

Spring 4-2022

Coastal Media Solutions: The Role Small and Medium Enterprises in Sustainability

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Devlin, Bridgette, "Coastal Media Solutions: The Role Small and Medium Enterprises in Sustainability" (2022). *Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth*. 7.
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The Role Small and Medium Enterprises in Sustainability
Coastal Media Solutions
Goal 8 UN SDG

Bridgette Devlin
Georgetown R.I.S.E/ United Nations Youth Corps
2022

Introduction

Despite being labeled as “small” businesses, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the global economy. In the United States, SMEs are considered to be firms with less than 500 employees.¹ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include 17 connected global goals that serve as a framework to achieve a more sustainable world. The SDGs were passed in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly.² Small businesses are the backbone to the world economy, and are necessary for innovation, skill development, job creation, and economic growth on all levels. SMEs represent about 90% of businesses and more than 50% of employment worldwide. Formal SMEs contribute up to 40% of national income (GDP) in emerging economies. South Carolina’s Georgetown County is teeming with small businesses, with the majority of businesses in the County fitting into the SME category, as seen in Figure 1 (S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce- 2021 Q3). They have the potential to help the County align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 8, “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.”² In Georgetown County I work as an intern at Coastal Media Services located in Pawleys Island, where my main responsibility is to create digital and print advertising content for other local businesses in the County. Through my work experience, surveying process, and research, it is clear that small businesses in the County and around the globe have the power to create

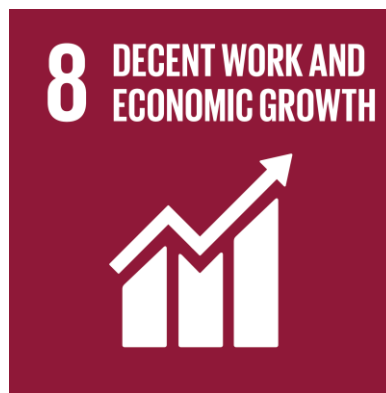
¹ OECD Statistics Directorate, “SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES),” OECD Glossary of statistical terms - small and medium-sized enterprises (smes) definition, December 4, 2001, <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3123>.

² “The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed April 9, 2022, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

sustainable economic development, support local communities, and substantially reduce negative impacts on the environment.

Project/organization Relation to SDGs and Specific Targets

Corporate sustainability expands the traditional bottom line to a triple bottom line, which incorporates the environmental and social dimensions into financial performance. It can be broken down into “three Ps”: profit, people, and the planet.³ By creating graphics and advertisements for local businesses, I get to show the local community and visitors all the great businesses in Pawleys Island. My goal is to effectively advertise these businesses, so Georgetown County can see economic growth, and local businesses can succeed. As more people come to Georgetown County for tourism or relocation, small businesses have to compete with larger corporations. By upgrading local businesses’ advertisements to draw in more customers to their businesses, my goal is to make Georgetown County a place that has strong community ties with their small businesses to help create economic growth, and a collaborative community on a local level.



Source: sdgs.un.org/goals

³ Kelsey Miller, “The Triple Bottom Line: What It Is & Why It’s Important,” Business Insights Blog (Harvard Business School Online, December 8, 2020), <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/what-is-the-triple-bottom-line>.

My work pertains to the Goal 8 target 8.9: “By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. This is because, I work to capture each businesses’ identity accurately, so the members of the community and visitors to the area are drawn to these unique local businesses.⁴ To tourists and community members alike, local businesses represent the identity of the whole county. Georgetown County can be a place that fosters successful small businesses, which can bring more businesses and customers to the county, increasing economic growth rates. It is important to get small local businesses the recognition and the support they need to achieve this. My company works with only local businesses, so we are working to make Georgetown County a tighter-knit community that is known for supporting its small businesses. My whole company’s mission is to be a helping hand to other businesses so they can thrive within the community. My work fits under target 8.3: “Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services,” because I am working to drive more traffic to local businesses, which will result in job creation, economic growth for the county, and more success for the individual businesses.⁴ It will be easier for Georgetown County to unite to combat sustainability issues in the community, if there is trust and collaboration among businesses and individuals.

As stated before, the sustainability of an organization is defined by their financial, social, and environmental performance.³ My efforts in advertising local businesses aids in the financial

⁴ “Goal 8 | TARGETS AND INDICATORS,” United Nations (United Nations), accessed April 9, 2022, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>.

performance of businesses in the county, but I found it hard to incorporate the social and environmental dimensions of the SDGs into my content creation. Therefore, to further align with Goal 8, specially Target 8.4: “Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead,” I created a infographic titled “How to be a More Sustainable Business: Small Business Guide.”⁴ In this infographic, which is included at the end of this report, I listed several steps businesses can take to implement sustainable practices into their day-to-day operations. I realized there is a lack of education on sustainability in local businesses, so my guide is intended to help businesses tackle the unfamiliar and intimidating concept of sustainability.

To gain a better perspective of Georgetown County’ small businesses, I created a sustainability survey to give to local business owners. I asked questions about the business owners about their definition of sustainability, and their opinions on it. I also asked questions about their sustainable practices. I received a 25% response rate from the businesses I contacted about my survey. Their data contributed to my understanding of businesses in the county, as seen below.

Survey Results	
Questions	% that answered yes
Believe sustainability is very important	80%
Recycled	60%
Offered paperless receipts/coupons/promotional materials	100%
Utilize eco-friendly products	80%
Sell eco-friendly products	60%
Buy second-hand	0%
Compost	0%
Have an employee(s) in charge of sustainability	0%
Donate/take part in volunteer work	60%
Believe running a sustainable business is hard	40%

From those who did participate in my survey, I found that some businesses are already trying to reduce their impacts on the environment. 4 out of 5 business owners who participated in the study said running a sustainable business was very important to them. 3 out of 5 businesses reported they recycled, 5 out of 5 businesses offer paperless receipts, coupons, or promotional materials, 4 out of 5 businesses are using eco-friendly products, and 3 out of 5 businesses sell eco-friendly products. Areas none of the businesses were participating in to be more sustainable include buying second hand, composting, and having an employee/employees who are responsible for the business's sustainability.

Through surveying, my workplace experience, and research, I have found that local businesses already are engaging in the social dimension of sustainability, by giving back to the community. My own company, Coastal Media Solutions often sets up events at the Hammock Shops Village in Pawleys Island for the community such as, Pictures with Santa and a 10,000 egg Easter egg hunt. I was also responsible for creating a social media advertisement for a restaurant inside of the

Hammock Shops Village who was hosting a blood drive in February. This restaurant also teamed up with a local dog rescue and hosted a dog adoption at the Hammock Shops Village, where my company was responsible for getting marketing materials from this event. From my surveying, I found the participating businesses all help the community in some way. 3 out of 5 businesses reported that they participated in volunteer work in the community and 4 out of 5 businesses supported the community in some way.

Overview of the County as it Relates to My Project/Organization

According to the Georgetown County Chamber Official 2021-22 Quality of Life Guide (2021), “Entrepreneurship is alive and well in Georgetown County. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, consistently playing a major role in economic growth.” It was also stated that “Georgetown County has a proven track record of fostering small businesses.”⁵ All of the businesses in Georgetown County are considered small businesses. This is shown in Figure 1. It is also important to mention that according to Site Selector (2021), South Carolina’s business climate was among the top 5 in the country.⁶

Figure 1: Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce- 2021 Q3

Employers by Size of Establishment	
Number of Employees	Georgetown County
0 to 4	1237
5 to 9	363
10 to 19	218
20 to 49	169
50 to 99	41
100 to 249	26
250 to 499	0
500 to 999	0
1000+	0

⁵ “Georgetown County Chamber Official 2021-22 Quality of Life Guide,” 365 Online Magazines, 2021, <https://365publicationsonline.com/GeorgetownNCG2021/#p=1>.

⁶ Mark Arend, “Business Climate Rankings,” Site Selection, November 2021, <https://siteselection.com/issues/2021/nov/brighter-horizons.cfm>.

In Georgetown County, job growth has been positive. Jobs have increased by 2.7% over the past year. In Georgetown, future job growth over the next ten years is predicted to be 35.2%, which is higher than the US average of 33.5%.⁷ Even though job growth has increased, unemployment is still an issue for the County. As of February 2022, Georgetown County's overall unemployment rate is 5.1% while the state's is only 3.5%.⁸ From the data in Figure 2, it is clear efforts need to be made to help unemployment rates to decrease in the county. Small businesses have the power to increase job growth as more businesses open in the county, and established businesses continue to prosper. According to one report, the share of small businesses in developed countries is very large, ranging from 97-99% of all enterprises, employing 50-70% of the population. In the UK, SMEs account for 58% of employment.⁹ These statistics show the crucial role small businesses play in overall employment in communities. Without small businesses, many people across the globe would be out of work. My work at Coastal Media Services combats unemployment by keeping businesses successful enough to retain their current employees and potentially grow their team by hiring more employees.

⁷ "Economy in Georgetown County, South Carolina," [www.bestplaces.net](http://www.bestplaces.net/economy/county/south_carolina/georgetown), 2022, https://www.bestplaces.net/economy/county/south_carolina/georgetown

⁸ "Georgetown County - South Carolina Community Profile," SC Works Online Services: Community Profiles (S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce Business: Intelligence Department, March 25, 2022), <http://lmi.dew.sc.gov/lmi%20site/Documents/CommunityProfiles/04000043.pdf>.

⁹ Сейсенбаева Айзада Муратовна et al., "TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VIA ENHANCING VIABILITY OF SMALL BUSINESSES THROUGH LENDING: A CASE STUDY," 3rd ed., vol. 9 (The Republic of Kazakhstan: JOURNAL OF SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES, 2020).

Figure 2: Source: S.C. Department of Employment & Workforce & The Conference Board's Help Wanted OnLine® data series

period	Georgetown County		South Carolina	
	unemployed	unemployment rate	unemployed	unemployment rate
Feb. 2022	1,303	5.1%	82,658	3.5%
Jan. 2022	1,228	4.8%	82,242	3.5%
Dec. 2021	1,057	4.1%	84,737	3.6%
Nov. 2021	921	3.6%	85,167	3.6%
Oct. 2021	959	3.7%	86,523	3.8%
Sep. 2021	1,011	3.9%	89,382	3.9%
Aug. 2021	1,349	5.1%	92,837	4.0%
Jul. 2021	1,375	5.1%	95,395	4.1%

Area Development Magazine (2021), ranked South Carolina the fourth best state for doing business, making Georgetown County a place with a lot of potential for more economic growth.¹⁰ According to the 2015 census data in Georgetown County, the top three sectors with the most percentages of employment are: accommodation and food services, retail trade, and manufacturing. Of these, the first two are considered local or service employment, totaling 35% of all Georgetown County's employment.¹¹ It is clear to see small businesses in Georgetown are responsible for employing a large portion of the county's population. This shows their power in stimulating economic growth, and the important role they can play in fulfilling the SDGs by integrating sustainable practices in their business structures. Job creation leads to other economic benefits, for example, real estate. Jobs drive demand for real estate because for every job that is created, a multiplier effect increases overall employment, resulting in an increase in population and income within the area.¹¹

¹⁰ Steve Kaelble, "The 2021 Top States for Doing Business Reflect Their Locational Advantages," Area Development, September 9, 2021, <https://www.areadevelopment.com/Top-States-for-Doing-Business/Q3-2021/top-states-for-doing-business-reflect-locational-advantages.shtml>.

¹¹ Rose, Alex J. Rep. ULI Advisory Services Panel: Transforming Georgetown Economically, Physically, and Socially. Georgetown, SC, 2016.

Figure 3: Georgetown County Annual Average

Industry Annual Average	
Top Ranked Industry	Georgetown County
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	3.11
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	2.92
Accommodation & Food Services	1.75
Construction	1.35
Real Estate rental & leasing	1.28
Retail Trade	1.21

Source: Rose & Associates SE Inc./ULI.

Georgetown needs to work to attract both local consumers as well as tourists, to further align with Target 8.9, “By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.”⁴ By supporting local businesses and sustainable economic development, the city of Georgetown can gain a reputation for sustainability, stability, and growth. According to the Art and Economic Prosperity IV report, 32% of the visitors to art and cultural sites are not from the county. It was stated in this report that non-locals spend \$39.96 on average, versus locals who spend on average \$17.42.¹¹ According to Rose & Associates SE, art and culture ranks first among Georgetown County’s economic drivers, creating three times the economic value compared to the state.¹¹ Georgetown’s art and culture can be leveraged to create economic growth and value for its residents, businesses, and government. According to the Art and Economic Prosperity report, art attendees spend \$24.60 per event in addition to the cost of admission. This represents \$313 million in economic output within Georgetown and employs 5.68% of its workforce as of 2015.¹¹ Small businesses, especially ones centered around art and culture, have the potential to draw in more tourists. This drives more money into the local economy, which will in turn benefit the community as a whole.

In the past Georgetown’s economy depended on a plantation economy that was built upon slavery. This created a permanent economic underclass that has persisted into the present day. Georgetown’s African American community has experienced limited economic mobility because of slavery, followed by Jim Crow, and then segregation.¹¹ The redevelopment of Georgetown County should start with building up the local economy, focusing on creating equal economic opportunity throughout the entire county. Georgetown's economy can be improved through supporting local businesses, but support should be focused on communities that lack the resources for economic mobility. It is important to support local African American communities by supporting their businesses within the county and focusing on providing growth opportunities for the members of these communities. In Georgetown City 58% of the population is African American, with 40% of this population living below the poverty line.¹¹ In the entire county, 33.5% of the population is African American.⁸ Supporting local business, especially in communities that face economic setbacks, is the responsibility of county members and officials. These efforts will help deconstruct the limitations set on the African American population in Georgetown by ensuring equity and access for everyone in the county. Efforts made towards this endeavor are a part of the social dimension of sustainability and align with target 8.5: “By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.”⁴

Figure 4:Georgetown County Median Household Income

Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity	
Race/Ethnicity	Georgetown County
Total Population	\$41,578.00
White	\$53,174.00
African American	\$23,377.00
Hispanic/Latino	\$26,174.00

Source: US Census Bureau

Georgetown’s population can be described as older and aging. According to the Community Profile of Georgetown County, 13,718 individuals of the 61,280 county members are 65 or older, which is about 22% of the population.⁸ The county is a retirement destination, which has some economic benefits, but in the county, low average household incomes as well as the pace of aging, caused by stagnant population growth, have negative impacts on the local economy. To align with Goal 8, target 8.6: “substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training,” Georgetown needs to work towards becoming a location for young professionals and new businesses seeking quality of life in a nature-rich environment.⁴ It is important for Georgetown to work towards attracting younger professionals by creating well-rounded economic opportunities. Innovation and economic growth can be built in a community through small businesses and entrepreneurs. Emphasizing and supporting local business can make Georgetown an attractive place for new businesses and young people to locate in.



Source: sdgs.un.org

Overview of My Project/Organization as it Relates to the Planet

Every country around the world has a large share of small businesses operating within their borders. SMEs or MSMEs (Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises) have a significant presence in the global economy. According to the World Trade Organization (2016), MSMEs represent over 90% of the business population, contribute to about 60-70% employment, and create 55%

of GDP in developed economies.¹² The combination of all these businesses can have a very significant effect on the planet. According to the report, “Sustainable Strategic Management (GES): Sustainability in Small Business”, small businesses’ activities are responsible for at least 70% of the world’s pollution.¹³ This is why it is important that small businesses start actively working to combat climate change by prioritizing sustainability. SMEs have the potential to contribute to the achievement of each of the 17 global SDGs by promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, fostering innovation, and decreasing income inequalities around the world. They can accomplish this firstly, by educating themselves on all the goals, then by developing practices and policies within their business that align with these goals.

Small and medium enterprises contribute almost 4 out of 5 jobs available in the market. They employ a large portion of the world population, and when big industries downsize and cut down jobs, MSMEs keep developing and creating more jobs.¹⁴ With such a big presence in the world economy, if each small business worked towards aligning to the SDGs, their combined efforts would result in a much more sustainable world. SMEs have the ability to fuel economic growth because they create new jobs and expand the tax base. A huge advantage of the SMEs is their potential to generate large amounts of employment at low capital expenditures. They fuel competition in markets, which results in the best efforts from each business, leading to

¹² Hannah McDonald, “How Small Businesses Can Save Society,” www.eriereader.com, November 11, 2021, <https://www.eriereader.com/article/how-small-businesses-can-save-society>.

¹³ Barbosa, Marileide, Juan Arturo Castañeda -Ayarza, and Denise Helena Lombardo Ferreira. “Sustainable Strategic Management (GES): Sustainability in Small Business.” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 258 (2020): 120880. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.120880>.

¹⁴ “The Impact of Smes in the Global Economy,” iQualify UK, accessed April 9, 2022, <https://www.iqualifyuk.com/library/business-management-section/the-impact-of-smes-in-the-global-economy/>.

innovation. The relationship between SMEs and the economy is reciprocal. Meaning, more development in the economy ensures the creation of more SMEs and more SMEs ensures economic growth.¹⁴

Empirical Evidence

Small businesses are not just important to local communities, like Georgetown County, they are driving forces for economic development throughout the whole country. From the report, “Small Businesses and the Community: Their Role and Importance Within a State's Economy,” the researchers explored the contributions of the smallest of the small businesses within the economy. For the study, 1,224 Oklahoma households were included. Through this research, it was cited that one in every five households owned and operated a business. These businesses generated substantial income and employed at least one other person.¹⁵ From the Family Economics and Nutrition Review (2001), it was reported that micro businesses in the US accounted for 94% of all firms. They employ up to 25% of all individuals in the country. The Small Business Administration found that by 2002, 50.1% of the USA's 112.4 million private-sector workers were employed by micro business firms.¹⁵ Based on the data presented, economic development can be achieved by putting in the effort to build the local economy through development of these local businesses, already in place. The researchers state that there are three key steps that must be taken to develop existing businesses. The first step is identifying all of the businesses that exist within a community or county. The second step is addressing the needs and issues of local business. The third step is identifying available resources, local, regional, state, and national, that can work with the business owner. Georgetown County officials and

¹⁵ Glenn Muske et al., “Small Businesses and the Community: Their Role and Importance Within a State's Economy,” vol. 45 (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Journal of Extension, 2007).

community members can follow these steps to support local businesses and help the county prosper.¹⁵

A way for Georgetown County to support its small businesses is by encouraging residents and tourists to shop locally. Small businesses play a huge role in their local economy. This is because, if you spend \$100 at a local business, roughly \$73 stays within your local economy. In contrast if you spend \$100 at a non-local business, only \$43 dollars stays in the local economy.¹⁶ It is important to buy local because small local businesses embody the personality of a community. Furthermore, a thriving shopping district creates an impression of vitality and wealth, producing a positive impression of the community overall.¹⁷ This fact is especially important for Georgetown County, because tourism is becoming a major industry in the county. Therefore, supporting local businesses helps preserve the uniqueness of the county, which can make it more attractive to tourists, and encourage these visitors to spend their money at these businesses. Shopping locally also creates more jobs in the community. Local workers are more likely to spend their money within the community they operate in, promoting the economic cycle. Small businesses are crucial for providing support to the community. In the article, “10 Ways Small Businesses Benefit Their Local Communities”, 52% of small business owners donate to charity, and of those that donate, 90% donate to local causes. This helps advertise local businesses to the community, while providing support to the community.¹⁷ As stated previously in this report, many businesses in Georgetown County already partake in activities that support the community. When businesses are encouraged to support their local community, everyone

¹⁶ LaMore, Rex L, and Nandi Robinson. Rep. *Why Buy Local? An Assessment of the Economic Advantages of Shopping at Locally Owned Businesses*, 2010.

¹⁷ BBB non-profit. “10 Ways Small Businesses Benefit Their Local Communities.” Medium. Medium, April 23, 2019. <https://medium.com/@BBBNWP/10-ways-small-businesses-benefit-their-local-communities-7273380c90a9>.

wins. The members of the community benefit from the charitable actions of businesses, and businesses gain more local support, which keeps money in the local economy.



Created by: Bridgette Devlin

The Local Works West Michigan Economic Analysis lists the four ways in which a business keeps money local. Firstly, by paying wages and benefits to local residents, then by local owners earning profits, next is the purchasing of local goods and services for resale and use within the community, and finally by making contributions to local nonprofits. Consistently, locally owned businesses exceed their competitors in all four of these categories.¹⁶ In 2002, in a case study of the economic impact of locally owned businesses on the local economy in the Mid-coast Maine region conducted by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, the charitable contributions made by local businesses were compared to those made by Wal-Mart. They found that for every \$1,000,000 in sales, one local business alone contributed \$4,000 to the community compared to Wal-Mart's \$1,000 contribution.¹⁶ Local business owners invest in the community and have a vested interest in the future of the community. This is why they are so important to the economic well-being of a community. They are more likely to care about the community they work in and take action to support it than bigger corporations. With all businesses in Georgetown County being considered SMEs, it reveals their major role in the local economy. The data above

proves how important local businesses are to the local community. With this knowledge, Georgetown County will benefit greatly from enabling their local businesses to thrive.

From 2000 to 2017, 8.4 million net new jobs were created by small businesses.¹⁷ Georgetown County is filled with small businesses that have the potential to create economic growth and social support to the community. From an article by Pew Research Center based on the data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research, since 2000, the majority of populations in individual rural counties have declined in 52% of rural counties. Today, 35% of urban residents and 31% in the suburbs have a bachelor's degree or more education, compared with 19% in rural counties.¹⁸ This poses a threat to the community of Georgetown County because 96% of the county is considered rural area.¹⁹ For Georgetown County to thrive economically, the young people of the county must get proper higher education and be able to find suitable work in the county. The county would benefit from the skillsets of these younger professionals. Education is the first step to create economic growth, since these young people are the future workers of the community. This is why it is important to make Georgetown County a place known for fostering innovation and supporting entrepreneurs and new businesses, so young people remain in the county once they start their careers. This will help the county see much more overall economic growth.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests that clusters of small businesses in a walkable area, or near residential areas is a strategy local communities can benefit from.¹⁷

One example of this in Georgetown County in the Pawleys Island Area is the Hammock Shops

¹⁸ Kim Parker et al., "What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban, and Rural Communities," Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project (Pew Research Center, May 30, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/demographic-and-economic-trends-in-urban-suburban-and-rural-communities/>.

¹⁹ Stacker, "Most Rural Counties in South Carolina," Stacker, April 4, 2022, <https://stacker.com/south-carolina/most-rural-counties-south-carolina>.

Village, one of my company's clients. There are 21 shops and 2 restaurants all connected by a walkable path. The benefits of this type of shopping area includes reduced car usage, encouragement of biking and walking for shoppers, reduced emissions from vehicles and lessened traffic congestion, which makes the streets safer and a better experience for those driving in the community.¹⁷ This will also draw in more tourists, who will spend their money within the county. Another benefit I observed from this kind of shopping area is a sense of community among the business owners within the shopping area. These areas become local staples and are more attractive to consumers because it is more convenient to go to a singular place for all your shopping.



Coastal Media Services: Trevor Swenson

The GATE (Governing and Accelerating Transformative Entrepreneurship) Research Project surveyed small and medium enterprises and found that 8 out of 10 SMEs see sustainability as important, very important or extremely important. These results are very similar to my survey results from businesses in Georgetown County. They reported 9 out of 10 businesses see fostering employee well-being as important, and 7 out of 10 see engagement in

creating an inclusive work environment and participation in community outreach as important. In addition, 5 out of 10 businesses see pursuing social justice through their purchasing practices as important.²⁰ These perspectives show that small businesses are moving in the correct direction to fulfill the UN SDG, Goal 8. When asked if these businesses changed employee behavior to be more environmentally friendly, 81.1% said they have. When asked if they have changed their suppliers to one that is more environmentally friendly, 55.4% responded that they have.²⁰ It is clear that many small businesses are taking steps to fulfill the SDGs, especially Goal 8, Target 8.4 “Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavor to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead.”⁴ From the GATE survey, they found businesses of all sizes and in various sectors are interested in sustainability and have a variety of strategies for fulfilling the SDGs.²⁰ Businesses must develop their own unique policy incentives and business practices to help the business best align with the SDGs. The data from this survey reveals that there is untapped potential for SMEs to contribute to sustainable development in local communities. The sustainability efforts of SMEs can have a significant impact on society, specifically by helping make customers’ practices more eco-friendly and improving the well-being of employees and the local residents. Businesses are motivated to become more sustainable but need guidance in creating sustainability and profitable businesses.

This data supports the idea that Georgetown County can create sustainable economic growth through its large number of small businesses.

²⁰ “ Gate Survey Report .” *Uwaterloo.ca*, April 5, 2018. University of Waterloo.

Cox Enterprises conducted a survey to gauge small and medium-sized businesses perceptions and actions toward sustainability. They found that the top five ways that small and medium businesses are supporting sustainability are: using supplies efficiently, such as printing on both sides of paper (62%), using energy-efficient lighting and equipment (60%), offering paperless billing (56%), offering recycling programs (54%), and holding meetings virtually (45%). In the guide I created, these sustainable methods are included. Overall, 62% of the SMEs surveyed, have implemented sustainable practices. They found that companies with higher revenues were more sustainable, finding 89% of companies with \$100M+ in revenue practice sustainability vs. 57% of companies with less than \$10M in revenue, who do not. They found SMEs believed the top benefits of sustainability are cost savings (46%), demonstrating a commitment to the environment (40%), and enhancing the company's public image (38%).²¹ SMEs in Georgetown County could save money, help the environment, and gain support from the local community through the sustainable practices mentioned above.

Small businesses want to be more sustainable but lack the knowledge and resources to completely fulfill Goal 8, “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.”¹ Cox Enterprises reported that the main obstacles for small businesses were, other priorities and unwillingness to pay higher upfront costs. Another issue was a varying interest in sustainability among age groups. The top 3 areas small and medium businesses believe they need more guidance are: understanding what government incentives are available, reducing energy consumption, and waste disposal.²¹ 2 out

²¹ “Cox Conserves Sustainability Survey: A Study of Sustainable Solutions for SMBs.” <https://www.multivu.com>. Cox Conserves, November 3, 2015. COX ENTERPRISES. <https://www.multivu.com/players/English/7486651-cox-conserves-sustainability-survey/links/7486651-Survey-Results-Overview-Online.pdf>.

of 5 businesses I surveyed reported that it is hard to be a sustainable business. From my survey results the main challenges business owners stated were overuse of paper towels, the Covid-19 pandemic causing inflation, finances in general, having customers who appreciate your business's mission, and finding sustainable products to sell. My goal, by creating my infographic guide, was to help businesses implement sustainable practices, but it is clear these businesses also need support from their local communities and officials to be able to overcome lack of demand and financing issues.



Created by: Bridgette Devlin via Canva

The solutions Cox Enterprises suggested to businesses after the survey were to start by reviewing their baseline energy usage by contacting their utility company to get detailed records of what your energy usage is. Next, they suggested looking for government programs to help. Furthermore, SMEs were told to take advantage of nature, by using low-tech solutions to save energy. Finally, they suggested involving employees, because as the survey shows, today's employees, especially younger ones, are passionate about sustainability. Business owners encouraged employees to practice sustainable business with simple acts such as turning off lights when they leave the room, powering down their equipment at the end of the day, and using reusable coffee mugs.²¹ These solutions are applicable to the businesses in Georgetown and help fulfill Goal 8. These steps are relatively simple to implement, but businesses are just not aware of how powerful they can be in fostering sustainability and improving their bottom line. One small

business may not have a large negative impact on the environment, by the sum of all the small businesses around the world do. This is why it is important for all businesses to partake in sustainable business practices.

Georgetown County provides support to small local businesses through the Minority Owned & Small Business Enterprise Program, and the Georgetown Economic Development Alliance. The first initiative helps businesses across Georgetown County with tasks such as registering in the county's procurement program, so they can take advantage of bid opportunities. The Economic Development Department will also assist with promotion of these local businesses. Brian Tucker, director of Georgetown County Economic Development said, "Our main priority with this is to make sure our minority owned businesses know they are being heard and they are supported in Georgetown County. We are committed to the growth of businesses of all sizes here and recognize that small businesses are a vital part of our community."²² The Georgetown Economic Development Alliance works to promote, implement, and support activities designed to improve the economic development of Georgetown County and to maintain a quality climate for business and industry.²³ Businesses can become members and make an annual donation to support the development of Georgetown County's economy. Members receive benefits such as networking opportunities, website and social media presence, and exclusion event invitations.

A survey was conducted by the McKinsey Company, to explore why and how companies are addressing sustainability. When developing sustainability strategies, they suggest

²² "Georgetown County Launches Program for Minority-Owned Small Businesses." GeorgetownCountySC.org, 2021. <http://www.georgetowncountysc.org/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=42>.

²³ "Georgetown Economic Development Alliance ." Georgetown Economic Development Alliance, 2022. <https://georgetownalliance.org/>.

that businesses learn where the biggest opportunities for value creation are in an industry, and where the risks and barriers lie.²⁴ They reported that, most companies that create value through sustainability start by improving returns on capital, which often means reducing operating costs through improved natural-resource management (such as energy use and waste). One company that successfully did this is Dow Chemical. They have reported that they invested less than \$2 billion since 1994 to improve its resource efficiency. To date the company has saved more than \$9.8 billion from reduced energy consumption and water waste in its manufacturing processes.²⁴ Better risk management for sustainability begins with detecting key risks of operational issues from climate change, resource scarcity, or community issues. Faced with potential supply constraints, Nestlé, for example, launched a plan in 2009 that promoted more sustainable cocoa. They did this by producing 12 million stronger and more productive plants over ten years, teaching local farmers efficient and sustainable methods, purchasing beans from farms that use sustainable practices, and working with organizations to help address issues such as child labor and poor access to health care and education.²⁴ The examples above show how sustainability does not come at the cost of being a profitable business, instead they go hand and hand. When businesses take the time to strategically plan how they will implement sustainable practices, they see more success.

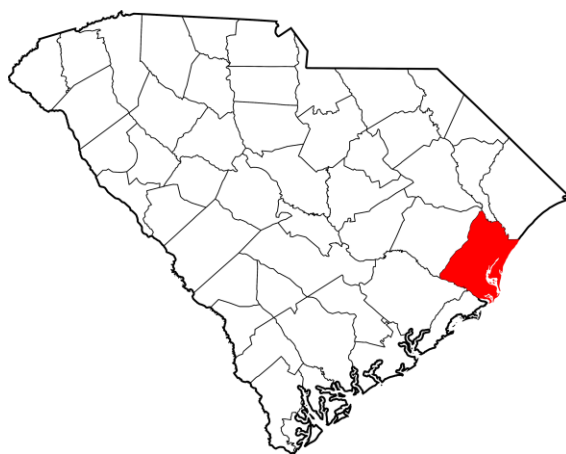
Conclusion

Small businesses are a driver in the world economy. Globally, 90% of total employment comes from MSMEs. Businesses have the capability to contribute to the alignment of every one of the 17 SDGs. Small businesses need support and guidance in learning how to operate in a

²⁴ Bonini, Sheila, and Stephan Görner. "The Business of Sustainability." McKinsey & Company. McKinsey & Company, January 9, 2019. <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/the-business-of-sustainability-mckinsey-global-survey-results>.

sustainable way that does support the fulfillment of the SDGs. Local communities and governments need to offer this support to businesses for these communities to see sustainable economic growth. Being a sustainable business does not mean that the business will see less financial success. Businesses can still be profitable and run their business in a way that protects the environment and improves the well-being of those in their community.

A more sustainable world that is aligned with the SDGs has to be created on a local level first. If communities work with their local businesses, sustainable local economies will multiple. As more and more local communities work towards sustainability, It will higher the demand for sustainable businesses with sustainable products and services. This will help reshape the way business is done currently in our country, and the rest of the world. Precedence needs to be set for other communities to engage in sustainability, so a good place to start is here in Georgetown County, because it is a community that thrives off of its small businesses and is abundant in nature that needs to be protected.



Source: Georgetown County, South Carolina,

Policy Recommendations

It is clear that small businesses have a huge impact on the economy, the well-being of communities, and the environment. For the UN SDG 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all,” to be fulfilled, small businesses must integrate sustainable practices into their businesses.¹ Large corporations have regulations that help manage their impact on the environment, while small businesses need to take this responsibility into their own hands. Below is a guide to aid small businesses in getting started with sustainability. The county should work to develop and enforce regulations and policies for small businesses that ensure these businesses are taking steps to protect the environment. The county should also offer some sort of financial support to local businesses, to aid them in becoming more sustainable. There cannot be any business in Georgetown if the environment deteriorates, so it is crucial that businesses are educated on sustainable business practices and receive the support they need to align with the SDGs. Consumers in the community also need to be educated on sustainability, so the whole community sees it as a priority. This will also increase the demand for sustainable businesses, allowing them to further prosper in the community.

Local governments and communities need to show support towards local companies. Communities need to be incentivized by officials to shop locally and educated on the overall benefits of supporting local businesses, which were mentioned previously in this report. A way Georgetown could promote local businesses is by following the example of Akron, Ohio. In Akron, they have developed an app, Akronite, that actively encourages shopping online with local businesses. Akronite connects shoppers to local businesses and offers points that lead to discounts.²⁵ Local governments should invest in workforce training programs aimed toward

²⁵ Muntean, Christian. “Council Post: Nine Ways Local Governments Can Support Small Business Success during a Pandemic.” Forbes. Forbes Magazine, January 26, 2021

future economic activity. For example, Charlotte, North Carolina, has invested in a workforce training and placement program that targets fields the city would like to grow in, such as advanced tech and renewable energy.²⁴ The South Carolina Department of Commerce has links to many resources small businesses can use to help them run a successful business.²⁶ They also have links to agencies all around the state that assist and support business ventures. It is important that small businesses take advantage of these resources, to help improve the local economy.

The local SMEs already do a lot for the community in Georgetown County. Their efforts deserve more recognition, so the local community can offer support back to these businesses. Local businesses can work together to create a collaborative network with each other that will benefit them and the community. Georgetown County also needs to prioritize the economic mobility of those in the community that are at a disadvantage, such as the African American community. Small businesses can offer support to such communities by offering educational training programs, making donations, and bringing awareness to those who are struggling in the community. The community needs to support the businesses of these struggling communities to uplift them and create equal opportunities for everyone in Georgetown County.

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²⁶ "South Carolina Business Resources." South Carolina Department of Commerce. Accessed April 4, 2022. <https://scbos.sc.gov/business/resources/statebusiness>.

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INFOGRAPHIC GUIDE

Created in Canva

HOW TO BE A MORE SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

SMALL BUSINESS GUIDE

"Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

The Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by 2030.

The Business and Sustainable Development Commission found that companies could unlock \$12 trillion in market opportunities by 2030 and create 380 million jobs by integrating the Sustainable Development Goals in their business strategies.

According to the World Trade Organization, small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent over 90% of the business population, 60-70% of employment, and 55% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in developed economies. This shows how important small businesses are for economic growth. Small companies' activities are responsible for at least 70% of the world's pollution. This shows why it is important for small companies to practice sustainability.

1 in 3 consumers prefer eco-friendly options.

Almost 50% of top US companies and 60% of international companies are investing in strategies that reduce their environmental impacts.

63% of Americans hope businesses will take the lead to drive environmental change

STEP 3: MAKE YOUR SPACE MORE GREEN.

- Use natural light to your advantage when possible. Swap traditional lighting with LED lamps or bulbs and install automatic lighting sensors.
- Improve indoor air quality with live plants.
- Turning down the AC by just one degree can increase your energy costs by 10 per cent. Adjust your thermostat according to the weather to reduce energy use.
- Analyze your energy expenditures and see where you could reduce costs.
- Always turn off lights, computers, printers and any other appliances at the power point when not in use. This will reduce your power bills and save energy.
- In the office kitchen, reduce water and power consumption by running office dishwashers only when full, fixing leaky taps, and turning down the hot-water temperature setting. A leak can waste an average of 10,000 gallons of water each year.
- Switch your energy provider to one that uses renewable energy.



STEP 4: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE.

Find ways to reduce waste in your company and cut costs. Here are some ideas!

- Instead of disposable cups, plates and utensils, and coffee pods, use real glass and ceramic alternatives.
- Do not throw out structurally intact boxes, instead use them again. Encourage employees to use both sides of the printer paper.
- make recycling points visible in your breakrooms.
- Recycle broken electronic equipment and batteries. Donate old working computers. Also you can mail old printers and toner cartridges out of state for reuse or recycling.
- Make recycling stations visible in the office and mark clear recycling stations for paper.
- Send less emails. Sending, receiving and having attachments in emails all use and release carbon emissions. This can apply to email marketing too.



STEP 5:

GO PAPERLESS.

- **Offices in the US use 12.1 trillion sheets per year. This causes a great loss of trees.**
- **Switch to online billing and paperwork to cut down on paper waste and increase your storage space. Swap paper receipts for email receipts.**
- **Reduce paper by requiring employees to bring their own reusable mugs, or supply coffee cups made from recycled paper.**
- **Using cloud-based solutions for storing files and other paperwork.**
- **Instead of using paper mailers, use digital promotions and social media for marketing. This will cut costs and broaden the audience you can reach.**



It can be hard to be completely paperless.

- **You can still save trees by using sustainably sourced recycled paper. Look for a local supplier.**
- **Make sure to always recycle your paper.**

STEP 6:

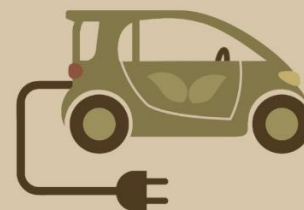
OFFER REMOTE WORK.

- **Letting employees work from home when possible cuts down on pollution, fossil fuel usage, and reduces your company's carbon footprint.**
- **This small change can help reduce traffic and emissions.**
- **Conduct virtual meetings to save the cost of making business trips.**
- **Remote work allows your company to save money on stocking, lighting and heating the workplace, since less people will be in the physical space.**
- **Use virtual office services or outside contractors/freelancers rather than increasing office space.**



STEP 7: USE ECO-FRIENDLY PACKAGING AND SHIPPING.

- According to the EPA, “containers and packaging alone contribute to over 23% of the material reaching landfills in the US.”
- Use biodegradable packaging like corn starch, mycelium, wood pulp, and seaweed.
- Packaging is less likely to end up in a landfill if it is trendy, sturdy, or has multiple uses. For example, customers could reuse a tote bag with your logo on it.
- Choose an eco-friendly storage facility that uses renewable energy for climate control and use green storage containers instead of pollutive plastics.
- For local deliveries, consider more fuel-efficient, or even fuel-free options. For example, your business could rent electric cargo bikes perfect for city goods deliveries or invest in electric or hybrid delivery vehicles.
- Use packaging that is as compact to minimize cost. This will also result in less trips, lower the amount of emissions.
- Avoid putting a boxed item into a second or third box before shipping to cut costs and waste.
- Offer discounts for multiple orders to encourage bulk purchases to reduce emissions and costs.



ECO-FRIENDLY SHIPPING MATERIALS

Biodegradable mailing pouches
Biodegradable filler, like starch-based packing peanuts
Compostable bags



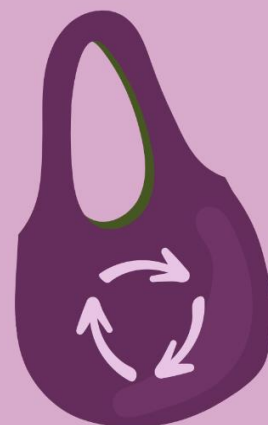
SHIPPING MATERIALS TO AVOID

Mailing pouches with plastic bubble lining
Styrofoam packing peanuts
Plastic wrap or cushioning



STEP 8: USE SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS.

- **There is a whole industry of green cleaners that do not include toxic chemicals. Using these products keeps toxic ingredients out of water streams and their waste out of landfills. Look for a cleaning company that uses natural cleaning products.**
- **Encourage customers to use reusable cloth bags, and sell them in your store.**
- **Stock your staff kitchen with ethical and sustainable supplies. Look out for tea brands that use biodegradable, unbleached tea bags and work within Fair Trading agreements. Also, look into compostable coffee pods.**
- **Single-use items account for about 150 million tons of plastic waste each year. Use compostable products for things like take out containers, bags, utensils, etc.**
- **In the US, over four million pens are thrown away every day. That's a significant amount of plastic. Swap traditional pens with pens that can have their ink refilled. You can also purchase dry erase boards, or encourage employees to take digital notes, instead of using sticky notes.**



STEP 9: SHOP SECOND HAND & DONATE.

- **It takes a lot of energy and raw material to make new tables, chairs, couches and desks. Consider thrifting office furniture and decor or opt for recycled furniture.**
- **Check online and in stores for reconditioned laptops and printers.**
- **When renovating a workspace, you can probably find used flooring materials, windows, doors, and fixtures. Habitat for Humanity operates a series of ReStore building supply stores in many cities.**
- **Donate items you need to replace to charitable organizations rather than taking them to the landfill. These items create more waste for the planet and pollute the air. Electronics that are improperly disposed of and end up in landfills release heavy metal toxins, like mercury, arsenic, and lead.**



STEP 10: HELP THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & DONATE TO CHARITY.

- **Your business can actively support the environment. Here are a few ideas:**
 - **Start a promotion, such as planting a tree for every 10 products sold.**
 - **Donate a percentage of your proceeds to environmental programs.**
 - **Set up a fundraiser in your community to promote sustainable initiatives.**
 - **Here are some other ways to help the local community:**
 - **Supporting local sport programs for the kids of the community. For example, providing t-shirts to your local little league team**
 - **Support fellow local businesses.**
 - **Restaurant owners can donate meals to feed frontline workers or a homeless shelter.**
 - **Retailers can donate goods to clothing drives for a local charity.**
 - **Host an event for the local community.**



STEP 11: GAIN A LEGIT GREEN BUSINESS CERTIFICATION.

Here are some ideas:

- **Green C Certification for supporting environmentally responsible practices.**
- **USDA Certified Organic seal for 100% organically produced food.**
- **B Corp Sustainability certification for your current and long term environmental and social performance.**
- **Green Business Bureau certificate for organizing an office "Green Team" and other internal efforts.**



SOUTH CAROLINA SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCES:

SOUTH CAROLINA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS (SCSBDC)

the SC SBDC program was established to aid small business start-up ventures and to assist in the continued growth of small businesses across the country. The program is supported with federal, state and private funds and is open to any present or prospective small business owner generally fee free.

<https://www.scsbdc.com/>

SOUTH CAROLINA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

They work to promote economic opportunity for individuals and businesses. As South Carolina's leading economic development agent, the Department of Commerce works to recruit new businesses and help existing businesses grow.

<https://www.scchamber.net/>

SCORE

The nation's largest network of volunteer, expert business mentors, is dedicated to helping small businesses get off the ground, grow and achieve their goals.

SCORE is a nonprofit organization and a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). Thanks to this generous support from the SBA and because of the selfless contributions of more than 10,000 volunteers, they are able to deliver most of our offerings at no cost.

<https://www.score.org/score-south-carolina-chapters-and-resources>

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPT. OF COMMERCE RESOURCE GUIDE

Find support, information, and help to start and grow your business.

<https://scbizdev.sccommerce.com/>

GEORGETOWN COUNTY RECYCLING PROGRAM

Georgetown County offers a free paper and cardboard recycling program for businesses. The program provides businesses in the County with recycling containers that are picked up weekly via recycling truck. Use this link to apply!

<http://www.georgetowncountysc.org/DocumentCenter/View/426/Commercial-Recycling-Program-Application-PDF>

SOURCES:

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