



PARTNERSHIP
**GRAND
STRAND**

2023-24
BENCHMARK REPORT

PARTNERSHIP
**GRAND
STRAND**

ACCELERATING
THE PROSPERITY
OF THE GRAND STRAND

Mission



To accelerate the economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life for all businesses and residents across the Grand Strand.

Notes Page

Digital Marketing Links





"As resort operators, we see the profound potential Partnership Grand Strand holds for our industry and the people we serve. This is a powerful collaboration that empowers resorts, restaurants, attractions and the broader Myrtle Beach community as well. By focusing on the pillars of prosperity, talent, place, and infrastructure, we're ensuring a stronger, more resilient economy for our residents. It's not just an investment in the present, but a strategic move that will shape the future of Myrtle Beach for years to come.

Partnership Grand Strand is about creating and sustaining jobs, driving new investments, and enhancing the quality of life for everyone who lives and works here."

Clay Brittain, Brittain Resorts & Hotels

"Coastal Carolina University and our trajectory are inextricably tied to the success of our surrounding community. This is the fastest growing area in the country and our goal is to produce graduates ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow all along the Grand Strand. This partnership is key to the overall growth of our area which will inevitably lead to an increased quality of life for all our citizens."

Michael T. Benson, Coastal Carolina University



Michael Benson
PGS Vice Board Chair
Coastal Carolina University



"HGTC's connection with Partnership Grand Strand serves as a testament to the institution's commitment to both academic excellence and community enrichment. This collaboration serves as a cornerstone of progress, uniting higher education with local visionaries to create a tapestry of innovation and growth. Together, we weave the threads of knowledge, ambition, and compassion to forge a brighter future for both our students and the entire Grand Strand community."

Dr. Marilyn Murphy Fore, Horry-Georgetown Technical College

Thank You to Our Investors!

SILVER LEVEL



BRONZE LEVEL



PARTNER LEVEL



SUPPORTERS



Thank You to Our Investors!

We couldnt do any of this work without you!



DIAMOND LEVEL



GOLD LEVEL



SILVER LEVEL



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Who We Are

The Partnership Grand Strand (PGS) Foundation is a 501c3 formed in 2022 and was activated in January 2023. We are an extension of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce serves all of Horry and Georgetown counties which includes the entire Grand Strand.

In **2020**, a group of local business owners across the Grand Strand area came together and identified that a more focused effort needed to be put in place to ensure the long-term growth of their community.

In **2021**, a third-party consulting firm was commissioned to do a complete analysis of the issues facing the area. Power 10 Consulting did hundreds of interviews with business stakeholders, analyzed multiple data points and identified **FOUR** major areas of focus. Workforce Development, Small Business & Entrepreneurial support, Policy issues related to infrastructure and other business-related legislation, and Downtown Myrtle Beach Re-Development.

In **2022**, the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, under the leadership of Karen Riordan CEO, initiated the creation of the Partnership Grand Strand Foundation and secured the 501c3 status. The balance of that year was spent fundraising. By Fall of 2022, the team had secured 5-year pledges from local businesses totaling over \$3 million.

In **2023**, Partnership Grand Strand hired their Director, Peggy Masterson and Workforce Development Lead, BJ Beaver. The first strategic plan was written by March and approved by the board in April of 2023.

Partnership Grand Strand (PGS) is a proud representative of the local business community. PGS is privately funded with over 83 investors. We believe with the support of the local, forward-thinking business community, the Grand Strand will accomplish great things in the years ahead.

4 Strategic Focus Areas

PROSPERITY
Diversify our economy & grow small business

TALENT
Attract, develop & retain a high-quality workforce

PLACE
Support the revitalization of downtown & the oceanfront

INFRASTRUCTURE
Advocate for scaling up our transportation infrastructure

Cost of Living Analysis



Along that same notion of information gathering, PGS has recently conducted a Cost of Living Analysis for Horry County and surrounding communities. Our plan moving forward is to compile similar data on surrounding areas to deliver a robust comparison tool.



PGS provides progress updates to investors at semi-annual Town Hall meetings.

Coming soon... Community Podcasts



We're excited to announce a new addition to our multi-pillar initiative: "Thrivin at the Beach." Stay tuned for our upcoming community podcasts, where we'll share stories, insights, and discussions to enrich our coastal community. Coming soon!

Multi-Pillar Initiatives

Partnership Grand Strand has also created and implemented several sets of programming that cross all of our pillars. It is clear that prosperity requires forward momentum from multiple areas at once, so there are some PGS programs that touch all our pillars.

Insider's Events

INSIDERS EVENT SERIES

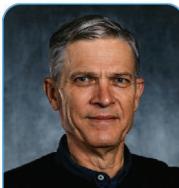
We have created "Insiders Events" that will energize and expose young professionals to everything the Grand Strand has to offer. These are behind the scenes VIP-type opportunities. To date we have provided opportunities for these professionals to hear from the Myrtle Beach Downtown Alliance for a sneak peek at the development plans for downtown; a private Q & A experience with Brian Tucker, our Assistant City Manager; and behind the scenes experience with the Long Bay Symphony and the HGTC International Culinary Institute of Myrtle Beach.



Community Survey

We believe that information is key to developing all initiatives, so our team conducted a Community Survey to poll small businesses and residents on their perception of the issues facing the Grand Strand. The results of this survey are available for all to review on our website.

Board Members



Clay Brittain
PGS Board Chair
Brittain Resort Management



Michael Benson
PGS Vice Board Chair
Coastal Carolina University



Tracy Conner
Board Member
Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce



Brian Argo
Board Member
Conway Medical Center



Stewart Miller
Board Member
Burr & Forman LLP



Bruce Bailey
Board Member
Tidelands Health



Randy DeVaux
Board Member
Kingston Resorts



Mike Chapman
Board Member
Carolina Cool



Steve Chapman
Board Member
Island Vista



Laura Crowther
Board Member
Coastal Carolina Association of Realtors



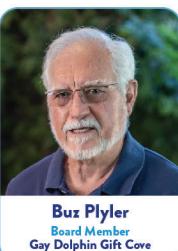
Angie Goeppinger
Board Member
SkyWheel Myrtle Beach



Carlton Lewis
Board Member
Horry Telephone Cooperative



Steve Mays
Board Member
Founders Group International



Buz Plyler
Board Member
Gay Dolphin Gift Cove



Rick Vines
Board Member
Vines Plumbing

Meet Our Team



Peggy Masterson
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A Word From Peggy



Peggy Masterson
Director
PGS Foundation

2023 marks the first operational year for the Partnership Grand Strand Foundation. Much of our initial work has been focused on identifying the biggest areas of opportunity within our four focus areas and then building sustainable programming to begin to fill those gaps.

PGS is focused on accelerating the prosperity of our region, but our approach is to do so by supporting ALL policy, economic development entities (City, County, MBRED), educational institutions (HCS, CCU, HGTC), workforce development teams including HCCOG, SC DEW, small business support organizations (SCSBA, SCORE, SCSBDC) and entrepreneurial entities (eMYRge).

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We're just getting warmed up!



First Town Hall

Transportation



We have also forged a partnership with Coast RTA and Enterprise Rental Cars to explore alternative approaches to public transportation for our workforce.



Within this first year, Partnership Grand Strand's role in policy has been largely focused on assessing the current state of affairs on key issues and proposed legislation. We have compiled information and delivered summaries of policies to our stakeholders. These summaries can be found on our website under our policy blogs. Many of these summaries are in the form of infographics in an attempt to take the complex and drill it down to a simple, easily understood communication.

Our policy pillar works closely with the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce to amplify their communication across multiple policy related issues. We have expanded into policy areas that are not necessarily transportation related but are extremely relevant to the prosperity of the Grand Strand. Some of those include legislation surrounding electronic vehicles, child care issues, workforce legislation, affordable housing initiatives and much more.

Policy Pillar Defined



As the population of Horry County continues to grow at a record pace and coupled with tourist visits, congestion on our roadways poses a significant set of challenges. Relieving congestion, creating connectivity, and maintaining the condition of our roadways are all key to long-term productivity for the Grand Strand. Additionally, evaluating emergency evacuation plans is necessary to keep our community safe.

Partnership Grand Strand has made multiple strides in this area, but these projects all involve an extremely long timeline.



Clemson University



In 2023, PGS partnered with Clemson University to conduct an analysis of our current hurricane evacuation lifeline.

Prosperity Pillar Defined

The Grand Strand area does not have a formal Business Retention and Expansion program that targets small and midsize companies. PGS supports the great work of the MBREDC by expanding the focus to include small business and start-ups.

Our region needs more economic diversity to sustain long-term growth. The Grand Strand economy has a heavy emphasis on tourism, hospitality, and retail (over 72% of all employment) and this needs to become more balanced over time.

The per capita average wages in our area are below the state and national averages.

Small Business Retention & Expansion Interviews



Purpose: To assess small business climate, environment, and morale. Our goal is to understand their pain-points, needs, growth plans and areas of opportunity.

We conducted over 150 individual interviews, 3 focus groups and joined local small business networking organizations to collect structured feedback. PGS has created a database of all responses and is using the data to drive ongoing initiatives.



PGS is collaborating with these partners to create a single BR&E Interview and database for all findings across the Grand Strand.

Creation of an AI Tool to Inform & Assist Small Businesses



Purpose: Utilize a modern, web-based digital tool that can deliver individualized responses to small business start-up, licensing, business planning and more. This approach allows for quick, customized response and easy updating to keep all information current and accurate. "Ask Myrtle" for Business will pilot in June of 2024 and fully launch later in 2024.



Coming Soon...

Small Business Educational Programming

Purpose: Deliver best in class education on the topics that small businesses and entrepreneurs want (and need) to learn.

Training topics include Business Planning, Website Design, Marketing, Social Media, SEO, Legal Direction, Tax Preparation, HR, Benefits, Employee Retention, Employee Development, and much more. This program will be launched in the summer of 2024 and will be executed in partnership with the HTC Inspire Hub and eMYRge Center in downtown Myrtle Beach.



Working Closely with the Myrtle Beach Downtown Alliance Team



MYRTLE BEACH DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE

PGS has Funded the Broadway Revitalization Plan



New landscaping, sidewalks, crosswalk designs and lighting.



Karen Riordan
Founder
Partnership Grand Strand

"We envisioned a new Chamber foundation in 2020 because we knew that PGS could focus on the four key pillars that we need to succeed long term in our community. It's been so gratifying to see the response to PGS, and the work being done by our talented staff to make progress in workforce development, public policy advocacy, retention of entrepreneurs and to support the revitalization of downtown Myrtle Beach."

Karen Riordan, Founder, Partnership Grand Strand, Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and CVB

The Place Pillar Defined



The downtown and oceanfront area of Myrtle Beach are in need of revitalization. These areas are often referred to as the “Heart” and “Front Porch” of Myrtle Beach. Both sections of the area have aged and are in serious need of redevelopment. The downtown area suffers from high levels of economic stress, including a poverty rate that is more than double the state and triple the national average.

Partnership Grand Strand’s role in this pillar is to support the work underway by the City of Myrtle Beach and the Myrtle Beach Downtown Alliance (MBDA). PGS awards 25% of its annual revenue directly to the MBDA. To date we have funded beautification efforts on Broadway Street and the research work underway to identify a state-of-the-art lighting plan for downtown.



Nights at Nance Plaza

Workforce Development Pillar Defined

Talent and Workforce are the top-of-find issues for most small businesses in our community. Demand for quality workforce continues to outpace the supply of quality workers. A particular pain point is found in the area of middle management positions. The Grand Strand must find a way to retain qualified employees and successfully place them in middle management roles.

Additionally, the influx of an aging population is impacting the number of eligible employees entering the workforce in our area.



Purpose: To connect local employers to the Career Technology Education (CTE) programming within the Horry County Schools.

In our inaugural year, we took a cohort of 20 employers into every Horry County High School over a 6-month period. Employers got to see the great work happening within HCS, observe the innovative education taking place within the CTE program, and connect with educators that are developing tomorrow's employees.

This program has been a huge success for both HCS and employers. It is the first partnership of its kind and plans include expanding the program to two cohorts of employers in the 24-25 school year.

The Coastal Carolina University RISE Internship Program



Purpose: To strengthen our local businesses by providing top-notch internship candidates in summer employment.

The RISE internship program is completely managed by the Coastal Carolina University team. It is an opportunity for local employers to customize a job description that meets their

specific needs and deploy the university experts to identify the best potential students.

Employers get the opportunity to interview the top 2-3 candidates put forth by the university and make their selection. CCU takes care of all the insurance, wages, and mechanics associated with these interns. The company that elects to take on a RISE intern agrees to make the experience as beneficial as possible for the student. These internships are subsidized by Partnership Grand Strand and make getting a highly talented summer intern extremely affordable.

We have successfully placed 13 interns in the Grand Strand area for summer 2024 and plan to open applications for our next cohort of interns in January of 2025.

Workforce Forum



Purpose: To pull all Grand Strand stakeholders involved in talent development, workforce expansion, human resources, and career placement together for an informative forum tied to key challenges facing this segment of our community.

This is an annual forum that will take place each fall. Topics may vary, but all that attend will walk away with the current state of the marketplace update, key learning, and a broader network of local career professionals.



Start Something Amazing Program



This initiative is focused on Healthcare and Skilled Trade Career Education. It is a partnership with Horry County Schools, the local hospital systems, and Horry Georgetown Technical College.

Start Something Amazing for healthcare was created to address a workforce issue that the hospital systems are experiencing surrounding jobs that do not require a 4-year degree. This past year, PGS put over 200 Horry County health science students through complete tours of the hospitals. Each student also received the requirements and salary information for all non-degree healthcare positions.

Plans for the skilled trade version of Start Something Amazing are currently underway and will begin to execute in conjunction with HGTC in the fall of 2024.

Other Workforce Initiatives

Youth Employability Skills Training:

Solutions are underway to address a widespread training need for basic work-related skills such as customer service, communication skills, professional conduct, and interviewing.



Summer Youth Leadership Camp: PGS is exploring partnerships with HCS and CCU to develop a summer camp experience for future leaders within the Grand Strand community.

Two new partnership programs with **Coastal Carolina University:** PGS will partner with the CoBE Institute to place students within local businesses to deliver project-driven outcomes that will benefit the small business. PGS will also be partnering with the CCU Wall Fellows group on professional development programs for graduating students.

