

South Carolina's Economy Continues to Improve

The South Carolina Leading Index (SCLI) was above the 100 mark for the fourth consecutive month in March, showing a consistent sign of improving economic conditions in the state. The March 2012 value of 100.58 is the highest value the index has reached since 2008. Except for the average manufacturing hours worked, which fell 1 percent last month, each of the SCLI economic indicators gained in March. The improving real estate market and decreasing number of initial claims for Unemployment Insurance, which fell 14 percent last month, were the primary contributors to the positive SCLI movement. An SCLI value above 100 indicates improving economic conditions in South Carolina over the next three to six months.

-David Clayton



Source: South Carolina Department of Commerce

Real Estate Market Builds Momentum in March

South Carolina experienced increases in the average single family home sales price, the total number of homes sold in the state and the number of residential building permits issued. The average single family home sales price gained 3.4 percent in March, while the number of homes sold increased 34 percent compared to February. Roughly a quarter of the 1,618 residential building permits issued in March were in the Charleston metro area (412 permits), followed by Columbia (323) and Greenville (202). Each of these regions saw increases in March, while Myrtle Beach was the only metro to experience a decline, down 50 percent from January.

The Research Division at the South Carolina Department of Commerce is a highly-skilled, multidisciplinary team of professionals dedicated to the economic development of South Carolina and the collection, analysis and dissemination of information to support that mission. The Research Division publishes reports and analyses for statewide constituents and proposals for companies considering South Carolina for investment. If you would like to receive Commerce's monthly Economic Outlook, e-mail EconomicOutlook@SCcommerce.com.

KEY S.C. INDICATORS

Income

+0.7%

State Personal Income

grew to \$159 billion in the fourth quarter of 2011. Total growth in 2011 was 4.7%.

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

+2.4%

South Carolina Stock Index

gained 2.08 points in March, closing at 88.49 on the last trading day of the month.

Bloomberg

Employment

+0.9%

Nonfarm Employment

increased 17,100 non-seasonally adjusted jobs in March from the prior month.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+0%

Labor Force

decreased by 805 to 2,157,641 in March from the previous month.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

-0.2%

Unemployment Rate

fell to 8.9 percent for the month of March.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

-1.0%

Manufacturing Weekly Hours

decreased by 0.4 hours to 41.7 hours in March from the previous month.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+3.1%

Available Online Job Postings

rose by 1,600 positions in March to a seasonally-adjusted 52,500 job postings.

The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Index

Real Estate

+3.4%

Single-Family Home Sales Price

increased to \$144,800 in March.

South Carolina Association of Realtors

+11%

Residential Building Permits

increased by 160 permits over the previous month.

U.S. Census Bureau



South Carolina Employment

Non-Seasonally Adjusted Wage and Salary Employment

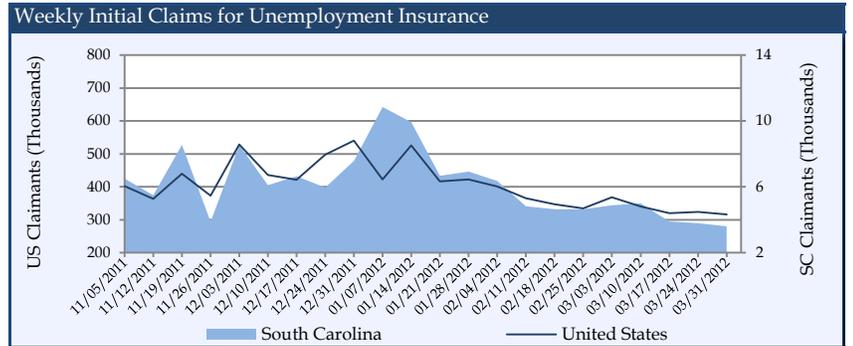
Non-seasonally adjusted nonfarm employment increased from the previous month, gaining a significant 17,100 jobs in March. Continuing the trend of previous months, gains in the service sector drove most of the increase, accounting for 16,600 of the total job gains. The subsectors of Trade, Transportation and Utilities; Professional and Business Services; and Leisure and Hospitality each grew by more than 4,000 jobs. Education and Health Services and Information each lost a marginal number of jobs in March.

Industry Sector	March 2012	Previous Month	Previous Year	% Change Month Ago	% Change Year Ago
Goods Producing	299,600	298,800	294,200	0.27	1.84
Natural Resources and Mining	3,800	3,800	4,000	0.00	-5.00
Construction	74,300	74,100	76,700	0.27	-3.13
Manufacturing	221,500	220,900	213,500	0.27	3.75
Service Providing	1,545,500	1,529,200	1,524,900	1.07	1.35
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	351,400	347,600	345,000	1.09	1.86
Information	26,700	26,800	25,900	-0.37	3.09
Finance	94,900	93,900	95,100	1.06	-0.21
Professional and Business Services	230,100	227,500	225,100	1.14	2.22
Educational and Health Services	219,100	220,000	216,700	-0.41	1.11
Leisure and Hospitality	207,700	199,300	203,700	4.21	1.96
Other Services	69,300	69,200	68,600	0.14	1.02
Total Private	1,498,800	1,483,100	1,474,300	1.06	1.66
Government	346,300	344,900	344,800	0.41	0.44
Total Nonfarm	1,845,100	1,828,000	1,819,100	0.94	1.43

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Weekly Unemployment Claims

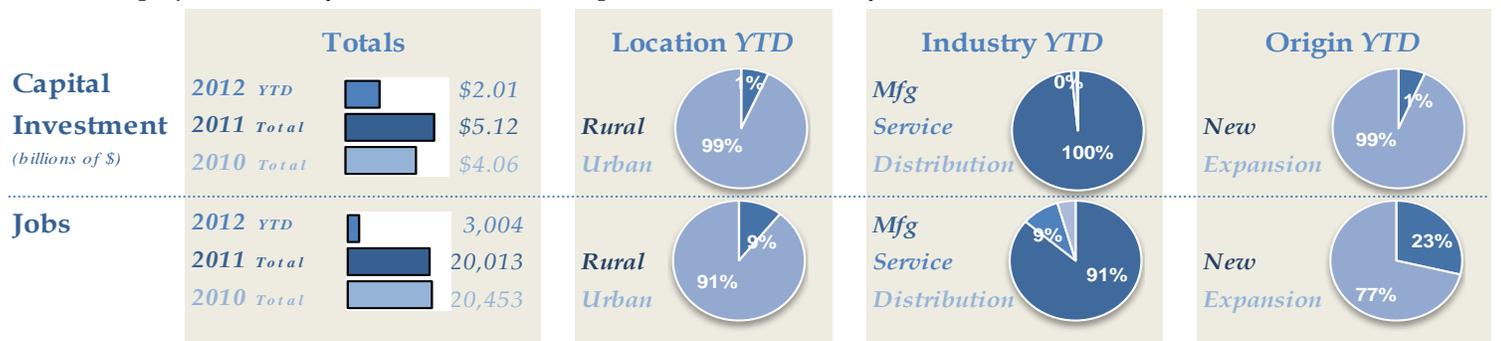
The trend of declining numbers of initial claimants for Unemployment Insurance (UI) continued in March. The weekly average number of initial UI claimants last month was 4,400, similar to levels seen this time last year. The Myrtle Beach metro area saw a 25 percent decline in initial UI claimants, while Charleston saw an 8 percent decline and Greenville experienced a 2.5 percent decline. Columbia, Florence and Spartanburg each experienced moderate increases in claimant activity.



Source: U.S. Department of Labor

Capital Investment and Job Recruitment

Capital Investment and Job Recruitment provide statistics on industry recruitment efforts, detailing upcoming jobs and capital investment projects closed by the South Carolina Department of Commerce year-to-date.



Source: S.C. Department of Commerce Note: Not all closed projects have yet undergone announcement.

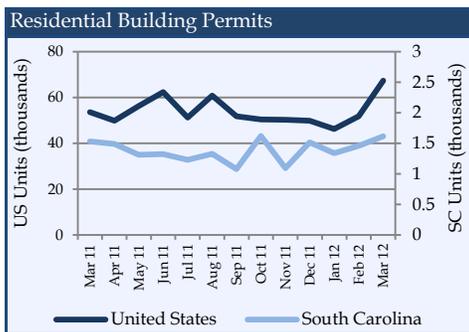
South Carolina Real Estate

Compared to a year ago, the median home sales price is down slightly, to \$144,800 from \$145,000 in March, 2011; however, the month-to-month gain of 3.4 percent is promising. Consistent with the long term trends, the number of homes sold, which increased 34 percent last month, and building permits, which rose 11 percent last month, indicate a strengthening real estate market. Foreclosure activity also shows signs of improvement, as filings decreased 22 percent to 3,396 in March.

	Month	Current	Previous Year	% Change Year Ago	2012 YTD	2011 YTD	% Change YTD
Closings	March	4,405	4,038	9.1%	10,688	9,754	9.6%
Median Sales Price*	March	\$144.8	\$145.0	-0.1%	\$143.0	\$140.0	2.1%
Foreclosures	March	3,396	2,917	16.4%	11,055	8,613	28.4%
Residential Building Permits -Total	March	1,618	1,532	5.6%	4,417	3,569	23.8%
Residential Building Permits -Valuation*	March	\$306,102	\$240,396	27.3%	\$797,536	\$589,081	35.4%

* Thousands of US dollars. Source: S.C. Association of Realtors, RealtyTrac, U.S. Census

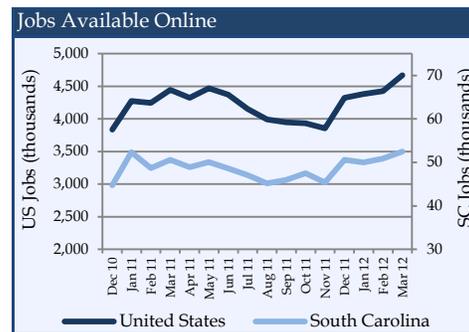
Business Activity



Source: U.S. Census



Source: U.S. Department of Labor



Source: The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Index



Source: South Carolina Department of Revenue



Source: Bloomberg

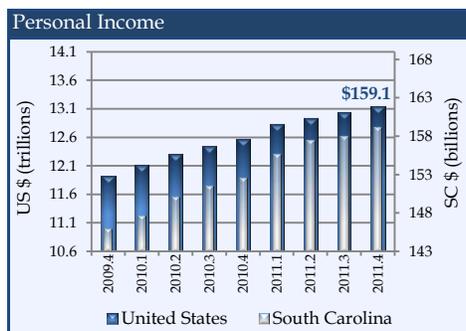


Source: U.S. Department of Labor

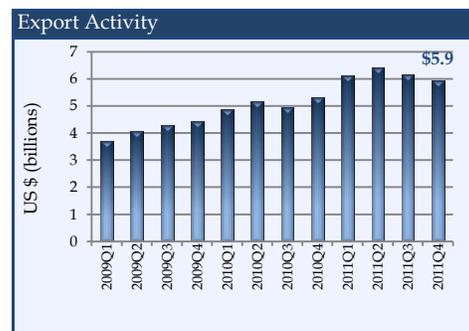
Income and Output



*Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units. Source: SC Ports Authority



Source: U.S. Census



Source: Foreign Trade Division, U.S. Census



South Carolina Regional Update

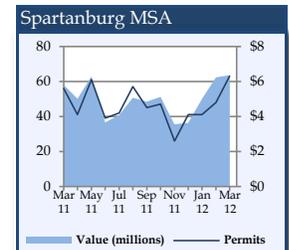
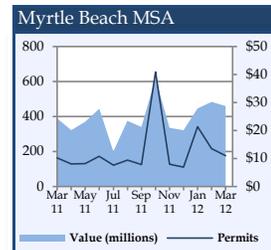
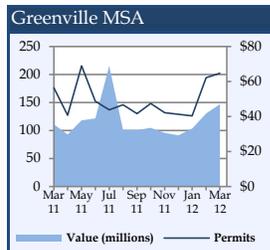
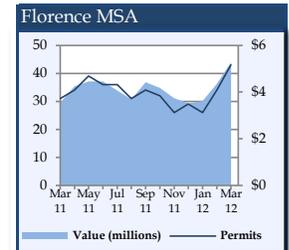
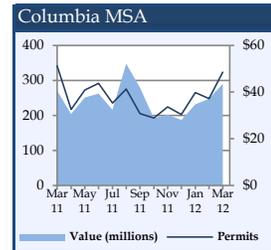
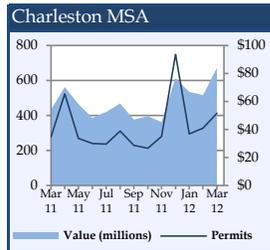
The South Carolina Regional Update provides a snapshot of the most recent economic figures for the six largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the state.

Home Sales

MSA	Indicator	Mar 11	Mar 12
Charleston	Sales Volume	860	898
	Median Price (000's)	\$178	\$182
Columbia	Sales Volume	527	615
	Median Price (000's)	\$132	\$135
Florence	Sales Volume	102	129
	Median Price (000's)	\$115	\$114
Greenville	Sales Volume	578	619
	Median Price (000's)	\$138	\$144
Myrtle Beach	Sales Volume	742	687
	Median Price (000's)	\$145	\$130
Spartanburg	Sales Volume	221	262
	Median Price (000's)	\$106	\$103
South Carolina	Sales Volume	4,038	4,405
	Median Price (000's)	\$145.0	\$144.8

Source: S.C. Association of Realtors

Building Permits



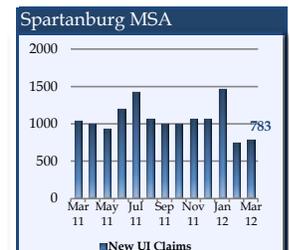
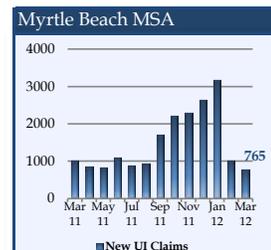
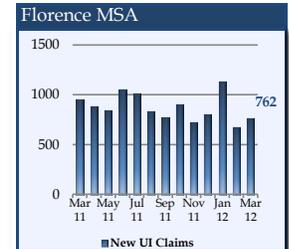
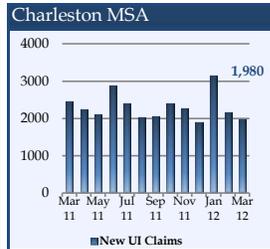
Source: U.S. Census

Employment

MSA	Indicator	Feb 12	Mar 12
Charleston	Employment (000's)	304.1	304.8
	Unemployment Rate	7.8	7.1
Columbia	Employment (000's)	342.7	342.1
	Unemployment Rate	8.1	7.5
Florence	Employment (000's)	84.3	84.8
	Unemployment Rate	10.4	9.6
Greenville	Employment (000's)	291.3	290.4
	Unemployment Rate	7.7	7.1
Myrtle Beach	Employment (000's)	109.0	113.4
	Unemployment Rate	12.3	10.3
Spartanburg	Employment (000's)	120.9	121.9
	Unemployment Rate	9.4	8.7
South Carolina	Employment (000's)	1,961.1	1,964.6
	Unemployment Rate	9.1	8.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (MSA figures not seasonally adjusted)

Unemployment Insurance Claims



Source: SCDOC analysis of SCDEW data

Average Weekly Wages, March 2012



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2012 (Reflects average weekly wage for all private employees)