and sustainability in any community. According to Esri’s Business Analyst tool, there were an estimated 43 businesses in Awendaw, employing around 350 people in 2023. These businesses are categorized into twenty different industry codes established by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) based on the type of service, business activity, or production process of that establishment. In smaller economies, like Awendaw, it is common for not all NAICS industries to be represented. However, diversity of industries is key in creating a healthy and functioning economy and enhances the economic resiliency of the community as a whole.

Based on this 2023 report, Awendaw has at least one business in 15 of the 20 NAICS industries. The diversity among businesses and employees is a strength for Awendaw as it enhances the Town’s economic resiliency in the event of a national or regional decline in any particular industry. As seen in Figure X, industries like Construction and Retail Trade, have a high number of businesses while also employing a sizeable number of people. This provides current, potential, and future employees with several employment options as well as a variety of goods and services offered to residents. The Manufacturing and Utility industries, on the other hand, are more vulnerable industries as large numbers of employees are employed through a small number of businesses.

Figure X: Number of Businesses & Percent of Employees in Awendaw by NAICS Industry Code, 2023



Note: Five industries (Educational Services, Management of Companies & Enterprises, Information, Mining, and Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting) are not shown on Figure X due to no businesses or employees falling under those classifications.

TRANSPORTATION INVENTORY

A safe and functioning transportation network is paramount for upholding the quality of life of a community. People in Awendaw rely on the network of roads, bike & pedestrian paths, and transit routes for them to conduct their day-to-day activities, like commuting to & from work, traveling to school, exercising, running errands, and leisurely drives. In addition to people, a transportation network connects the local economy to other local and regional markets, allowing for the movement of goods and services. Therefore, understanding the circulation and characteristics of the people, goods, and services moving through Awendaw’s transportation network is key to future transportation planning efforts.

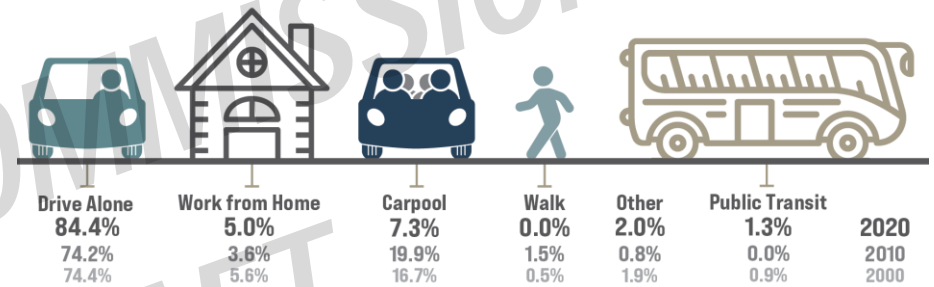
COMMUTER TRENDS

For most people, commuting is an unavoidable aspect in our daily routine and can heavily influence a person’s health, happiness, and overall quality of life. In rural communities, like Awendaw, the impacts from commuting are slightly different than urban or suburban communities like Mt. Pleasant or Charleston. Awendaw residents are likely subject longer commute times and greater miles traveled as opposed to severe traffic congestion, noise pollution, or frequent accidents. This is in part due to Awendaw’s rural location and low population density. In general, understanding the role and flow of commuters through the local system is key to maintaining an efficient and functioning transportation network.

The origin and destination of commuters are fundamental aspects in assessing commuter trends. According to the Census on the Map tool, there are three types of commuters: those that travel to Awendaw for work (**Inflow**), those that travel from Awendaw to work (**Outflow**), and those that travel in Awendaw for work (**Internal**). Given the limited number of businesses located in Town, it was expected that there be more outflow commuters than inflow or internal. Some of Awendaw’s top outflow commuter destinations in 2020 include Mt. Pleasant (23%), Charleston (18%), and North Charleston (18%). These areas are among the top employment centers in the region.

About 97% of households in Awendaw had access to at least one vehicle in 2020, a majority of which actually had three or more vehicles available. With that being said, most commuters in 2020 relied on these private vehicles as a means to travel to work as opposed to alternate forms of transportation, such as public transit, walking, or biking. Still, it is important to note the 12-point decrease in commuters carpooling between 2010 and 2020 while commuters driving alone increased by a similar margin. Although social distancing from the COVID-19 pandemic likely had an impact on carpooling in 2020, annual commuter trends between 2010 and 2020 actually revealed a gradual decline among carpoolers.

PRIMARY MODES OF TRANSPORTATION TO WORK BY AWENDAW RESIDENTS



NUMBER OF INFLOW & OUTFLOW COMMUTERS, 2020



Commuter trends were further influenced by the state of the national economy. In the years after the 2008 recession, **Figure X** shows that households in Awendaw had fewer vehicles available. However, this trend reverses in 2015 as households begin to purchase additional vehicles, a testament to the power of the national economy and resiliency of the local community.

DISTANCE & TRAVEL TIME TO WORK

The Census on the Map tool also reports on the distance traveled between an outflow commuters' home (Awendaw) and work destination. This, coupled with the travel time to work, will highlight any changes in the actual commute for Awendaw residents. The most notable changes illustrated in **Figure X** were the 15-point shift in residents traveling farther followed by the 8-point increase in residents traveling over an hour for work. These trends support the over four-minute increase in the average travel time for Awendaw residents, increasing from 31.7 minutes in 2010 to 36.0 minutes in 2020. Comparatively, the average travel time in Charleston County as a whole only increased by about two minutes during the same time period.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Awendaw has limited dedicated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure which given the rural nature of the community, is likely intentional. Typically, rural communities rely more on private vehicles and public transportation due to the greater distances to and from the destination. Awendaw is no exception as no commuters in 2020 reported to walk or bike as a means of commuting to work. Common bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure found in rural areas could include sidewalks, dedicated on-road bike lanes, and off-road hiking or biking trails. Although there is limited bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure intended for commuting in Awendaw, there are two main recreational biking and hiking routes currently accessible to users, the Palmetto Trail and the East Coast Greenway, and one planned recreational trail, the Wappetaw Trail. More information on these recreational trails will be discussed in the Community Facilities Element.

Figure X: Change in a Household's Vehicle Availability, 2010-2020

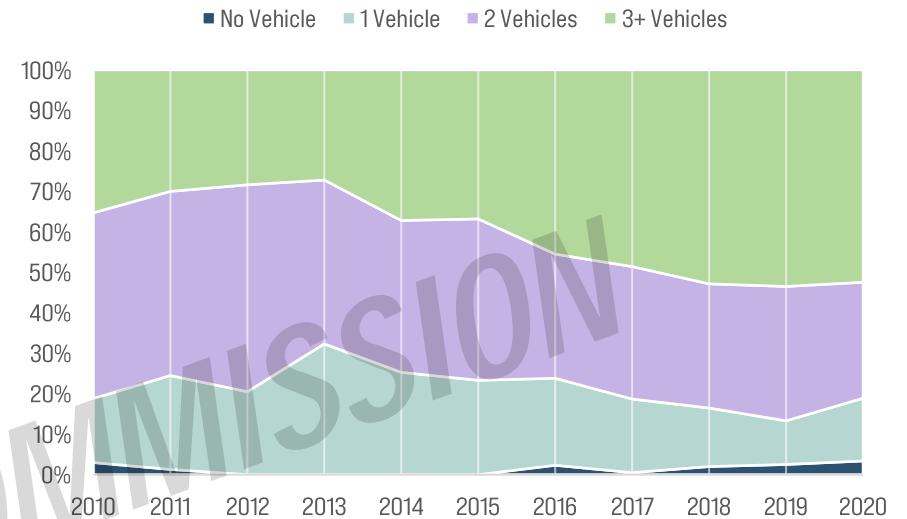
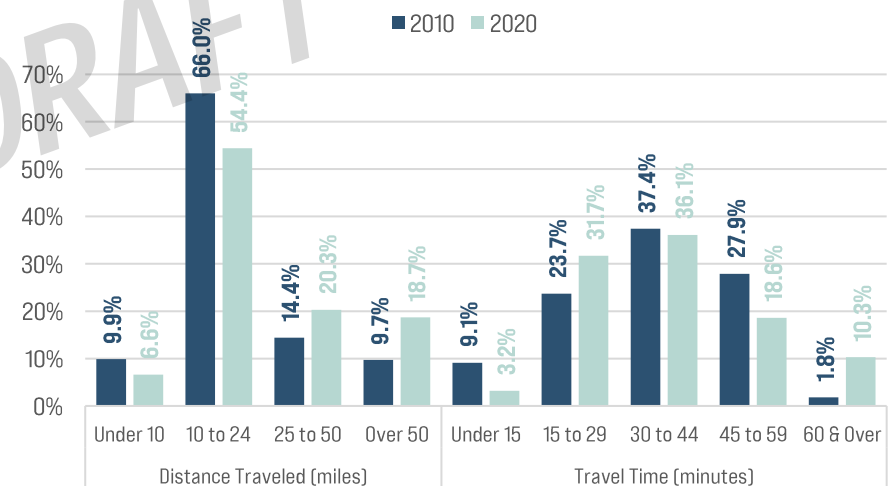


Figure X: Change in Distance & Travel Time to Work, 2010-2020



ROADWAYS

With the coast and National Forest acting as transportation barriers, Awendaw has a limited number of access points in and out of Town. US Highway 17 (US 17), which bisects the Town, serves as the primary corridor in, out, and through Awendaw. Consequently, this lack of connectivity creates a high level of dependency on US 17 for commuters, travelers, commercial traffic, businesses, and emergency services. As the name would suggest, US 17 is part of the US Interstate Highway System and is therefore maintained by SCDOT. US 17 is currently constructed as a two-lane divided highway with frequent access points connecting to offshoot roads, driveways, parking lots, businesses, and service roads. Despite these frequent connections, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) classifies US 17 as a Primary Arterial roadway which are commonly characterized as roadways intended for longer trips at higher speeds with minimal or controlled access points. Some of Awendaw's main offshoot roadways from US 17 include Steed Creek Road, FHWA Major Collector class, Seewee Road and Doar Road, both FHWA Minor Collector class, and Guerins Bridge Road and 15 Mile Landing Road, both FHWA Local Road class.

The rural nature of Awendaw has allowed for a series of sporadic local roads, streets, and driveways to develop throughout Town. FHWA characterizes these roads or streets as being intended for short trips at low speeds with the greatest access to abutting properties. This has created a complex network of publicly and privately owned and maintained streets and driveways that serve the residents and businesses in Town. However, a majority of these local roads and streets eventually lead to US 17, increasing traffic volume and safety concerns, specifically at bottleneck intersections, such as at Doar Road and Seewee Road.

Historically, Awendaw's lack of connectivity has been beneficial for the Town as it has for the most part preserved the rural character of the community. However, as the recently approved residential developments are built and eventually occupied, concerns over safety, traffic congestion, and infrastructure are likely to emerge. According to the BCDCOG's Travel Demand Model (TDM), all major roadways in Awendaw had a level of service rating of A in 2020 (Map X), which indicates that those roadways had free-flowing traffic during peak travel times. By 2045, the TDM forecasts traffic flow changes are likely to occur on Guerins Bridge Road and portions of US 17 (Map Y).

TRANSIT SERVICES

There are two public transit providers in the BCD Region, CARTA which serves the urban areas and TriCounty Link (TCL) which serves the rural areas. Awendaw, being located in rural Charleston County, is served only by TCL Route C203 which operates between Mt. Pleasant, Awendaw, and McClellanville. Route C203 runs primarily along US 17 and briefly along Seewee Road with minor spurs to the few dedicated transit stops. With that being said, TCL operates on a flagstop system, meaning that there are few dedicated stops where riders must wait for service. Instead, riders can wave down the TCL bus at any point along the transit route to be picked up. Some of the few dedicated stops include the Wando Crossing Walmart, Oakland Plantation Walmart, US 17/Seewee Rd intersection, Seewee Rd/Simmons Hill Rd intersection, Awendaw Town Hall, US 17/Porcher School Rd intersection and the St. James-Santee Health Center. Furthermore, both Walmart locations also serve as transfer stops where TCL riders can transfer to CARTA.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

The Town of Awendaw has supported various types of land uses throughout its history, including rural living, educational and religious institutions, agriculture, grazing, and conservation. Although most of these land uses are fairly common in rural areas, like Awendaw, the Town has also hosted some more intense land uses, such as commercial timbering/lumbering, phosphate, sand, and clay, mining, and an oyster factory. The history of the Town is but one factor that influences land use patterns in Awendaw. In fact, all other Elements of this Plan have influenced existing land use patterns one way or another, including:

- Demographic Makeup
- Population Growth Trends
- New Housing Developments
- Taxes, Cost of Living, & Affordability
- Access to Community Facilities
- Natural Resources (i.e., Streams, Wetlands, & Floodplains)
- Conservation Efforts
- Public Safety Services
- Utility Infrastructure
- Transportation Network
- Proximity to Employment Centers
- Commuter Trends

After taking these factors into consideration, identifying the current land uses in Town and any land use patterns that have formed over time is often the first step, albeit an important one, in preparing a future land use plan that fulfills the vision of the community.

EXISTING LAND USES

Before identifying the different land uses that currently exist in Awendaw, data from Charleston County Tax Assessor’s Office provided an initial group of land use classifications and a foundation for each property. Using GIS, there were 12 general existing land use categories identified. These categories are as follows:

Conservation

Areas designated as Conservation include properties in which the conservation of resources or wildlife is the primary land use. This mostly includes the land owned by the US Forest Service or US Fish & Wildlife Service.

Agriculture

A broader land use category, areas designated as Agriculture includes larger (and often vacant) properties that are predominantly covered by forestlands and forested wetlands. This is the largest existing land use category, followed closely by Residential – Vacant. The Agriculture category acted as a default for most properties not called out as a specific use by the Tax Assessor’s Office.

Parks/Open Space

The Parks/Open Space category includes properties that are intended for parks, recreation, and open space uses and facilities.

Residential – Single-Family

The third largest existing land use category, areas designated as Residential – Single Family include properties with existing single-family detached homes.

Residential – Manufactured Home

Based mainly on data from the Tax Assessor’s Office, areas designated as Residential – Manufactured Home include properties with existing single-family mobile or manufactured homes.

Residential – Vacant

This category includes vacant parcels that either have been discussed as becoming residential subdivisions in the near future OR are smaller parcels located in between existing residential properties. This is the second largest existing land use category. Given the number of sizable properties designated as Residential Vacant, it is expected that there be more acres of vacant residential properties than occupied properties.

Institutional

Whether privately or publicly owned, areas designated as Institutional generally provide specific services to the community. Some of these uses include schools, religious institutions, cemeteries, community centers, government facilities, and police, fire or EMS stations.

Commercial

One of the broader categories, areas designated as commercial can include a wide range of businesses including retail, restaurants, banks, salons, medical offices, gas stations, convenience stores, outdoor recreation, etc. These land uses are commonly concentrated along heavily traveled roadways, like US 17.

Commercial – Vacant

Similar to the Residential – Vacant, this category includes smaller vacant parcels located in between or adjacent to other commercial uses. Currently, there are more areas of Commercial Vacant properties than Commercial properties.

Warehouse

The smallest existing land use category, areas designated as Warehouse include properties assessed as such by the Tax Assessor’s Office as well as properties used for outdoor storage or the parking of vehicles, machinery, or equipment.

Utilities

Areas designated as Utilities include properties owned by utility providers and/or have specific utility infrastructure on site.

Undevelopable

The Undevelopable category includes all areas that are likely undevelopable due to environmental constraints on the property.

About 35% of Awendaw’s total land area is protected from future development through various forms of conservation efforts. This includes all of the land owned by the US Forest Service and US Fish & Wildlife Service, but consists mostly of properties protected by other federal, state, and local government agencies, private & public land trusts, nature conservancies, and conservation easements. However, what sets these properties apart from the areas designated as Conservation is that they still function as their underlying land use, whether that be residential, agriculture, or a park/open space.

As seen on Map X, the only definitive land use pattern that can be identified in Awendaw was the concentration of non-residential properties, i.e., commercial, warehouse, utilities, and institution, along US 17 and at select intersections. Furthermore, due to the natural development of the Town’s street system over the years, there are no consistent lot patterns between either residential or non-residential properties.

Distribution of Existing Land Uses in Awendaw

