

FACT SHEET

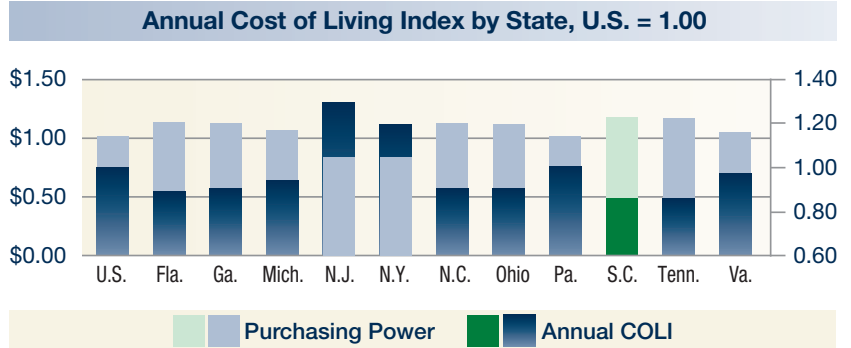
Quality of Life

South Carolina offers a low cost of living, affordable housing, education assets, career opportunities and many leisure activities.

**COST OF LIVING** *Providing More Buying Power*

The Annual Cost of Living Index (COLI) which compares all states, metropolitan areas and counties in the United States for 2006, shows South Carolina has a lower cost of living than neighboring states. South Carolina's effective purchasing power is \$1.16 ( $1.16 = 1/0.86$ ), which means the average value of \$1 across the United States can purchase \$1.16 worth of goods and services in South Carolina.

(Source: South Carolina Department of Commerce "Annual Cost of Living Index," January 2009)



**REAL ESTATE** *More Affordable*

Home values have remained stronger than the United States and neighboring states.

- Seventh best state for home ownership (Source: U.S. Census, 2007 Homeownership Rates by State)
- Thirteenth best state in housing appreciation (Source: Office of Federal Housing Enterprise Oversight, based on fourth quarter 2008 data)
- Fifth best housing market in the country (Source: Home Builders Association of South Carolina)
- The foreclosure rate in South Carolina (1 in 1,090 homes) is half the United States average (1 in 416 homes) (Source: realtytrac.com, December 2008)
- For 2007, 4.2 percent of mortgages in South Carolina were in the sub-prime category compared to 6.1 percent nationally (Source: Mark Nix, Executive Director, Home Builders Association of South Carolina)

**Home Values in Various Areas**

Area	Median Home Price	One-year Home Value Change
United States	\$204,393	-10.6%
Charleston, S.C.	\$200,500	-5.6%
Columbia, S.C.	\$141,500	+6.8%
Greenville, S.C.	\$134,500	+15.9%
Rock Hill, S.C.	\$133,000	+4.3%
Spartanburg, S.C.	\$98,500	+9.4%
Charlotte, N.C.	\$166,500	+2.5%
Raleigh, N.C.	\$210,500	-2.8%
Atlanta, Ga.	\$241,500	-3.6%

(Source: www.rates.banks.com/realestatehome/, February 2009)

**RECENT RANKINGS** *South Carolina & Its Cities Recognized Nationally*

- Top States for Cost of Business - 9th lowest state (Source: CNBC, America's Top States for Business 2008)
- Top States for Economic Competitiveness - 18th best. (Source: American Legislative Exchange Council, March 2009)
- America's Top 100 Places to Live - Greenville was ranked as the 4th best place to live. Four other South Carolina cities made the list: Aiken, Charleston, Columbia and Rock Hill. (Source: relocateamerica.com, May 2008)
- Top Affordable Suburbs - Fort Mill, South Carolina ranked as the 10th most affordable suburb. (Source: BusinessWeek, February 2009)

PUBLIC EDUCATION *Preparing Students for Success***Governor's School for Science & Mathematics**

Established in 1988, the Governor's School for Science & Mathematics (GSSM) is a public high school for academically talented juniors and seniors, offering courses and hands-on opportunities in math, science and technology. GSSM has enjoyed much success including:

- Garnering a top 20 ranking among public elite high schools for the past several years by *Newsweek* magazine
- Offering a top-notch faculty where 80 percent hold Ph.D.s and 100 percent hold a master's degree
- Creating high caliber students that received over \$10 million in scholarships in 2008 alone

(Source: Governor's School for Science & Mathematics)

**America's Best High Schools**

The annual ranking by *U.S. News & World Report* rated North Charleston's Academic Magnet High School ninth among nearly 1,600 ranked as the best in the United States. Data from 2006-2007 were examined to see how the schools served all students, using state proficiency standards as the measuring benchmarks. Schools that met proficiency standards were assessed on how well they prepared students for college-level work.

Eighteen other schools in South Carolina made the list. South Carolina also ranked 20th in a state comparison of all measures, better than North Carolina (25th), Tennessee (33rd) and Georgia (35th). (Source: *U.S. News & World Report*, December 2008)

HIGHER EDUCATION *Providing Better Funding Opportunities for South Carolina Residents*

Approved by the South Carolina General Assembly in 1998, the Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarship is a merit-based scholarship program administered at each eligible public and independent higher education institution in South Carolina. The LIFE Scholarship may be used toward the cost of attending a college for up to eight terms. South Carolina's LIFE Scholarship amounts are over 30 percent higher than comparable programs in other Southeastern states. Over 30,000 students have benefitted from LIFE Scholarships, with more than \$146 million in scholarships awarded to date.

**Scholarships by State, Institution and Amount**

State	Scholarship	2-Year Institution Amount	4-Year Public Institution Amount	4-Year Private Institution Amount
Florida	Florida Bright Futures	\$1,352	\$2,069	\$2,069
Georgia	HOPE Scholarship	\$1,118	\$2,902	\$1,750
Mississippi	MTAG	\$250	\$250	\$250
South Carolina	LIFE Scholarship	\$2,772	\$4,566	\$4,997
Tennessee	HOPE Scholarship	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000

(Source: Compiled by the South Carolina Department of Commerce from state scholarship Web sites, 2009.)

**JOBS** *Offering Challenging Careers*

Since 2003, the South Carolina Centers of Economic Excellence Program has created over 2,000 knowledge-based jobs and has invested over \$500 million in talent and infrastructure at South Carolina's research universities.

South Carolina is ranked as a top five state in employment concentration for several goal-oriented careers including:

- Chemical Engineers
- Industrial Engineers
- Nuclear Technicians
- Nuclear Engineers
- Industrial Engineering Technicians

(Sources: South Carolina Centers of Economic Excellence Comprehensive Program Evaluation 2003-2008, U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2007 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates)

**ACTIVITIES** *Many Enjoyable Opportunities***Natural Settings**

- Appalachian foothills to the northwest
- 187 miles of Atlantic Ocean coastline to the east
- Numerous lakes offer opportunities for boating, fishing, various water sports and outdoor activities

**Golf**

- More than 400 championship golf courses
- Five courses on *Golf Digest's* 100 Greatest Courses
- Seven courses on *Golf Digest's* 100 Greatest Public Courses

**Sports**

- Professional golf in Augusta (The Masters) and Hilton Head (Heritage)
- Professional tennis in Charleston (Family Circle Cup)
- NASCAR races in Darlington and Charlotte