



SC Leading Index Ticks Upward

The South Carolina Leading Index (SCLI) rose in December to 101.6, improving on last month's result of 101.45. Turmoil in the stock market and an increase in unemployment claims were unable to fully dampen the surging housing starts. The Dow Jones Composite Average fell 2.7 percent and the Bloomberg South Carolina Stock Index dropped 3.7 percent. Initial claims for Unemployment Insurance saw a 13.0 percent bump. Countering these results, housing starts boomed, gaining 14.0 percent from last month. The Conference Board's national Leading Economic Index declined 0.2 percent, coming in a modicum lower at 123.7 for December.

- Brandon Wilkerson

South Carolina Leading Index



Source: South Carolina Department of Commerce

Strength of SC Real Estate on Display

Real estate indicators for the period were highly favorable. The number of homes sold in South Carolina went up 11.7 percent year-to-date, with 71,946 homes sold for 2015. Median sales price also shot up 6.2 percent over the calendar year, reaching \$172,000. Home sales showed frenetic activity at the MSA level as well, with the most significant monthly gains in Charleston (+55 percent) and Greenville (+32 percent). Columbia and Florence, close behind, each rose 26 percent. Foreclosure activity, meanwhile, fell 13.9 percent compared to December 2014, and the number of residential building permits issued in South Carolina over the last 12 months exceeded 30,000, just the third time this has occurred since 2009. Construction employment paralleled these strong results, growing by 6,000 net jobs since December 2014.

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 bwilkerson@SCcommerce.com.

KEY S.C. INDICATORS

Income

+1.2%

State Personal Income

increased to \$187.5 billion in the third quarter of 2015.

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

-3.7%

South Carolina Stock Index

fell 3.96 points in December, closing at 101.87 on the last trading day of the month.

Bloomberg

Employment

+0.3%

Nonfarm Employment

increased by 5,800 non-seasonally adjusted net jobs from the prior month.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+0.5%

Labor Force

increased by 10,300 to 2,271,664, seasonally-adjusted, in November.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+0%

Unemployment Rate

remained at 5.5 percent, seasonally-adjusted, for December.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

+1.7%

Manufacturing Weekly Hours

increased by 0.7 hours to 42.4 hours in December.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

-7.7%

Available Online Job Postings

decreased by 5,600 positions in December to a seasonally-adjusted 66,900 job postings.

The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Index

Real Estate

+0.6%

Single-Family Home Sales Price

increased by \$1,000 to \$175,000 in December.

South Carolina Association of Realtors

+14%

Residential Building Permits

increased by 263 permits from the previous month to 2,143 permits issued in December.

U.S. Census Bureau



South Carolina Employment

Non-Seasonally Adjusted Wage and Salary Employment

South Carolina's total non-seasonally adjusted, nonfarm employment grew by 5,800 net jobs to 2,040,400 in December, representing a 0.3 percent rise from October, and a 3.3 percent gain from one year ago. The Trade, Transportation, and Utilities sector, which picked up 4,800 jobs, led all sectors in monthly gains.

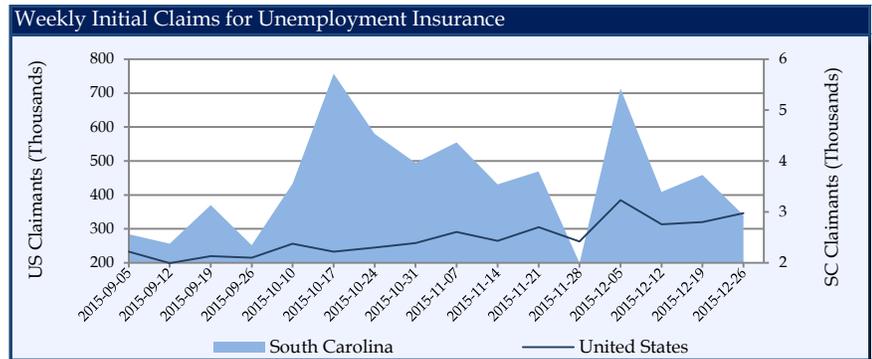
The month's biggest losses came from the Leisure and Hospitality sector, which dropped 5,400 jobs. Manufacturing, however, had notable growth, with +1,200 jobs in December. Year-over-year, the biggest gains went to Professional and Business Services (+19,600) and Educational and Health Services (+11,500). From one year ago, the state economy has added 64,500 net nonfarm jobs.

Industry Sector	December 2015	Previous Month	Previous Year	% Change Month Ago	% Change Year Ago
Goods Producing	326,300	324,400	321,700	0.59	1.43
Natural Resources and Mining	3,800	3,700	3,900	2.70	-2.56
Construction	89,800	89,200	83,800	0.67	7.16
Manufacturing	232,700	231,500	234,000	0.52	-0.56
Service Providing	1,714,100	1,710,200	1,654,200	0.23	3.62
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	397,200	392,400	386,200	1.22	2.85
Information	26,600	26,500	27,000	0.38	-1.48
Finance	95,300	94,500	97,000	0.85	-1.75
Professional and Business Services	279,600	276,900	260,000	0.98	7.54
Educational and Health Services	240,900	241,000	229,400	-0.04	5.01
Leisure and Hospitality	231,800	237,200	219,000	-2.28	5.84
Other Services	74,600	73,500	71,600	1.50	4.19
Total Private	1,672,300	1,666,400	1,611,900	0.35	3.75
Government	368,100	368,200	364,000	-0.03	1.13
Total Nonfarm	2,040,400	2,034,600	1,975,900	0.29	3.26

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

Weekly Unemployment Claims

The number of initial claims for Unemployment Insurance declined throughout the month, falling from 5,421 in the first week to 2,935 in the final week of December. The average for the month was 3,869 weekly initial claims in South Carolina, a 13.0 percent rise versus November and 2.8 percent greater than one year prior, but 23.9 percent lower than two years ago. The largest MSAs in the state reported more claimants for December, with Greenville's number up the most, at 65.2 percent. The Myrtle Beach MSA's claimants remained nearly flat, with a 0.6 percent rise.



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

Average Hourly Earnings

These charts present the average hourly earnings of all employees in private industry, based on a monthly national survey of businesses. The data are not seasonally adjusted.



Source: US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics



South Carolina Real Estate

Last month, the number of building permits issued in South Carolina for new residential construction rose 14.0 percent. This number was also up 11.9 percent year-to-date. Valuation for the permits ticked upward as well, with a 14.3 percent increase compared to November, and a 13.6 percent increase year-to-date. Also positive was foreclosure activity, which fell a precipitous 68.5 percent for the month, and exhibited a 13.9 percent drop compared to last year.

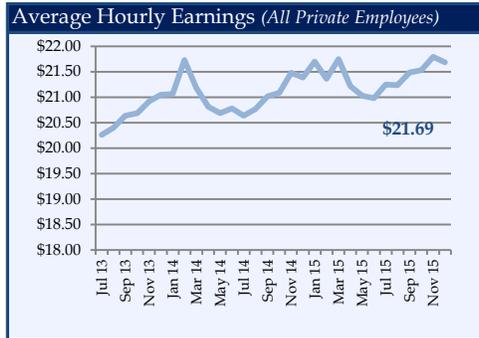
	Month	Current	Previous Year	% Change Year Ago	2015 YTD	2014 YTD	% Change YTD
Closings	December	5,708	5,565	2.6%	71,946	64,417	11.7%
Median Sales Price*	December	\$175.0	\$163.0	7.4%	\$172.0	\$162.0	6.2%
Foreclosures	December	1,698	1,972	-13.9%	27,230	27,744	-1.9%
Residential Building Permits -Total	December	2,143	2,300	-6.8%	30,437	27,197	11.9%
Residential Building Permits -Valuation*	December	\$432,454	\$446,827	-3.2%	\$6,006,078	\$5,286,143	13.6%

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

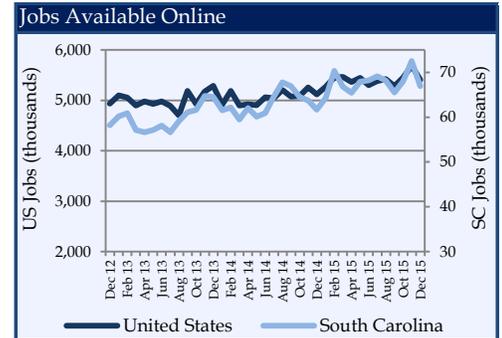
Business Activity



Source: U.S. Census



Source: U.S. Department of Labor



Source: The Conference Board Help Wanted Online Index



Source: South Carolina Department of Revenue



*Represents publicly-traded companies headquartered in SC.

Source: Bloomberg

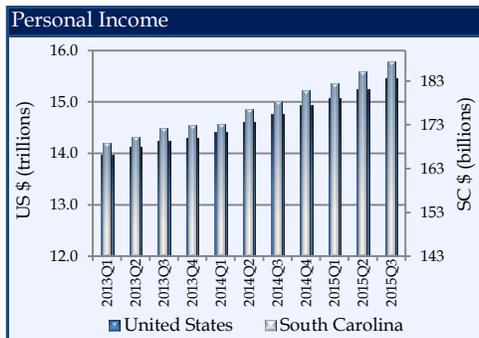


Source: U.S. Department of Labor

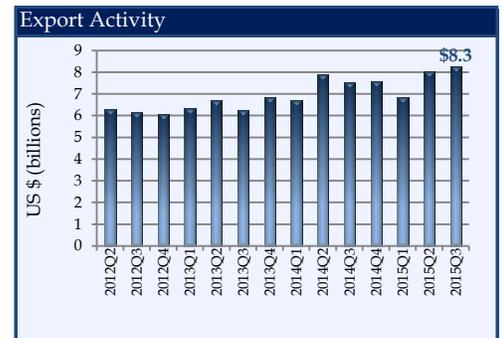
Income and Output



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



Source: U.S. Census



Source: Foreign Trade Division, U.S. Census



South Carolina Regional Update

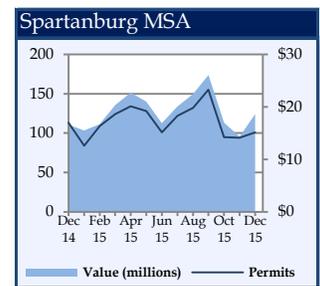
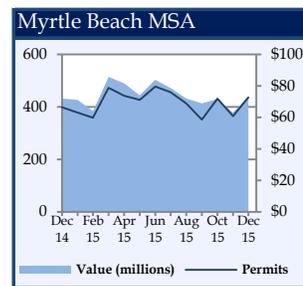
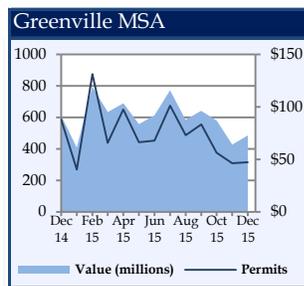
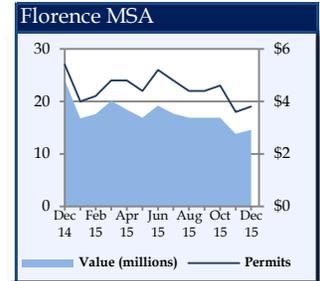
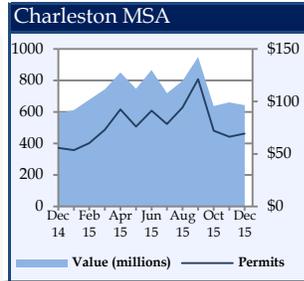
The South Carolina Regional Update provides a snapshot of the most recent economic figures for the six largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the state.

Home Sales

MSA	Indicator	Dec 14	Dec 15
Charleston	Sales Volume	1,288	1,424
	Median Price (000's)	\$202	\$240
Columbia	Sales Volume	834	840
	Median Price (000's)	\$143	\$146
Florence	Sales Volume	134	152
	Median Price (000's)	\$134	\$138
Greenville	Sales Volume	850	930
	Median Price (000's)	\$161	\$166
Myrtle Beach	Sales Volume	852	864
	Median Price (000's)	\$165	\$165
Spartanburg	Sales Volume	314	316
	Median Price (000's)	\$126	\$135
South Carolina	Sales Volume	5,565	5,708
	Median Price (000's)	\$163.0	\$175.0

Source: S.C. Association of Realtors.

Building Permits



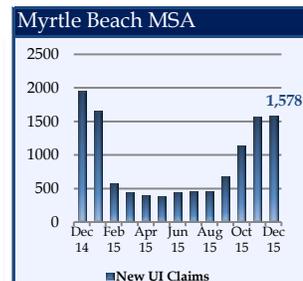
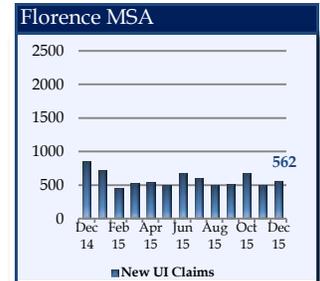
Source: U.S. Census

Employment

MSA	Indicator	Nov 15	Dec 15
Charleston	Employment (000's)	342.0	340.9
	Unemployment Rate	4.5	4.5
Columbia	Employment (000's)	375.2	376.0
	Unemployment Rate	4.9	4.9
Florence	Employment (000's)	87.9	88.3
	Unemployment Rate	6.1	6.2
Greenville	Employment (000's)	393.5	396.1
	Unemployment Rate	4.6	4.6
Myrtle Beach	Employment (000's)	169.0	166.4
	Unemployment Rate	6.6	7.1
Spartanburg	Employment (000's)	142.9	143.8
	Unemployment Rate	5.1	5.0
South Carolina	Employment (000's)	2,137.5	2,147.6
	Unemployment Rate	5.5	5.5

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

Unemployment Insurance Claims



Source: SCDOC analysis of SCDEW data

Projected Population Growth Rate by MSA (2015 to 2020)



Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, January 2016