



## Appalachian Council of Governments January – June 2007, Midyear Highlights

The following are just a few of the projects and services provided by the Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) for the municipalities, counties and citizens of the Upstate of South Carolina. For more complete information, visit ACOG's website at [www.scacog.org](http://www.scacog.org) and read ACOG's bimonthly newsletter *ViewPoint*. Contact ACOG offices at 864-242-9733.

### GRANTS



**A new college classroom facility** under construction at Spartanburg Community College's Gaffney Campus. The project was partially funded by a \$500,000 ARC grant and a grant of \$1,250,000 from EDA.

ACOG is administering numerous Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for infrastructure projects throughout the region, including grants awarded to Anderson County, Cherokee County, Pickens County, and the cities/towns of Pendleton, West Pelzer, Iva, Blacksburg, Gaffney, Central, Easley, Wellford and Woodruff. Activities include environmental reviews, procurement of engineering and/or construction services, compliance with Davis-Bacon and related construction labor acts, drawdown of funds, public hearings, and close-out. These projects will enhance the lives of the area's residents and promote economic development activities.

Staff is also providing administrative services for CDBG-funded housing rehabilitation projects in Anderson County and the cities of Belton, Honea Path, Easley and Woodruff. This work involves qualifying residents for assistance, inspection of houses to determine needs, developing work write-ups, obtaining bids for work, overseeing contractors and approving invoices for payment.

Staff worked closely with local governments to write and submit applications for CDBG funding for infrastructure improvements to alleviate health and safety threats. Applications were submitted to the Department of Commerce to assist with water system improvements in Cherokee County and the towns of Pendleton and Liberty. Also, grant applications for sewer system improvements were submitted by the cities of Pickens, Seneca and Wellford.

The Town of Pacolet, with assistance from ACOG, submitted an application to the Appalachian Regional Commission for \$475,000 to assist with sewer line construction to serve the downtown area of Pacolet. Most businesses in downtown are currently utilizing septic tanks, which inhibits growth in the downtown area.

### GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Since January 2006, ACOG has assisted the Town of Williamston in its recovery from severe financial and administrative difficulties. While the Town is now financially stable, ACOG continues to advise the Mayor and Council on a number of critical fiscal and management issues.

In the last six months, staff conducted strategic planning retreats and



**Williamston is coming back.** 2006 was a particularly difficult year for the 3,800 citizens of the Town of Williamston. By mid-2007, the Town was well on its way to complete financial recovery.



**Pickens City Council Retreat**  
ACOG facilitated seven council retreats and four board orientations in January, February, and March.

goal-setting sessions for the town councils of several Upstate municipalities including Belton, Williamston, Pickens, Gaffney, Inman, Woodruff and Central. ACOG-facilitated retreats are typically conducted at the Council of Governments offices in Greenville and focus on the development and prioritization of both long term and short term council goals and objectives. ACOG staff members also frequently participate in retreats conducted and facilitated by local city, county and special purpose district managers onsite.

ACOG continued work with the municipalities of Travelers Rest, Pickens, Liberty, Landrum, Westminster, Central and West Union under COG's Small Towns Technical Assistance Program. Assistance included utility rate studies, support for a COG-developed business license software program, management studies, goal-setting sessions, and advice to councils and staff on numerous administrative and Home Rule issues.

Staff provided ongoing technical assistance to a number of jurisdictions on personnel and wage-related issues. Specifically, staff provided detailed assistance in the application of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) as it relates to wages and overtime for regular and public safety employees.

Staff provided financial and personnel technical assistance to the Poplar Springs and Westview-Fairforest Fire Districts. Staff finalized work on a cost-benefit study analyzing the fire services and costs on a long-standing contract between the City of Easley and the Crosswell Fire District.

## PLANNING

In the first half of 2007, ACOG provided technical assistance on planning matters to communities throughout the region including Pendleton, Belton, Honea Path, Walhalla, Westminster, Seneca, Easley, Central, Liberty, Pickens, Six Mile, Chesnee, Cowpens, Inman, Landrum, Lyman, Pacolet, West Pelzer and Woodruff.

ACOG staff has helped develop several plans and ordinances for local communities. Staff assisted the new Anderson HOME Consortium partnership between the City of Anderson, Anderson County, and City of Belton as they developed a Consolidated Plan and Annual Action Plan, which will bring \$750,000 to assist with community development efforts in those communities. Staff also developed Architectural Design Guidelines for the Town of Pendleton, a noise ordinance for Cherokee County, and Comprehensive Plan updates for the towns of Six Mile, Central, and Chesnee.

ACOG provided contractual planning services to the Town of Pendleton and the Cherokee County Planning Commission and Board of Appeals. Staff also helped facilitate a community planning charette with Spartanburg County for the Town of Inman to identify needs and develop a vision for the future of Inman. ACOG provided planning education training for over 40 planning officials and committee members in the first half of 2007.

ACOG staff worked on several transportation planning projects. Work was completed on a Long Range Transportation Plan for the Appalachian region that established priorities for road improvements that will be constructed between 2007 and 2012 for the region's rural transportation area. Staff also worked with SCDOT to facilitate stakeholder meetings as part of Transit Coordination Planning efforts for the region. The plan will be the basis for a Regional Transit Coordination Plan required to meet the Federal Transit Administration's requirements for transit funding. ACOG also serves on the Greenville/Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS) and Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS) Technical and Policy Committees, and also provides staff support to the Pickens County Transportation Planning Committee.



ACOG completed Community Needs Assessments for Cherokee County and the municipalities of Seneca, Liberty, Pickens and Wellford. Over \$4,000,000 was awarded to fund projects supported by ACOG needs assessments and applications.

During the first six months of 2007, ACOG staff reviewed 148 "208" Water Quality permits for conformance with the Appalachian Regional Water Quality Plan.

### **AGING/ SENIOR SERVICES**

In the first half of 2007, ACOG staff have written and received approval of the annual Regional Aging Services and Budget Plan; conducted fiscal and programmatic monitoring of 7 contractors; conducted Quality Assurance review of all contractors providing Level 1 Home Care; monitored 28 congregate dining sites; presented testimony to SC Joint Legislative Committee on Aging; participated in 4 Senior Expos and 3 Senior Job Fairs; opened the regional Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), currently serving residents of Anderson and Oconee counties; engaged a Long Term Care Manager and Medicaid Eligibility Specialist through cost sharing contracts to staff the ADRC; stationed our Regional I/R & A Specialist one day a week in each county; and negotiated and executed new year aging services contracts.

ACOG staff have responded to 1,438 calls for information and assistance; worked with 615 seniors on Medicare fraud issues and 1,350 individuals with insurance policy issues and Medicare Part D prescription drug plan enrollment issues; financially assisted 496 caregivers of seniors and 40 grandparents raising grandchildren; responded to 674 complaints of abuse, neglect or exploitation in facilities; conducted 249 consultations; made 11 in-service presentations to facility staff; and made 86 volunteer ombudsman friendly visits.

ACOG Aging contract funds have assisted 9,488 seniors in the region through the provision of: 661,185 miles of transportation; 16,365 hours of home care assistance; 413 hours of Alzheimer's respite care; 253 days of adult day care service; 580 hours of legal assistance; 18,723 hours of wellness and exercise activities; 5,020 hours of care management service; 2,902 minor home repair units; 350 health screenings; 560 high risk nutrition screenings; 1,602 health promotion activities; 9,150 hours of physical fitness activity; 5,611 consultations on medication management issues; 62,835 home delivered meals; and, 91,317 group dining meals.



**Some of ACOG's dedicated Aging staff at a recent awards ceremony.** In the first six months of 2007, ACOG directly and indirectly assisted many thousands of Upstate seniors.



**The 2007 Spring Job Fair**, held at Clemson's Littlejohn Coliseum, is just one of the many ways ACOG's Work-Link team promotes employment in the Upstate.

### **WORKFORCE/ EMPLOYMENT**

More than 500 job candidates participated in ACOG's WorkLink Job Fairs on April 24 and 25 at Clemson University's Littlejohn Coliseum. WorkLink cooperated with the South Carolina Employment Security Commission, Adult Education, and Tri-County Technical College to make the fair a great success.

Staff conducted a Community Forum for Southern Growth Policies Board – *The Next Southern Workforce* and held a second class for Career Development Facilitator Training, graduating 22.

Employment One-Stops have served 32,291 customers from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007. There have been 53,246 visits to the One-Stops for services such as job search, resume preparation, labor market information, workshops, etc.

From July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007, 573 adults, 879 dislocated workers and 265 youth received services using Workforce Investment Board funds. From July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007 there were 6 Incumbent Worker Training Contracts written with area companies for \$190,987 to train 312 current employees.



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC), during the first half of 2007, continued to experience a high level of interest from local banks seeking to lend money for regional projects. The ADC approved and/or closed a total of \$6.8 million in financing, including: eight loans totaling \$1,230,000 from the Appalachian Loan pool; nine Small Business Administration (SBA) 504 loans totaling \$3,704,000; and two loans from Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF) amounting to \$2,102,000. These loans will significantly increase the local tax base and will create an estimated 251 jobs over the next two years.

The ADC was recently honored by the SBA as one of its "Top Lenders" in the 504 loan program for the past year.



The Blakely Funeral Home in Gaffney, a very successful local business, was partly financed by Development Corporation loans.

## INFORMATION SYSTEMS/ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACOG staff provided data and application updates for *InfoMentum* and *InfoMap*, a decision support system for the Upstate. Staff provided technical support and training to research personnel from each county economic development office, Anderson Library, and the Upstate Alliance. *InfoMap* is the on-line, interactive mapping application linked to each county economic development website, showcasing the available industrial properties and offering a wealth of information about population, labor market, and economic climate.



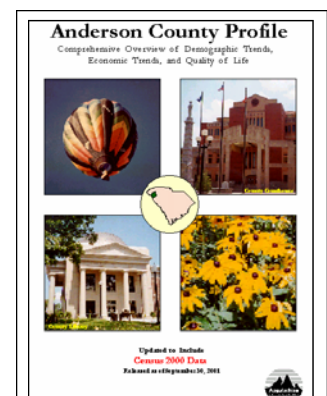
ACOG launched PLANABIZ.org, the on-line mapping and demographic analysis tools to support small business development in the region. The *ADC Small Business Resource Directory* catalogs web links for organizations, publications, and websites that support small business development. The *Plan-A-Biz Suitability Tool* enables entrepreneurs, bankers, and business consultants to analyze the suitability of a proposed business location based on demographic factors. Visitors to the free web site use mapping tools and detailed regional databases as a tool for refining business plans and enhancing the business development process.

Staff participated in a roundtable discussion organized and facilitated by the Strom Thurmond Institute to address issues related to the current and future growth of the region. ACOG presented an overview of economic development tools and information at the Pickens County Business Assistance Symposium, held in March, 2007.

## DATA SERVICES

ACOG responded to 386 requests for statistical information and map data for the region. Services ranged from providing demographic data, to assisting the City of Anderson Fire Department in completing a FEMA grant application, to assisting the Greenville County Planning Department in the preparation of their comprehensive plan by providing data and map layers from the *Greenville County Multi-Family Housing Survey*. Staff also assisted the Anderson Economic Restructuring Committee of the National Trust Main Street Program in assessing data availability for use in the development of a book focused on attraction and retention of businesses in downtown Anderson.

Staff collected county consumer data for the quarterly *ACCRA Cost of Living Index*, in coordination with the Greenville Area Development Corporation and the Greenville Chamber of Commerce. Staff also completed annual research and updates for the *2006-2007 County Economic Profiles*, which are comprehensive overview of demographic trends, economic trends, and quality of life. Copies of these and other ACOG publications are available at ACOG offices and online.



Current Economic Profiles are available for each of ACOG's six counties.