CCF Coastal
Community
Foundation
OF SOUTH CAROLINA

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
SUMMARY

COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS
AND
REGIONAL DATA

coastalcommunityfoundation.org/CEA

"In sitting down and choosing to listen rather than act, Coastal Community Foundation gave voice to many who have felt otherwise voiceless in advocating for better communities across all coastal counties."

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Communities are reactive, living ecosystems. Their success and resilience depend heavily on shared common threads and pillars of organizational support. As a pillar of philanthropic leadership serving a nine-county service region, Coastal Community Foundation recognizes the pressing importance of understanding the issues that challenge our community and crafting thoughtful, dynamic responses.

In September 2017, CCF partnered with the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, an independent nonprofit that teaches philanthropic leaders how to converse with community members about seemingly intractable problems. Through their model, both community leaders and community members reveal common threads, fostering collaborative efforts to address issues that would be otherwise impossible to solve alone. The Institute's "community conversation" framework is used across all 50 U.S. states by some of the nation's largest nonprofits, as it provides a holistic, grassroots understanding of cross-regional issues and bottom-up avenues for social progress.

> " When there is a connection and people are working together, there is more opportunity for youngsters to be making decisions and planning their futures. If connected, you have opportunities. If not, it can be bad. "

A GUIDE TO THIS SUMMARY

In collaboration with 1000 Feathers, a Columbia-based strategy and implementation consulting firm, Coastal Community Foundation recruited 50 individuals for a two-day training facilitated by a Harwood Institute "coach." These individuals then conducted 36 community conversations in all corners of our service region. The conversations took place between September 2017 and February 2018. Group sizes averaged thirteen participants, and were intentionally capped at 20 participants to allow for all voices to be heard and create the environment of a "kitchen table" conversation. In all, over four hundred individuals participated in these conversations.

Instead of taking a participatory role in these conversations, facilitators simply kept the conversation on track, spotlighting the voices of our community. The goal of these conversations was not oriented in providing immediate solutions, but in gathering a broad understanding of community issues that would inform future strategies of innovative leadership and community involvement.

The themes outlined in this summary fall under three umbrellas:

▶ **Equity:** bridging the gap between racial and regional disparities in response to a rapid increase in net migration.
▶ **Safety:** creating enjoyable, connected, and crime-free communities that people can be proud of.
▶ **Education:** the umbrella under which many issues—namely employability, child development, and advocacy—often fall.

The five themes discussed in this summary reflect an awareness of these issues across a variety of counties, socioeconomic classes, and races. Through including quotes of participants, the themes are defined and contextualized in the communities in which they are prevalent. The final section of the summary outlines commonalities between these five themes, as well as ideas for community engagement and collaboration.

THEMES

Access to Economic Opportunity

Twenty-nine percent of participants chose access to economic opportunity as the most important issue their community faces, spanning across Charleston, Berkeley, Dorchester and Hampton counties. Many see this issue as an undesirable product of current migratory trends. As one Beaufort resident put it, "when you grow, you have growing pains." As a rapidly populating region bringing in 35 residents daily to the Charleston metro region alone, many feel that growth and prosperity are markedly inequitable. Based on the conversations, there appear to be two commonly-held conceptions of economic inequity throughout our service region:

Regional: Despite rapid economic growth throughout Lowcountry city centers, rural areas of coastal counties feel that they have suffered from economic marginalization. Participants in Colleton and Hampton counties specifically alluded to the challenges their regions face. Since the closing of the Panolam factory in 2014, many Hampton residents have felt pressured to either commute long distances to neighboring counties or uproot their families entirely in search of a better livelihood. One woman spoke about how she "had to lie, fake that my child attended Allendale schools so she could take swim lessons." Underdeveloped economies have led to a decrease in quality of life. Several conversations suggest that communities should create a center that relays information regarding job and vocational training opportunities.

> " Economic disparities and related suffering have kept African-Americans out of the human family. "
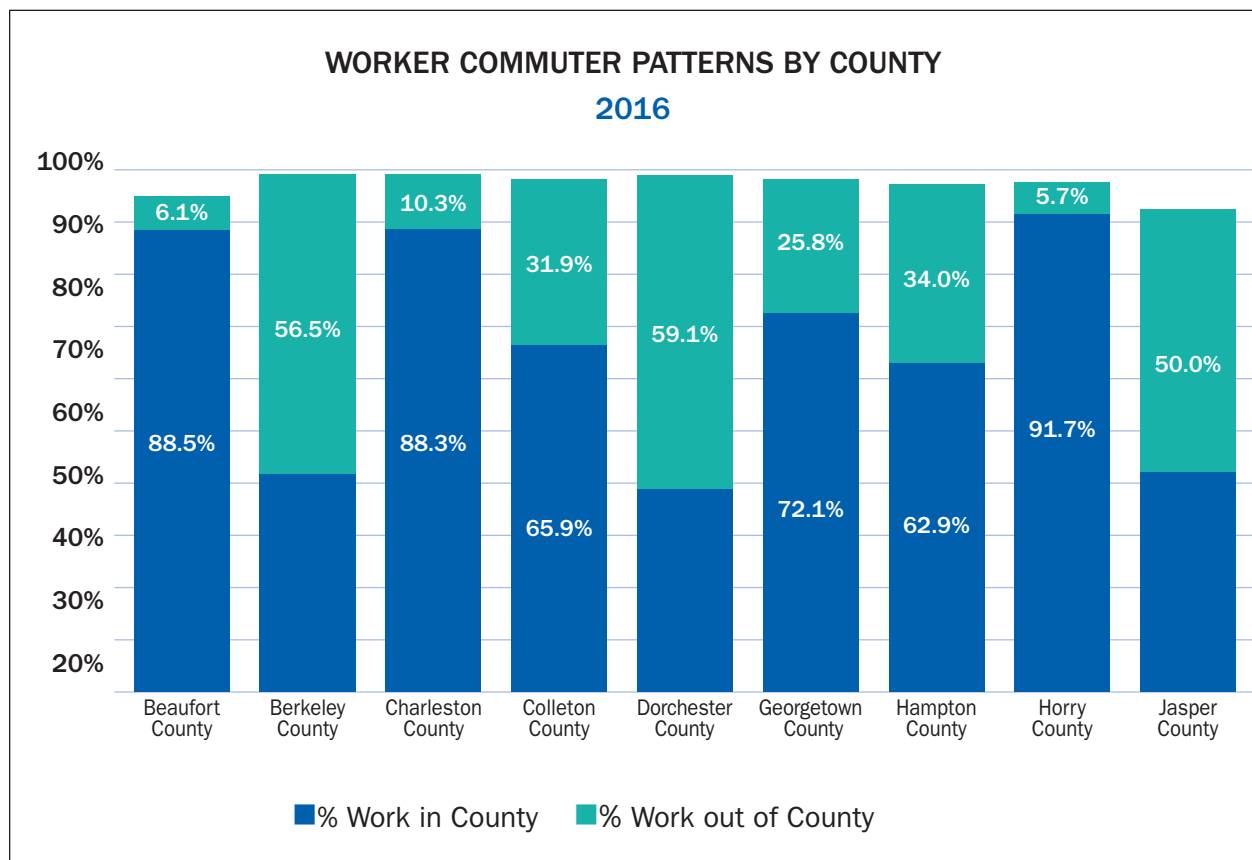
Supporting Data: Worker Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns, or the flow of workers from place of residence to place of work, is an indicator of several economic conditions for a given area. Primarily, these patterns can reflect the availability and quality of work locally and in surrounding counties.

Berkeley, Dorchester, and Jasper counties have a large percentage of residents who work outside of the county, while Beaufort, Charleston, and Horry counties have a large portion of the residents who live and work in county. This provides insight into the regional economic disparities our communities face.

WORKER COMMUTER PATTERNS BY COUNTY
2016

County	% Work in County	% Work out of County
Beaufort County	88.5%	6.1%
Berkeley County	56.5%	—
Charleston County	88.3%	10.3%
Colleton County	65.9%	31.9%
Dorchester County	—	59.1%
Georgetown County	72.1%	25.8%
Hampton County	62.9%	34.0%
Horry County	91.7%	5.7%
Jasper County	—	50.0%

(Berkeley work in county 56.5% label shown near 50%; Dorchester work in county ~48.9%)

■ % Work in County   ■ % Work out of County

Racial: The longstanding issue of racial divides has caused some minority community members—those with entrepreneurial spirits and dreams of starting businesses that will improve the economic and cultural composition of their community—to feel immobile. The roots of disparity run deep in racial economic inequity, their salience exemplified through gentrification of neighborhoods and "brain drain" from minority neighborhoods in search of economic opportunities elsewhere, thus perpetuating the issue. Many point to racial injustice within the tourism industry, which capitalizes on Gullah traditions but does not return any of the money to the Gullah community.

Many participants are looking for access to startup capital, career training, and mentorship opportunities between young entrepreneurs and successful business people, particularly those who represent minority communities. One participant in Charleston expressed his frustration with the new development of downtown Charleston neighborhoods:

" You almost feel like a stranger in your own home. There's so much frustration in that kind of feeling of…how are you just getting here and you're redeveloping Nassau Street when I've been here my whole life and I haven't had access to capital to do that myself? I can't speak for all black folks, but I think that embodies the frustrations of the African-American community, especially those of us with an entrepreneurial spirit. "
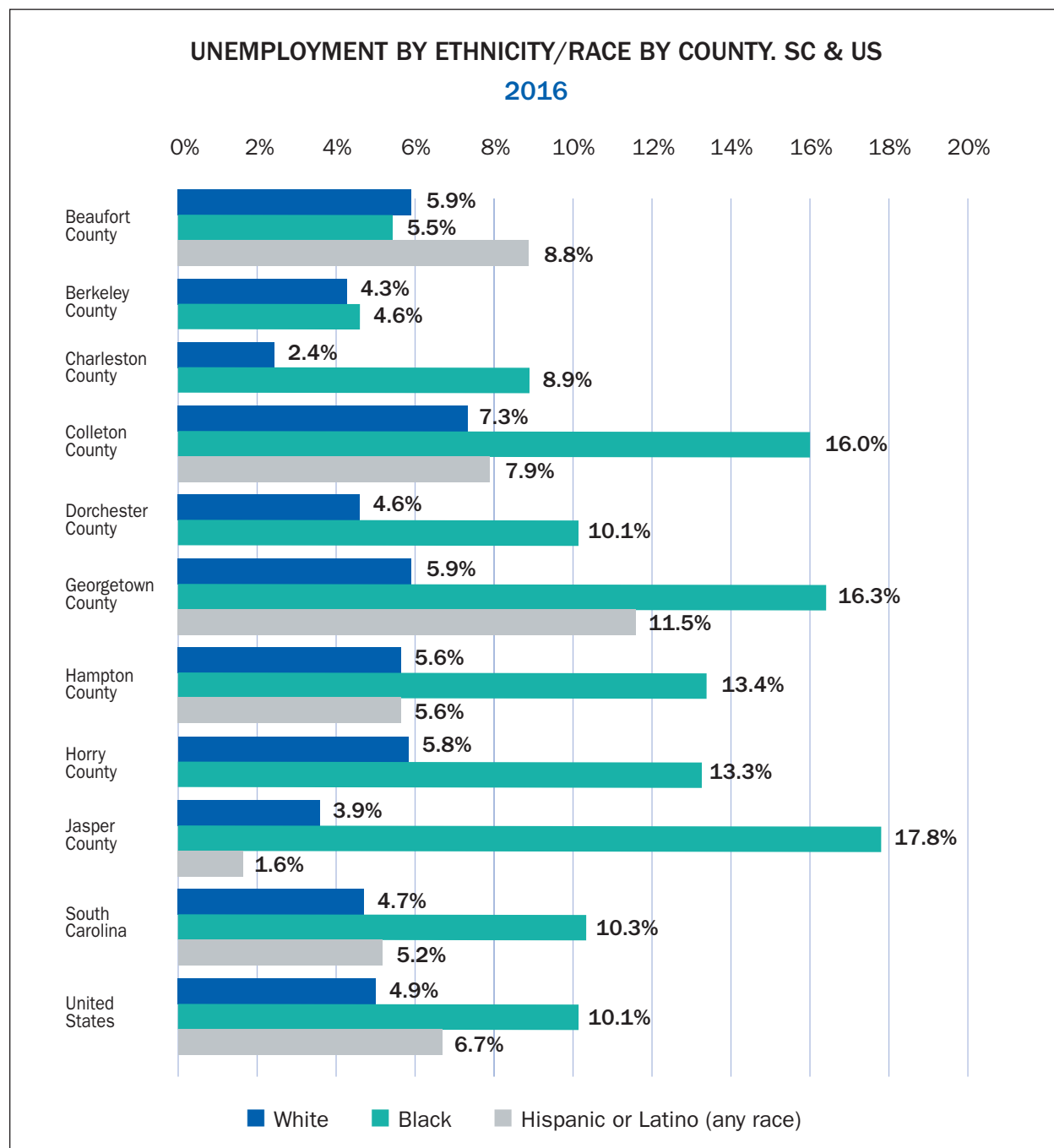
Support Data: Unemployment

When individuals are unemployed, the community loses. Families lose wages, the local economy loses the purchasing power of those individuals, and the workforce loses production of goods or services. Significant disparities by race/ethnicity exist in all of our counties. Black residents are far more likely to be unemployed then their white and Hispanic counterparts.

Note: for some of the counties, the unemployment rate for the Hispanic population was not reported (gray bar) by the Census Bureau.

UNEMPLOYMENT BY ETHNICITY/RACE BY COUNTY. SC & US
2016

County	White	Black	Hispanic or Latino (any race)
Beaufort County	5.9%	5.5%	8.8%
Berkeley County	4.3%	4.6%	
Charleston County	2.4%	8.9%	
Colleton County	7.3%	16.0%	7.9%
Dorchester County	4.6%	10.1%	
Georgetown County	5.9%	16.3%	11.5%
Hampton County	5.6%	13.4%	5.6%
Horry County	5.8%	13.3%	
Jasper County	3.9%	17.8%	1.6%
South Carolina	4.7%	10.3%	5.2%
United States	4.9%	10.1%	6.7%

Legend: White, Black, Hispanic or Latino (any race)

EDUCATION

Nearly one third of all community conversations chose this as the number one topic of concern. It was the most expansive of all themes, discussed in conversations in Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper, and Dorchester counties. While the theme of education is expansive, the conversations surrounding it in the Lowcountry are targeted: people want education to become more practical, supportive, and diverse, and for community schools to "focus on educating children rather than just having school," as one Berkeley County resident put it.

Enrichment outside of the classroom environment, such as mentorships, soft skills, and a sense of civic and emotional awareness, is considered a crucial (and missing) element of education. One conversation was comprised solely of high school students, who exclaimed that they didn't want "faculty and staff to focus on busywork and check boxes," but provide a holistic education that also includes technical skills and extracurricular activities. Many think these external enrichment opportunities will aid in combating gang violence.

> " I won't start a family in a place where I can't send my children to a quality public school. "

Many community members cited the role of the home in creating quality education for all. Some Beaufort County residents expressed the importance of increasing early childhood educational resources to enrich a student during some of their most formative developmental years. In Jasper County, some identified the lack of parental involvement in a child's education as an issue that slows the progress of educational reform.

> " I wish this community had a stronger focus on educating children rather than just having school...I'm not sure that there is a plan for children to gain what they need to be contributing, functional adults and to go on to higher education. "
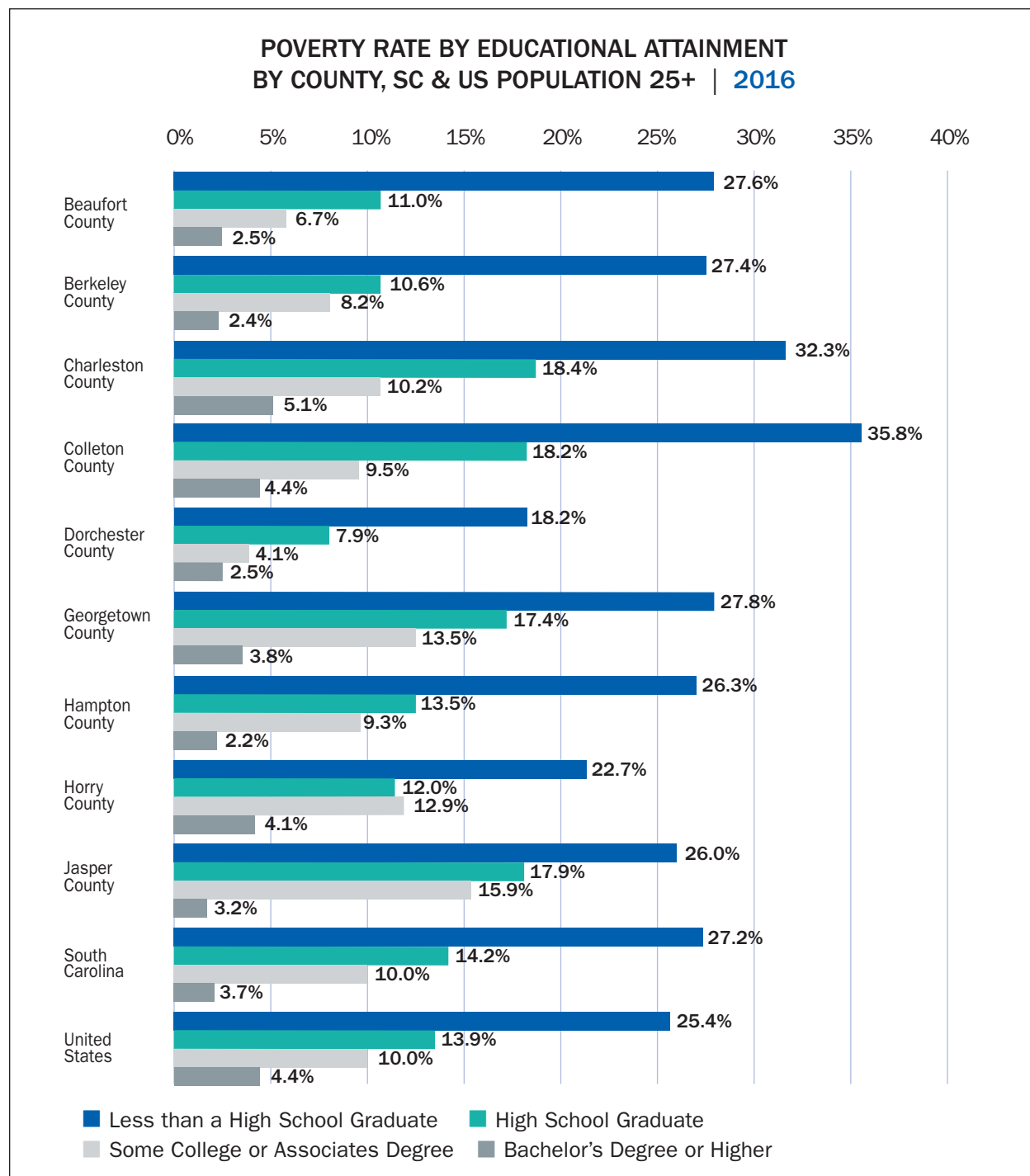
The lack of diversity and economic inequity with respect to education was repeatedly discussed. Jasper County community members articulate how private schools in the area are primarily white and retain higher-achieving students in comparison to public schools, who are under more financial constraints and cannot offer desirable benefits and classrooms to quality teachers. A group in North Charleston discussed one of the significant barriers to success that their students face—transportation. Due to the lack of quality programming (e.g. Honors, AP, IB-dual enrollment courses) in local schools, one teenage participant recounted the three hours daily he spent commuting to and from a school in West Ashley. This concern was echoed by one mother who shared how "my children are on the bus for a long time. I see their quality of life going down. It affects the whole family." Increasing the accessibility of quality schooling will be essential in addressing widespread discontent with educational programming in our service region.

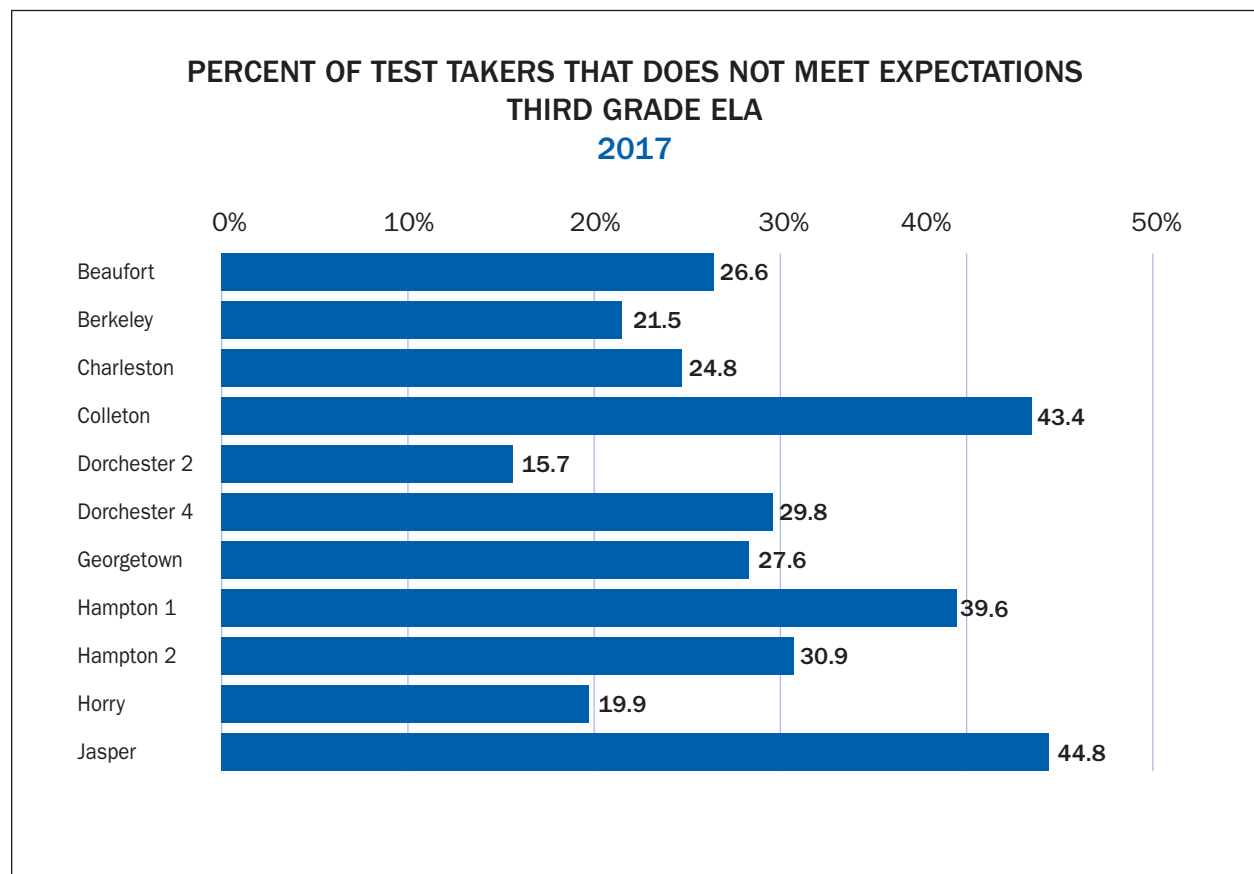## Supporting Data: Earnings and Poverty Rates by Educational Attainment

Higher educational attainment is strongly correlated with higher earnings and lower poverty rates, regardless of location. As educational levels increase, so do earnings and poverty rates decrease. Like median earnings by educational attainment, poverty rates in the counties by attainment levels reflect the national trend. Those with a bachelor's degree or higher have a significantly lower poverty rate than those who have failed to graduate high school, and our community is no exception.

POVERTY RATE BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
BY COUNTY, SC & US POPULATION 25+ | 2016

County	Less than a High School Graduate	High School Graduate	Some College or Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Beaufort County	27.6%	11.0%	6.7%	2.5%
Berkeley County	27.4%	10.6%	8.2%	2.4%
Charleston County	32.3%	18.4%	10.2%	5.1%
Colleton County	35.8%	18.2%	9.5%	4.4%
Dorchester County	18.2%	7.9%	4.1%	2.5%
Georgetown County	27.8%	17.4%	13.5%	3.8%
Hampton County	26.3%	13.5%	9.3%	2.2%
Horry County	22.7%	12.0%	12.9%	4.1%
Jasper County	26.0%	17.9%	15.9%	3.2%
South Carolina	27.2%	14.2%	10.0%	3.7%
United States	25.4%	13.9%	10.0%	4.4%

Legend:
- ■ Less than a High School Graduate
- ■ High School Graduate
- ■ Some College or Associates Degree
- ■ Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Supporting Data: Third Grade English Language Arts (ELA)

Students who fall behind in reading at grade level are at a higher risk of not graduating high school and experience long-term impacts on their future social and economic statuses. Reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade is a strong predictor of a child's educational development and a make-or-break benchmark. Prior to 3rd grade, children are "learning to read" whereas 4th grade and beyond is "reading to learn." After 3rd grade, textbooks and other reading materials are no longer simple primers, but rather actual texts containing material that children must master before moving forward. According to the Children's Reading Foundation, almost half of the printed 4th grade materials are incomprehensible to children who read below level. Act 284 (Read to Succeed) requires that, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, a student must be retained in the 3rd grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of 3rd grade as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment SC READY. A student may be exempt for good cause from the mandatory retention but shall continue to receive instructional support and services and reading intervention appropriate for their age and reading level. The Read to Succeed Team is aware of research around 3rd grade retention and is currently researching models and solutions in other states and among stakeholders in South Carolina.

PERCENT OF TEST TAKERS THAT DOES NOT MEET EXPECTATIONS THIRD GRADE ELA
2017

District	Percent
Beaufort	26.6
Berkeley	21.5
Charleston	24.8
Colleton	43.4
Dorchester 2	15.7
Dorchester 4	29.8
Georgetown	27.6
Hampton 1	39.6
Hampton 2	30.9
Horry	19.9
Jasper	44.8

AFFORDABLE PLACES AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

One conversation in Berkeley County began with a woman claiming, "the housing piece should even come before employment, because you can't often get a job if you're not in housing." Many feel trapped in the cycle of poverty due to a lack of affordable housing and transitional programming. The

> " The cost of living is only rising…a YMCA after-school program is still out of reach, despite a sliding pay scale. "

lack of quality employment, coupled with the increasing cost of living, presents community members with adverse variables: they often must choose to live in unsafe or distant neighborhoods, commuting long hours to a job that provides just enough to get by. In Berkeley County, community members express their exasperation over the fact that most jobs pay less than $15/hour, and lack of quality jobs in the area perpetuates people living in poverty. While the financial pressures associated with unemployment are evident, "employment is more than just the money coming in, it's the value that it brings to your life."

Shelters and transitional housing are deemed crucial in addressing issues with affordability, but many often feel that the quality (and quantity) of these resources are lacking. One group went further, expressing the importance of cultivating independence—that rather than shuffling veterans, ex-felons, and those suffering from mental health disorders into these homes, they should be taught and encouraged to gather the skills necessary to live independently. A landlord participating in a community conversation in North Charleston spoke to how "my tenant has a low credit score because he defaulted on school loan payments. I gave him a second chance. If you don't have the opportunity in the first place you can't take advantage."

One factor contributing to the lack of affordable housing cited by many groups has been gentrification. One lifelong member of the Eastside neighborhood in downtown Charleston expressed her concerns:
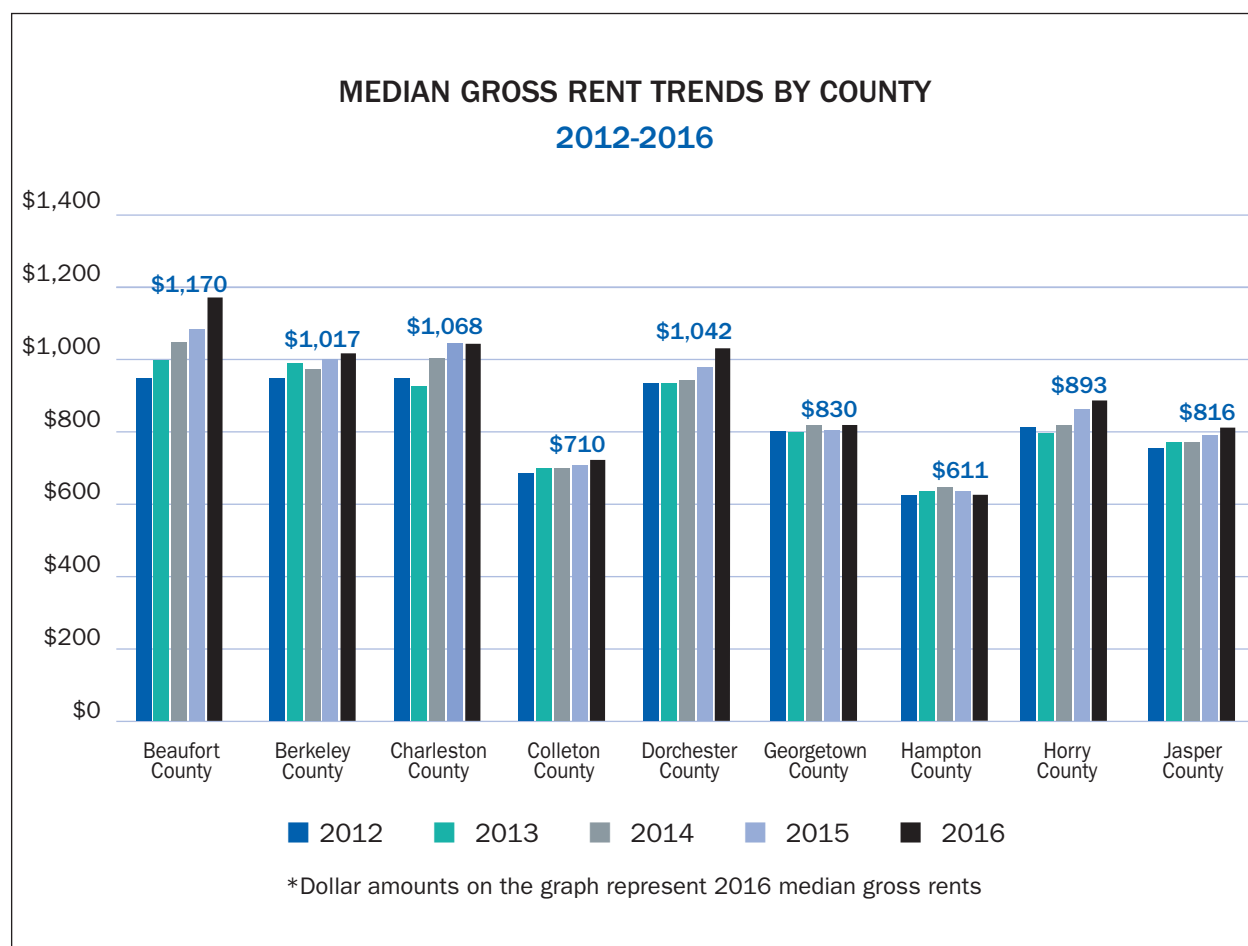
> " If you would please not renovate every house on the block and charge $2,000/month for a two-bedroom house on Nassau street…you're outside your righteous mind! But there is a new community coming in, Silicon Harbor is now here, people are coming here and are making enough money to do it, so the cost of housing jumps 500%. "

In more urbanized areas, such as Charleston County, many feel that the lack of affordable housing due to rapid immigration and gentrification has led to the stratification of once-integrated communities, while also bringing issues of food deserts and racial stereotyping. An important thread running through conversations centered around affordability is the fear of community replacement. Community members of many different generations, predominately African-Americans, feel pushed out of their own homes and neighborhoods by a "new community" of incomers who are otherwise oblivious to or indifferent towards the customs and traditions of the neighborhoods that they are inhabiting.

Supporting Data: Median Gross Rent

When considering housing affordability and the population's ability to save for homeownership, it is important to look at gross rent trends in the county. High rent prices compared to a low median household income could indicate that many renters will not have enough purchasing power to become homeowners, as they are likely to be spending more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. Rent has increased in all of the counties except Hampton County. Beaufort, Charleston, and Horry Counties have all had the largest increase in median gross rent from 2012 to 2016. The median gross rent in South Carolina was $841 in 2016 and five of the nine counties had a median gross rent higher than the state median.

MEDIAN GROSS RENT TRENDS BY COUNTY
2012-2016

County	2016 Median Gross Rent
Beaufort County	$1,170
Berkeley County	$1,017
Charleston County	$1,068
Colleton County	$710
Dorchester County	$1,042
Georgetown County	$830
Hampton County	$611
Horry County	$893
Jasper County	$816

Legend: ■ 2012 ■ 2013 ■ 2014 ■ 2015 ■ 2016

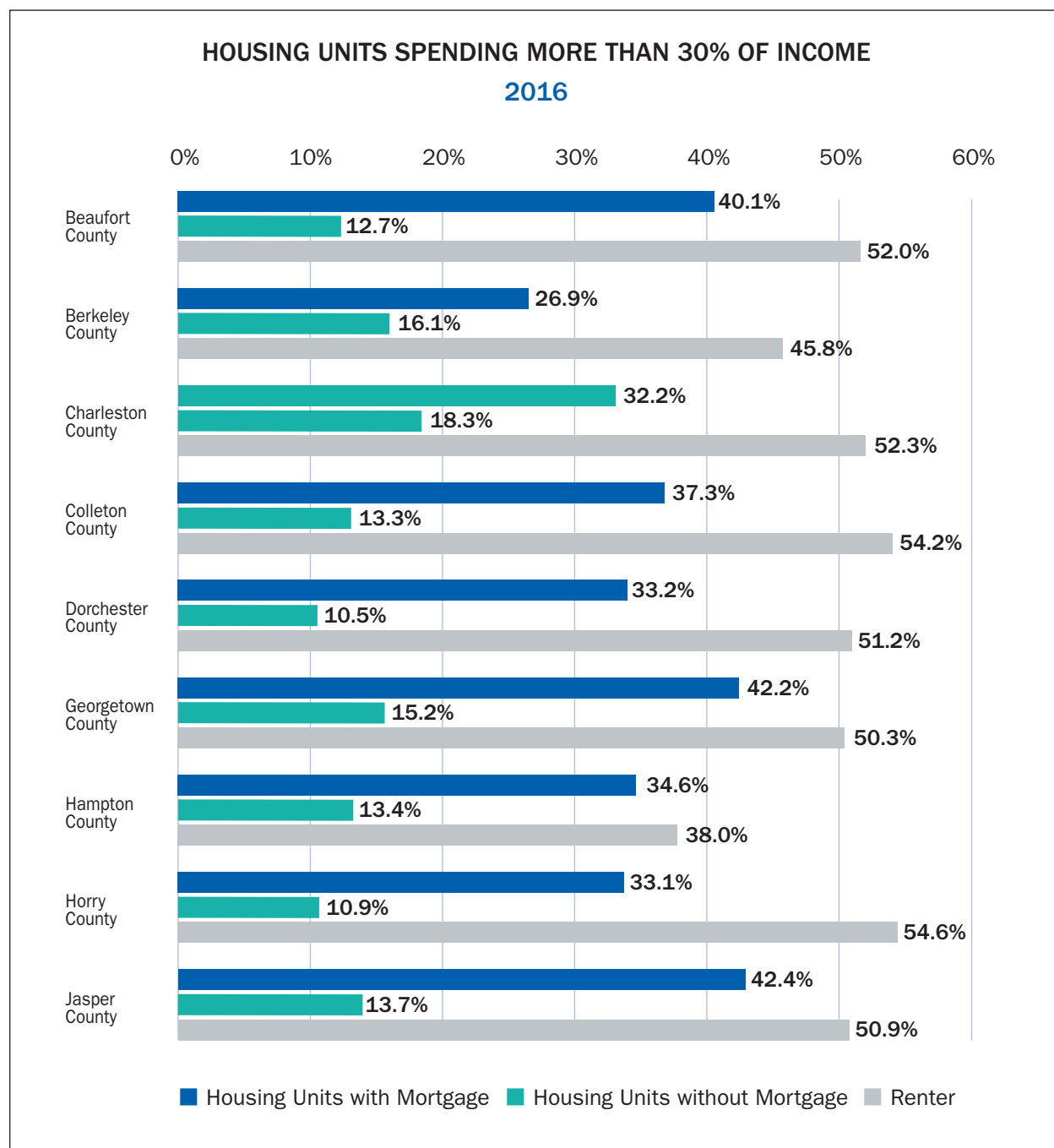*Dollar amounts on the graph represent 2016 median gross rents

Supporting Data: Households Spending More than 30% of Household Income on Housing Costs
Affordable housing is defined as housing that costs no more than 30% of a household's income.
Renters are more likely than homeowners in all of the counties to be spending more than 30% of their
income on housing expenses with more than 50% of all renters in Beaufort, Charleston, Colleton,
Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, and Jasper counties spending more than 30%. When transportation
expense are considered, there could be individuals in each of the counties spending over 80% of their
household income on housing and transportation expenses alone.

HOUSING UNITS SPENDING MORE THAN 30% OF INCOME
2016

County	With Mortgage	Without Mortgage	Renter
Beaufort County	40.1%	12.7%	52.0%
Berkeley County	26.9%	16.1%	45.8%
Charleston County	32.2%	18.3%	52.3%
Colleton County	37.3%	13.3%	54.2%
Dorchester County	33.2%	10.5%	51.2%
Georgetown County	42.2%	15.2%	50.3%
Hampton County	34.6%	13.4%	38.0%
Horry County	33.1%	10.9%	54.6%
Jasper County	42.4%	13.7%	50.9%

■ Housing Units with Mortgage   ■ Housing Units without Mortgage   ■ Renter

Supporting Data: Income by Homeowner Status

Homeowners have a higher median income than renters do in all of the counties.

INCOME BY HOMEOWNER STATUS			
	Median Household Income	Median Homeowner Income	Median Renter Income
Beaufort County	$65,919	$75,494	$41,968
Berkeley County	$59,153	$70,244	$44,041
Charleston County	$56,827	$73,100	$36,419
Colleton County	$33,918	$37,981	$23,603
Dorchester County	$57,637	$64,204	$40,059
Georgetown County	$45,299	$51,462	$25,668
Hampton County	$31,734	$36,877	$24,067
Horry County	$45,621	$54,292	$31,221
Jasper County	$38,991	$42,684	$34,609

Connected, Livable Communities

Almost all community members across our service region longed for this end goal in both a literal and physical sense. Public transportation is cited by many as an issue that siloes community members, as well as urban planning resulting in heavy traffic. The lack of proper bus routes poses issues for people across the Foundation's entire service region—one missed or off-schedule bus can cause one person living in poverty in Dorchester County to "have to walk ten miles just to get to a job."

The most poignant facet of this theme, however, is that community members are yearning to simply know their own neighbors. The transient nature of community members resulting from regional growth, coupled with an ever-increasing pace of life, has caused many to experience isolation within their own communities. In sum, many community members feel that a common desire to be a community is absent.

Ironically, almost all conversations spoke to this issue, indicating that those experiencing feelings of isolation are in fact not alone, and that, as a Dorchester County community member put it, "disconnectivity is bred from contempt." Many community members also shared their desire for a diverse community. When pressed as to what they feel is keeping them from currently attaining this goal, one Dorchester County participant said, "diversity matters to us when it's 'over there'—we want to help it, but we can't be a part of it." A shared values system amongst communities may mitigate individualism, while shared community centers and resources can create hubs for both transient and longstanding community members.

All feel that, while a shared values systems and community centers are key components of tackling this issue, sustained engagement from community members will be essential in catalyzing change. The lack of a common consciousness "causes communities to never change," and this facet of creating livable, connected communities will be important to keep in mind.

Promoting Community Safety

"If you live in fear, you cannot perform because you are using all of your energy to protect yourself and your family." This quote from a Jasper County community member underscores the sentiments of people who feel threatened by the current "safety" of their communities. Community members rightfully feel entitled to a community revered for its safety of both streets and expression. While some cite dark lighting of streets and unfair police profiling as common threats to physical safety, many people expressed their desire for a community in which they feel safe to express themselves, regardless of creed, skin color, age, or opinion. A lack of safety "hits every aspect of a family, of a community, and certainly of each one of us individually."

Many conversations center around a concern for at-risk adolescents who fall prey to gang violence and drugs. One teacher in a community conversation shared this anecdote:

"When I taught school I had kids hang out in my room after school until their parents could come pick them up because they didn't want to get involved in the gangs. And the gangs would meet them around the corner, and they would get beaten up every day until they willingly…well, 'willingly'…would join. They had no choice. When you're faced with getting beat to a bloody pulp every day or giving in and becoming a part of this gang and it stops, and you have nobody at home to defend you or stand up for you, what choices do you have?"

Some note how this comes not from deep-seated delinquency, but from boredom and a lack of people to look up to in the community. Mentorship programs were cited by three different organizations as an important combative element to youth falling prey to destructive habits.

Many minority community members also feel that police profiling and poor training is a threat to their safety. A woman from Hilton Head spoke about how her son was unlawfully arrested, claiming that "they get these officers from Desert Storm, put them out on the street as officers and they are trained to kill."

THEMATIC COMMONALITIES

Each of the aforementioned themes is not mutually exclusive. While the structure of the conversation allowed participants to focus on one issue, the points and concerns raised about an issue in one conversation tap into elements shared by different issues raised in several different conversations.

Intersectionality

One participant in Horry County believes that "safety is only one word, but it permeates your whole life. You can't do anything if you don't feel safe." This may resonate with some, while others argue that "other issues are part of the fiber of having a quality education." In the context of a vast social issue, such as homelessness and poverty, where do we point fingers to blame—in a shortage of educational opportunities? Affordable spaces? Crime-ridden neighborhoods? The reality of the themes discussed in this summary is that they are related, and that in addressing one, we are inherently addressing certain elements of others.

Policy & Advocacy

Due to the nature of the conversations, it appears that these themes partly involve advocating for policy changes. While traditional nonprofit structures can support summer leadership programs for children and community organizing efforts, avenues for social change regarding what our community is concerned about may require political participation. Incorporating different educational elements into students' curricula, expanding bus routes, and installing streetlights and sidewalks will involve collaboration with public offices.

Racial Disparity

This thread was evident throughout most community conversations, characterized by historical disparities between whites and African-Americans as well as Latino populations, given the region's growing number of farming migrants. From a socioeconomic perspective, a Charleston participant exclaims:

> I am a member of a large, successful African American community with several daughters. Luckily my daughters went to college and have good jobs and are able to support themselves and our family. But for every family doing well, there are 50+ other families not doing well in Dorchester County.

One North Charleston native noted how public schools seem to be less integrated than ever before. He lived during the segregation era, attending school in a "separate but equal" facility, and thinks that the issues that we face today with racial disparities within our schools are more pressing than they were before. In terms of affordability and homelessness, the evidence lies within the disproportionate number of African Americans represented in our region's homeless population. Additionally, many minority communities have been marginalized or pushed to the fringes of city centers to expand infrastructure.

MOVING FORWARD

One of the questions proposed to community members during conversations was "Thinking back over the conversation, what groups or individuals would you trust to take action on these things?" While providing insight into the voices of authority in these communities, the question highlights the necessity for collaboration, and indicates that we cannot tackle these thematic issues alone. Houses of worship and names of individuals within each community were more commonly cited as entities of trust to implement programmatic change than any others, including nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

The concerns of our coastal communities are expansive, but each community conversation ended on a note of hope. In sitting down and choosing to listen rather than act, Coastal Community Foundation gave voice to many who have felt otherwise voiceless in advocating for better communities across all coastal counties. After facilitating 36 conversations and listening to the concerns and aspirations of more than 400 individuals, it is clear that change will not come from one lone actor. The rich complexity of advocates for social justice and institutions of philanthropic leadership underscore the need for cross-organizational collaboration. Through the facilitation and analysis of these conversations, the Foundation is now equipped to honor the voices of those who represented the needs and desires of their community and craft a thoughtful response to what has been revealed through these conversations by way of collaborative action.

EDUCATION

Policy & Advocacy

AFFORDABILITY

CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT
AGENDA

Racial Disparity

Intersectionality

COMMUNITY
CONNECTIVITY

COMMUNITY
SAFETY

ACCESS TO
ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY