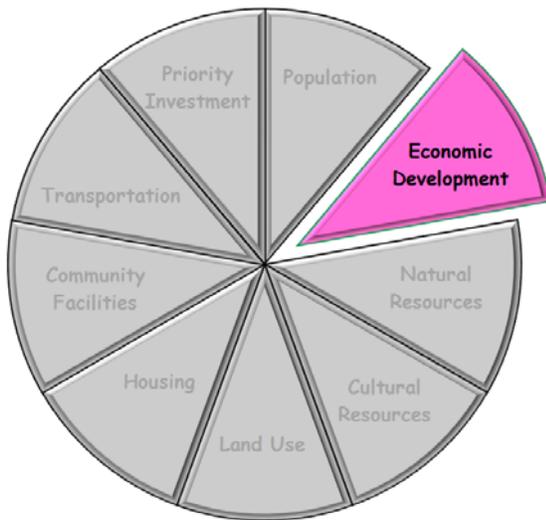


2010 Comprehensive Plan

City of Greer, SC

Section 2: Economic Development



The economic element should include all matters affecting the local economy. The impact of historical trends, an analysis of workforce demographics, and a review of current economic development strategies are just some of the relevant keys to a comprehensive economic base analysis. Tourism, manufacturing and revitalization efforts are possible characteristics that should be considered when relevant to development strategies and conditions. The South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 provides the following guidelines of the vital characteristics for the economic development element:

- ❖ Historic trends and projections based on the numbers and characteristics of the labor force
- ❖ Where the people who live in the community work
- ❖ Where people who work in the community reside
- ❖ Available employment characteristics and trends
- ❖ An economic base analysis

Historical Context

The economy of the area around what is known today as Greer was agriculturally based until the mid 19th Century and the construction of the railroad. Development toward the birth of the town occurred in 1873 when the Richmond and Danville Air Line Railway (now the CSX Railway) established a line between Atlanta and Charlotte. A station was built on land that belonged to James Manning Greer, and was named Greer’s Station. The first post office was located in the new depot, Greer’s Depot. Around this time merchants, blacksmiths and physicians began to set up shop in what is now the downtown area of Greer. In 1900, Greer’s first bank, The Bank of Greer’s, opened.



Greer's Depot

Piedmont and Northern laid a second railroad line through Greer in 1914. With two active train lines, Greer became an attractive site for commerce. The railway meant big business for local farmers, enabling them to ship their crops, mainly cotton and peaches, out of state. Greer also became a textile-manufacturing center, with flourishing mills that included Victor, Franklin, Apalache and Greer Mills. The communities that grew up around the mills were as close-knit as the outlying farming communities.

After World War II, the city began to grow and diversify its industrial base. A new hospital and high school were built. People came to downtown Greer from Spartanburg and Greenville to shop.

In the early 1960s, Interstate 85 was opened, as well as the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport. The fellowship that had begun in the mill villages proved to be Greer's strongest asset. As the textile industry began to derail in the 1970s and 1980s, threatening to turn Greer into a ghost town, the citizens rallied and worked together to recruit new industry. Since the 1990s, Greer has experienced some incredible economic changes starting with the opening of the BMW Manufacturing Plant.



Workforce Trends

Table 2-1 shows Labor Force Status in 1990 and 2000. As the city's population increased during this time the total number of persons in the labor force increased by 74.3% from 4,760 to 8,295. As a percentage of total persons 16 years or older, there were 58.7% people in the labor force in 1990 and 65.0% in 2000. Civilian labor unemployment improved from 6.5% in 1990 to 6.0% in 2000. There are no current estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau regarding Labor Force Status estimates for the City of Greer.

**Table 2-1
Labor Force Status 1990 and 2000**

	1990	2000
Total Persons 16 years and over	8,115	12,768
In labor force	4,760	8,295
Civilian labor force	4,750	8,259
Employed	4,442	7,761
Unemployed	308	498
Percent of civilian labor force	6.5%	6.0%
Armed Forces	10	36
Not in labor force	3,355	4,473

U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder

Table 2-2 shows Employment by Industry Type for Greer’s employed population 16 years and older since 1980. With population growth, the demand for services increases. This is reflected in a constant growth trend in that sector since 1980.

**Table 2-2
Employment by Industry Type**

Employment Category	1980	1990	2000	2007*
Employed population (16 years and over)	4,905	4,442	7,761	10,032
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	59	83	20	154
Construction	312	424	707	882
Manufacturing	2,410	1,428	1,754	1,751
Transportation, utilities, Information	193	216	714	589
Wholesale, retail Trade	825	1,006	1,350	1,937
Finance, insurance, real estate	196	268	447	490
Services**	804	947	2,617	4,009
Public Administration	106	70	152	220

*Estimated

U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder

**Professional, scientific, management, administrative, waste mgt., educational, health and social, arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodations, food, other

From 1980 to 1990, Greer lost 9.4% of its total labor force with manufacturing employment — a decline of nearly 1,000 jobs. While some of this decrease can be attributed to retirement and transfers, most of it reflects the changes in the textile industry. By 2000, the diversification of the area’s economy was in full swing, with growth in other manufacturing industries as the textile industry began to slow down due to closings and automation.

From 1990 to 2000, all sectors experienced significant increases in the total number of jobs — except agriculture, which continued to decrease. Of the total employed population, the biggest gain was made in the service sector, which increased by 12.4% from 21.3% to 33.7% — an increase of 1,670 jobs. After experiencing significant job loss from 1980 to 1990, the manufacturing sector reversed course by adding 326 jobs. The circumstance of this dramatic increase in the total labor force and industry composition is the result of the economic development strategies put into place in the 1990s that attracted new manufacturing companies like BMW and their support businesses that located in the area.

U.S. Census Bureau estimates from 2007 show that while employment in the manufacturing industry has held steady since 2000, there have been continued increases in almost all other sectors, especially the service industry which employs one of every four workers. Table 2-3 provides details on the major employers for Greer.

Table 2-3
Major Employers in Greer

Company/Organization	# of Emp.	Major Product/Service	Type
BMW Manufacturing Corporation	5,000	Automobiles	Mfg
Mitsubishi Polyester Film LLC	662	Polyester Film	Mfg
Greer Memorial Campus	500	Health Services	Non-Mfg
Cryovac Division-Sealed Air Corporation	1152	Plastic Packaging Material	Mfg
Honeywell Engine Systems & Services	500	Parts for Gas Turbine Engines	Mfg
Ashmore Brothers	180	Road Building	Mfg
Michelin North America	952	Radial Truck Tires	Mfg
City of Greer	203	Government	Non-Mfg
Lear Corporation	392	Automotive Seats	Mfg
CDS Ensembles Inc	162	Bedding Manufacturer	Mfg
Greer Commission of Public Works	136	Utility	Non-Mfg
Creform Corporation	150	Modular Material Handling Systems	Mfg

Greer Development Corporation, 2008

Economic Development Strategies since 1999

The economic circumstances of the 1990s, among other reasons, prompted the City of Greer to begin an annexation strategy for the purpose of economic growth. During this period, the announcements of the expansion of the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport and the location of the BMW Automobile Manufacturing Plant in the Greer area enhanced the development potential of the Greer community.



Together, the City of Greer, the Greer Commission of Public Works, the Greater Greer Development Corporation, the Greer City Development Corporation, the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce, and the Greer Strategic Planning Committee established a broad-based, long-range plan for community development and quality of life enhancement. To gain the influence and credibility necessary to attract participation and support from all segments of the community regarding economic development, these organizations pooled their resources to form the Partnership for Tomorrow. Through a pair of five-year campaigns— one beginning in 1998 and the other in 2003 —the Partnership for Tomorrow raised \$4 million and developed a strategic plan for community revitalization and economic development.

In 2002, the Greater Greer Development Corporation and the Greer City Development Corporation were consolidated into the Greer Development Corporation as a public/private partnership between the City of Greer and the Greer Commission of Public Works, the Partnership for Tomorrow, the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce, and private sector businesses. With three full-time employees the economic development corporation is dedicated to recruiting and retaining industrial, commercial, retail, and office employment and investment.



In addition, the city participates annually in contributing development projects and strategies that support the Appalachian Regional Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Greenville County. The CEDS is a five-year strategic plan for economic development mandated through the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The South Carolina Appalachian Council of Governments prepares the plan for this region and includes the development projects for the City of Greer under Greenville County. The current planning period is for 2007 through 2012. The purpose of the CEDS is similar to that of the comprehensive plan but on a regional scale. Its mission is to foster communication and partnership among the public, government decision makers, and businesses to better understand and improve economic conditions in relation to the various planning efforts throughout the region.

With these partnerships in place, the city moved forward to develop strategies that would form the basis of the following economic development goals and objectives for the comprehensive plan in 1999.

An Educated Population and Workforce

An overwhelming consensus on the key to successful economic development and a vibrant community was through the provision of an excellent learning environment supported by the business community and residents at all levels. This focus on education would provide the basis for a learned and skilled labor force and help provide opportunities for employment. There are several examples available of efforts over the past ten years to support this goal but a few key initiatives are highlighted here.

The Greer community has access to excellent education opportunities at both the primary and secondary level. The city works closely with Spartanburg County School District Five and the Greenville County School District to support efforts to address a growing population and to meet needs for modern facilities in the Greer area.



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Details regarding educational facilities are included in Community Facilities section, but since 1999 there have been several school renovations and additions as well as new school construction. These include Woodland Elementary, Greer High, Greer Middle, Riverside Middle, and in 2009, Abner Creek Elementary. Also, the old Greer High School was converted into the J. Harley Bonds Career Center, a vocational education center.



Abner Creek Elementary School



Greater Greer Education Foundation

In 2005, the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce established a foundation to further education, promote social welfare, and advance human capital. In 2009, the foundation was rebranded as the Greater Greer Education Foundation in order to focus its efforts on providing grants to schools and educational organizations that serve the Greer area and to sustain and develop programs that will prepare the next generation workforce for business and industry.

Many local industries and businesses partner with secondary school institutions to develop and recruit a diversified and well-educated workforce. BMW’s partnership with Clemson University on the International Center for Automotive Research is a good example of this. Undoubtedly the city should continue to work with community and business leaders to develop programs and initiatives that create a well-educated community with the skills necessary to retain and attract future businesses.



Development of a Local Public Transportation Network

In order to meet increases in demand for public transportation services, an emphasis was placed on communicating with potential transit providers in Greenville and Spartanburg to include the Greer community as a part of a system that would transfer passengers to and from places of employment, shopping, and recreation within the city and counties.

Efforts to develop a public transportation network throughout the Greer community continue, but are hindered by various obstacles such as general public apathy and a lack of regional transportation initiatives. Partnering with the Greenville Transit Authority was recommended, but that system has experienced sporadic ridership the past few years (with only about 2,500 riders per day in 2005). This is due mainly to the lack of a dense, urban environment and sprawl that leads to long transit routes, increases operational costs, and diminishes effective service. However, a comprehensive analysis of public transit options necessary for implementation has not been conducted to date.



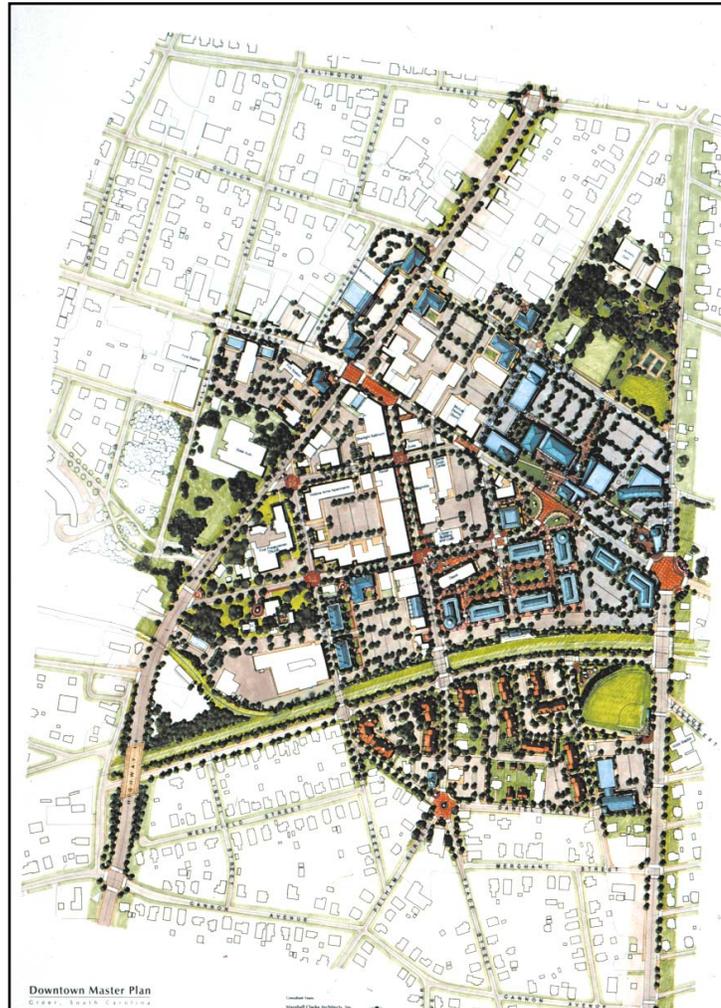
Promotion and Development of the Downtown Area

The downtown area was identified as potentially one of the most economically significant and exciting places to be in the Greer community. In developing the central business district, goals were set to help downtown evolve with its own sense of identity that complemented rather than competed with other commercial and business areas within the community.

The Partnership for Tomorrow, a partnership among the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce, The Greer Development Corporation, and the City of Greer, initiated a campaign to promote the economic development opportunities and quality of life standards available in the city's downtown central business district.

Funded through the Partnership, a strategic plan was developed that included a master plan, performing property research and analysis, development of a plan for business recruitment, developing economic incentives packages, expanding downtown parking, developing a new municipal civic center, facilitating community input, identifying needed public infrastructure improvements, and marketing the area as the place to be for evening activities and entertainment.

Additional steps were taken to have the downtown district designated as a Historic District to preserve and protect the historical integrity of its buildings. With this designation, business and property owners would be eligible for financial assistance through grants and low cost loans to renovate and maintain their properties. These funding opportunities would be marketed as financial incentives for redevelopment opportunities in the downtown area.



GREER **STATION**

Significant development has occurred in the downtown area as a result of these initiatives. New retail businesses and restaurants have opened and enjoyed great success. Funds through historic preservation and Partnership for Tomorrow grants have been used to renovate many properties. In 2008, the new Police and Courts Complex and City Hall building were completed and the Greer City Park opened in 2009. The downtown business district has been branded Greer Station with the catchphrase “Hip and Historic.” Downtown parking has increased and infrastructure improvements to sidewalks, lighting, and crosswalks have been completed. The downtown district was successful in attaining historic designation and efforts are underway to establish a Board of Architectural Review to provide oversight of the historical overlay and allow for grant funding opportunities.

Compete in the Global Economy

The announcement of the BMW Automobile Manufacturing Plant locating in the Greer community put the area in a much better position to compete in the global economy. It was recommended that Greer’s leadership seize the opportunity to further establish existing relationships with regional, state, and international entities to promote the Greer area for economic development purposes.



BMW Manufacturing Co., Greer SC

As part of this strategy, it was recommended to continue to support retention of existing businesses by providing assistance where possible. As a result, the basis of the city’s economic development strategies over the past 10 years has been one of strong collaboration between the city and the business community. Important to both recruitment and retention is the effective promotion of amenities the city can offer businesses.

Growth in the Greer area exemplifies the benefits of partnerships with a variety of expanding and new companies in the area in recent years. The city, in partnership with the Greer Development Corporation, has enjoyed tremendous success in recruiting new industrial and commercial businesses in a variety of sectors. Since 1999, the types of businesses announcing capital growth for the Greer area have ranged from plastics, metal working, textiles, automotive, warehouse and distribution, chemical firms, and other commercial establishments. Greer Development Corporation has created a Target Industry Profile, shown in Figure 1-4, for recruitment of industry and businesses that complement or expand on existing businesses.

Figure 1-4
Target Industry Profile

Manufacturing

- Automotive Suppliers & Support Services
- Aircraft Parts Manufacturing, Service & Maintenance
- Fabricated Metal Products
- Plastics
- Wood Products & Services
- Chemicals

Warehouse / Distribution / Logistics Services

Health Care Services / Research & Development

Commercial

- Restaurants
- Home Furnishings and Accessories
- Apparel Stores
- Bookstores
- Specialty Food Stores
- Specialty Retail
- Sporting Goods/Bicycles
- Jewelry
- Toys, Games, Hobby
- Back Office Operations
- Information Services
- Movie Theatre

As a result of these efforts, new and expanding businesses in the Greer area have invested more than \$1.6 billion and created more than 4,900 new jobs over the past six years,. The multiplier effect of these projects has been a net increase in economic activity of more than \$300 million annually and more than 5,400 new jobs.

Table 2-4 details business development in 2008 and typifies the success the city has had since 1999 in attracting economic growth to the community.

Table 2-4
2008 Economic Activity in the Greer Area

Name	Type	Investment	Jobs
Cafe Rivera	Restaurant	\$25,000	5
Home Helpers and Direct Link	Service	\$25,000	25
Indigo Skye Photography	Retail/Service	\$15,000	2
Pollywogs	Retail	\$15,000	1
Liberty National Insurance	Service	\$15,000	2
Northstar Creative	Service	\$15,000	1
Girlfriends 205	Retail	\$15,000	1
Ilgin Bearing	Mfg	\$38,000,000	120
MC Tool	Mfg	\$2,500,000	20
MGA Research	Service	\$3,000,000	5
Cafe Mundo	Restaurant	\$15,000	2
The Grapevine	Retail/Service/Art	\$15,000	1
Kids R Kids	Service	\$3,000,000	30
Baier and Michels	Distribution/Mfg	\$25,000	2
Lear Corporation	Mfg/Assembly	\$10,800,000	140
Synapse Chiropractic	Service	\$20,000	3
Rental One	Service	\$250,000	11

Greer Development Corporation

Since 1998, 72% of new jobs and 93% of capital investment have come from the expansion of existing business. To facilitate business retention and expansion, the city implemented a program in partnership with Greer Development through which business owners may meet with city officials to discuss concerns and initiate requests for assistance regarding matters that will help the success of their businesses.



Cities Mean Business

To effectively communicate the city’s economic development interests with elected officials at the state and federal level, the city began utilizing a lobbying firm in 2007. In addition, the city implements other advocacy measures such as those found in the Cities Means Business program. This program was implemented statewide by the Municipal Association of South Carolina in 2008 to increase awareness of the important relationship between strong cities and the state’s economic competitiveness. The program promotes how cities are the engines that drive economic development through comprehensive service provision and providing a highly positive quality of life — two key elements that have made businesses realize why Greer is a great place to live, work and play.

Meet Infrastructure Needs

Having adequate infrastructure planning and development to address future economic development needs was also addressed in the 1999 plan. It was recommended that economic development strategies should capitalize on the utility infrastructure in place with support given to future planning initiatives of the Greer Commission of Public Works, the primary water, sewer, electric, and gas service provider for the city and parts of the surrounding community. It was also recommended that, because of Greer’s location within two counties, there should be coordination with the South Carolina Department of Transportation, the Greenville Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS), and the Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS) to address roadway planning.



The city has actively followed the recommendations made in this regard, enjoying a close working relationship with Greer CPW to address infrastructure needs and planning. During the past 10 years, significant improvements to and expansion of water and sewer infrastructure has gone hand-in-hand with economic development. In addition, the city has made significant strides in storm water management for commercial and industrial development in accordance with state and federal requirements.

The city has also worked closely with federal, state, county, and regional transportation authorities to: widen existing arteries into the city; to construct a new overpass at I-85 and Highway 14; and to construct the new J. Verne Smith Parkway (Hwy. 80) as a secondary transportation route to U.S. 29. These transportation improvements, as economic development initiatives, have led to projects such as the Gateway International Business Center. The city has also maintained a proactive and comprehensive road management program in coordination with GPATS and SPATS by allocating matching funding each year to complete surface paving based on road quality and use.



Community Involvement and Information Sharing

The need for community leaders to communicate with the citizens regarding the challenges and issues facing the Greer community in effectively managing the area’s growth was recognized as a vital component of the plan. To that end, the city has taken care to make sure that the community has the opportunity to receive information and provide comment on economic growth and management. The Greer Development Corporation has a detailed public website that development strategies and objectives based on contextual data and analysis regarding growth patterns and needs identified throughout the community. Citizens are afforded the



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opportunity to attend planning commission and council meetings to follow the decisions being made by the city's leadership and to provide comment during public forum and petitioner periods of their agendas.

Goals

Since 1999, the city has continued to be proactive in refining sound economic development strategies in partnership with the Greer Development Corporation, the Partnership for Tomorrow, the Greer Commission of Public Works, the Greater Greer Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations. Each of these organizations has in turn developed programs of work and strategies that reflect the cooperative efforts among each other. With that in mind the city will implement strategies to attain the following goals.

Continue to develop the downtown as a unique commercial center for the community.

- Work with partner organizations to update the downtown master plan.
- Re-establish and support the Board of Architectural Review.
- Assist downtown property owners in attaining property improvement funding.
- Preserve and expand design standards for the central city areas.
- Continue to advance the Railroad Relocation Plan.
- Successfully recruit a unique retail anchor for the downtown.
- Market the residential potential of downtown to developers.
- Continue to develop event programming in Greer City Park and Events Center.

Continue to develop a marketable identity for Greer.

- Continue to work with partners to market the "Hip and Historic Greer Station" identity for downtown.
- Utilize professional services to develop a community wide identity for Greer as a great place to live, work and play.
- Work with partners to establish a Visitor's Bureau and Visitor's Center
- Develop a regional tourism strategy with surrounding communities.
- Incorporate Greer City Park and Events Center in marketing identity.

Continue to develop high quality, multi-national, and diversified industrial and commercial economic base

- Continue to partner with GDC on the business retention program
- Work with GDC to develop strategies to recruit restaurants and specialty retailers that support multi-national and multi-cultural business communities.
- Review and update commercial and industrial development standards
- Work with GDC to develop timely economic development data and materials.

Implement innovative commercial redevelopment strategies

- Implement decentralization of commercial developments to provide for hubs connected to residential development.
- Foster developer participation in broad land use and design planning.
- Develop redevelopment strategies to address Brownfield sites
- Implement strategies to achieve infill annexation
- Implement green space design standards in land use regulation code.
- Promote mixed use residential and commercial development in the downtown area as well as within commercial hubs that connect communities.
- Utilize project driven Public-Private Partnerships for residential and commercial development.



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