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Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan

Population and Demographics



PROVISIONAL
Pending Data
from 2010 Census

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3-1
Historic, Current, and Projected Growth Trends.....	3-2
Current Population.....	3-3
Population Projections.....	3-6
Characteristics of Population.....	3-6
Age.....	3-6
Household Size.....	3-8
Race and Ethnicity.....	3-8
Educational Attainment.....	3-9
Income.....	3-10

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Introduction

In less than 30 years, Beaufort County has more than doubled in population. In 1980, the U.S. Census reported that the County had 65,364 persons. The most recent Census projections (2008) estimates that the County's population now exceeds 146,000. The sheer magnitude of this population growth and the likelihood that it will continue into the future has tremendous policy implications on the provision of public facilities, the transportation network, the availability of affordable housing, natural resources, water quality and cultural resources. Population growth has brought about many changes in the County's demographics. Much of the recent growth has been a result of people moving to Beaufort County from other parts of the country or from other countries for retirement or to seek economic opportunities. Compared to 1980, on average, today's population is older, lives in smaller households, is better educated and is wealthier. However, these demographic trends do not apply evenly to all population subgroups or across geographic regions of the County.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze historic and current population and demographic trends; and to provide reasonable projections of future population growth to help guide policy decisions through the lifespan of this plan (2025). Each of the following chapters of this plan utilize these projections to help shape their recommendations. It is important to note that nine years have elapsed since the 2000 Census. This chapter uses 2008 U.S. Census estimates and information compiled in the 2006-2008 American Community Survey (also conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau). When the County receives data from the 2010 U.S. Census, this chapter will be updated to reflect this data.



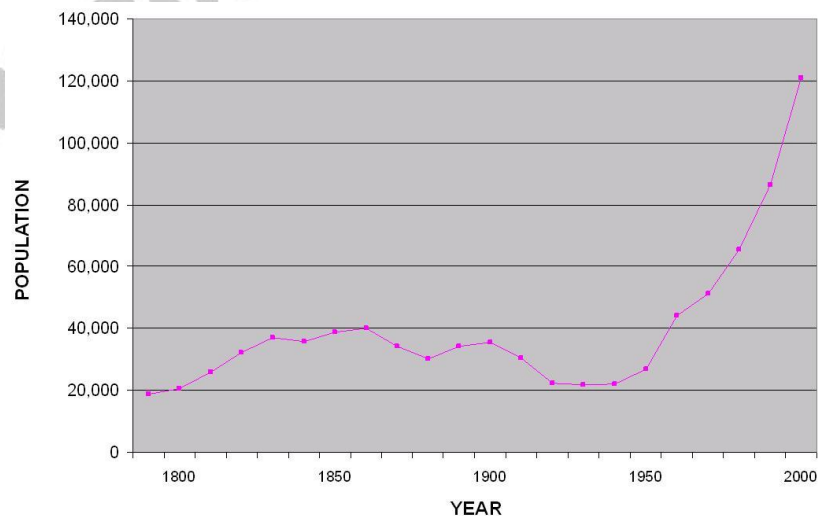
Historic, Current, and Projected Growth Trends

Beaufort County Population Growth – 1790-2000

Year	Population
1790	18753
1800	20428
1810	25887
1820	32199
1830	37032
1840	35794
1850	38805
1860	40053
1870	34359
1880	30176
1890	34119
1900	35495
1910	30355
1920	22269
1930	21815
1940	22037
1950	26993
1960	44187
1970	51136
1980	65364
1990	86425
2000	120937

Beaufort County's rapid growth rate is a relatively recent phenomenon in its 240-year history. The County was established in 1769 when South Carolina was still a British Colony. Over 200 years of census data reveal that Beaufort County's growth rate began to consistently trend upward after the 1950 census. Two events helped to spur this growth. In Northern Beaufort County the establishment of the US Marine Corps Air Station in 1955 eventually brought thousands of military and civilian jobs to the region. In Southern Beaufort County, the construction of a bridge to Hilton Head Island in 1956 spurred the development of the County's tourism and retirement based infrastructure.

Figure 3-1: Historic Population Growth Trends 1790-2000¹



¹ Beaufort County's original boundaries included present-day Hampton and Jasper Counties. Two historic downward growth trends can be explained by the establishment of Hampton County in 1877 and Jasper County in 1912.

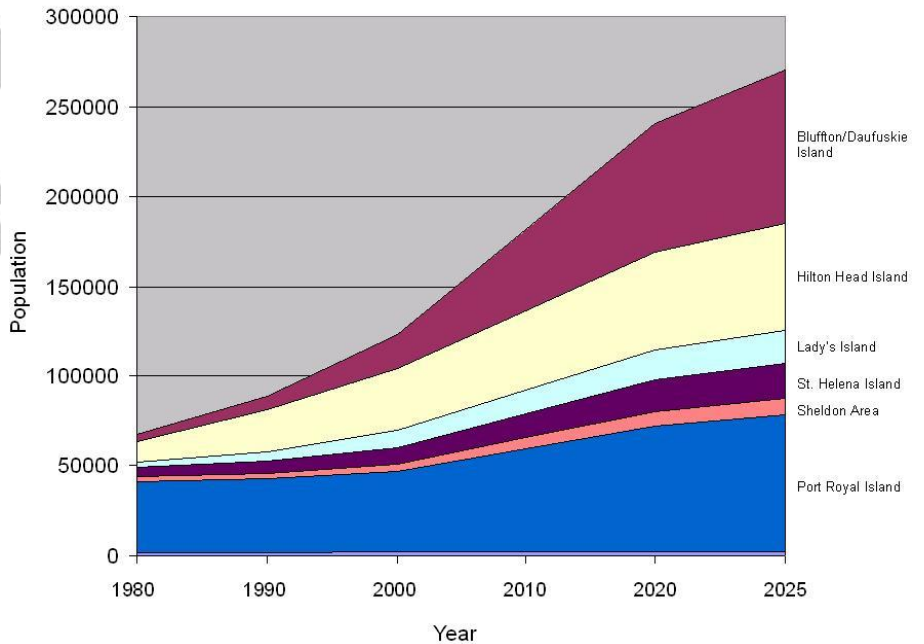
Current Year-round Population

The US Census estimates that Beaufort County’s current population (July 2008) is 146,743. This figure represents a 125% increase in population since 1980. This is a dramatic increase compared to population increases in South Carolina and the United States during the same period (Figure 3-2). Figure 3-3 helps to illustrate that this growth has occurred and will continue to occur unevenly across the County with the greatest increases occurring in Bluffton, Hilton Head Island and on Lady’s Island.

Figure 3-2: Comparison of Growth Rates 1980-2008

	Beaufort County	South Carolina	United States
1980	65,364	3,122,814	226,545,805
1990	86,425	3,486,703	249,639,692
2000	120,937	4,012,012	281,421,906
2008²	146,743	4,403,175	301,237,703
%change 1980-2008	124.5%	41.0%	32.9%

Figure 3-3: Comparison of Growth by Planning Area 1980 - 2025



² US Census estimate as of July 1, 2008.

Average Daily Population

In addition to Beaufort County's permanent population, tourists and other visitors, seasonal residents, and a net influx of daily commuters increases the County's population by 34% on an average day. This increase has a significant impact on the County's roadways, other public facilities and the provision of public services such as law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services. Figure 3-4 summarizes the County's estimated average daily population.

- **Tourists and Other Visitors:** According to estimates from the Hilton Head Island Chamber of Commerce and estimates based on accommodations tax receipts, Beaufort County had approximately 2,961,285 visitors in 2008. Factoring in an average stay of 5 nights for a vacationer to Hilton Head Island, this translates to 30,211 visitors on an average day. This number peaks in July at over 40,000 visitors a day.
- **Seasonal Residents:** Based on the 2000 Census and estimates for 2008, there are 14,206 seasonal dwellings in the County. Assuming that one third of seasonal dwellings are occupied on any given time, there are 10,702 seasonal residents on an average day.
- **Net Influx of Commuters:** Based on the 2000 Census and estimates for 2008, there is net influx of 8,993 commuters daily in Beaufort County.

Figure 3-4: Beaufort County Average Daily Population

Population Segment	Estimated 2008 Average Daily Population
Year-round Residents	146,743
Tourists and Other Visitors	30,211
Seasonal Residents	10,702
Net Commuters	8,993
Average Daily population	196,649

Population Projections

The imperfect nature of population projections results in a number of different predictions of future growth in the County. For planning purposes, the County utilizes the projections employed in its transportation model.

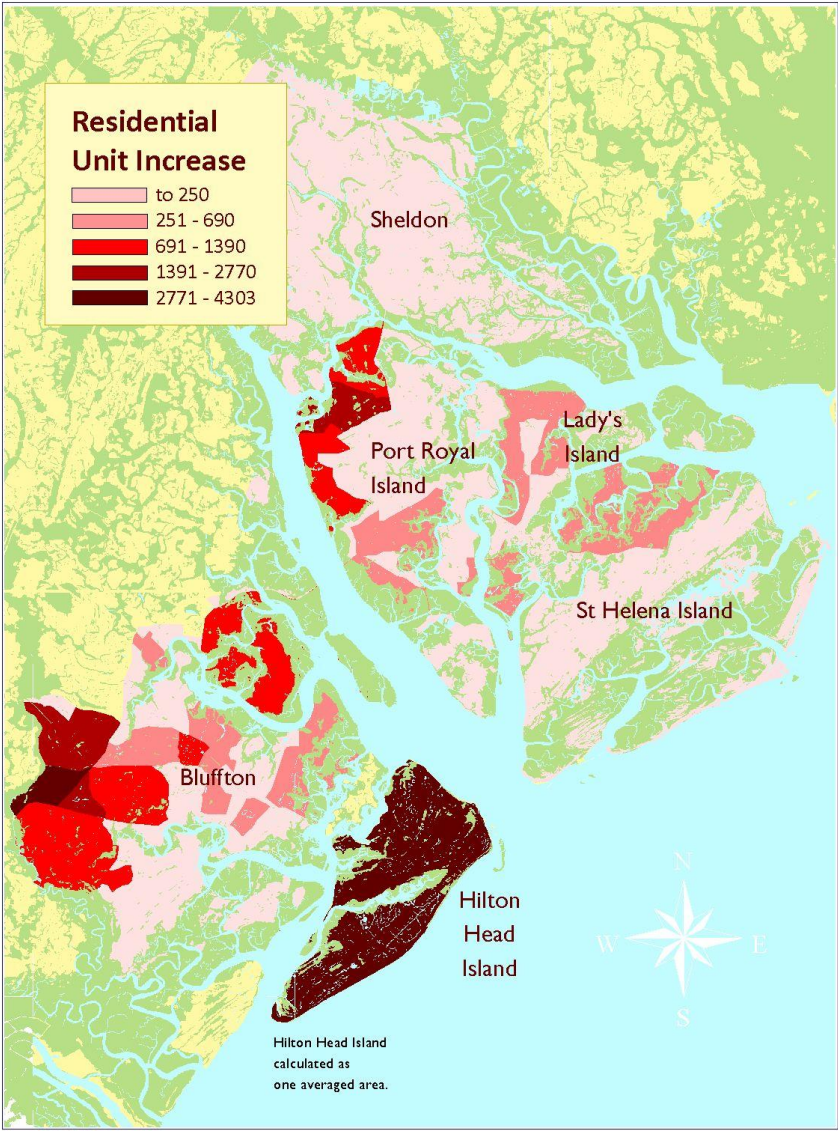
Figure 3-5: Beaufort County Population Estimates from its Transportation Model

Planning Area	2006 Dwelling Units	2006 Population	2025 Dwelling Units	2025 Population
Port Royal I.	19,875	50,244	30,587	76,299
Sheldon	2,123	5,266	3,696	9,203
Lady's I.	4,855	11,918	7,430	18,911
St. Helena I.	7,599	13,190	8,937	19,119
Greater Bluffton Area	17,510	36,864	39,291	83,616
Hilton Head I.	28,299	39,985	38,692	53,329
Daufuskie I.	170	340	315	630
TOTAL	80,431	157,807	128,948	261,107

The model utilizes projections compiled by the County's planning staff that divides the County into 124 Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZ). Within each TAZ, historic growth rates, planned development patterns, and land capacity are used to predict future growth. Other sources of population forecasts include the SC Budget and Control Board and Woods and Poole Economics, Inc. It is important to note that population estimates derived from national and state sources tend to be lower than locally derived data. Large area sampling methodologies tend toward conservative averaging, while local, area-specific transportation modeling tends toward maximal accounting.

Map 3-1 helps to illustrate where future growth is likely to occur over the next 15 to 20 years. The western portion of southern Beaufort County is projected to receive the greatest number of dwelling units as existing approved subdivisions build out in those areas. Additional growth is forecasted on Port Royal Island in the vicinity of Habersham and Clarendon Plantation, and in northern Lady's Island. Based on

Map 3-1: Projected Residential Unit Increase by Transportation Analysis Zone: 2005-2025



current projections, southern Beaufort County (south of the Broad River) is anticipated to surpass northern Beaufort County in year-round population in 2012 or 2013. This population shift will have implications on County Council representation in future years.



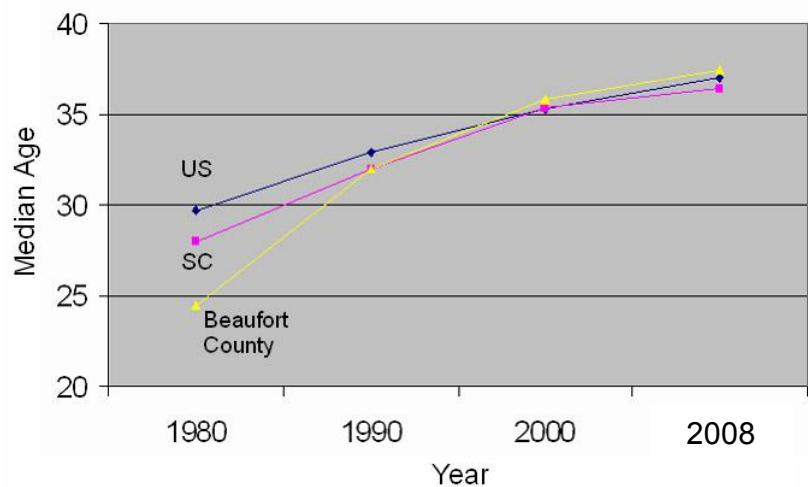
Characteristics of Population

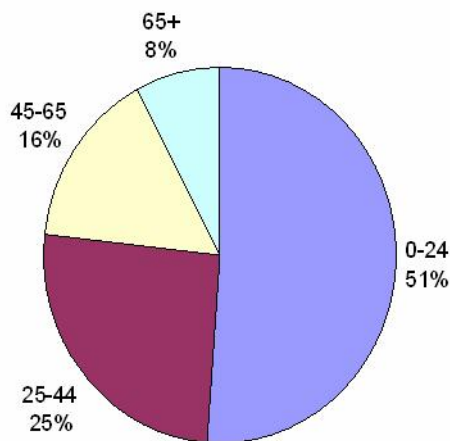
This section explores various attributes of Beaufort County's population including age, household size, race and ethnicity, educational attainment, and income. There are two noteworthy demographic trends in Beaufort County. One trend is the increased proportion of residents over 65 years of age. The other trend is the significant growth of the County's Hispanic community. In many ways, these two trends stand in contrast to each other. For example, the median age of the County's Hispanic population is 12 years younger than the County average. Hispanic households are, on average, 1.35 persons larger than the County average while elderly residents tend to live in smaller households. While these two demographic trends reflect national trends, they are amplified in Beaufort County by the region's popularity as a retirement destination and its relative prosperity over the last 15 years, which has attracted in-migration.

Age

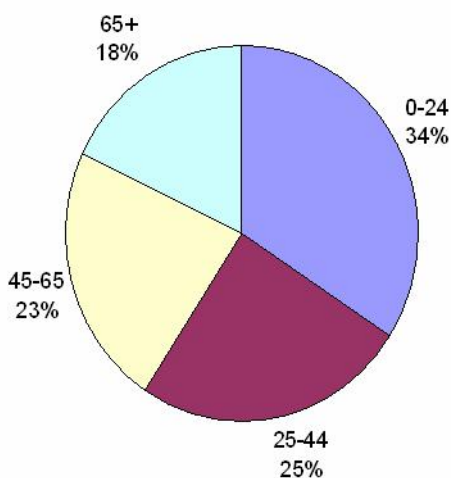
The age of Beaufort County's population has changed significantly since the 1980 census. In 1980, the median age was 24.5, much lower than both state and national median ages (see Figure 3-6).

Figure 3-6: Comparison of Median Age 1980-2008





1980 distribution of population among age groups.



2008 distribution of population among age groups.

In 2008, Beaufort County’s median age grew to 38.1, slightly higher than the state and the nation. Another significant statistic is the growth of the 65-year and older age cohort. In 1980, this group only made up 8% of the County’s population. In 2008, it was estimated that over 18% of County residents were 65 years or older (see sidebar).

Beaufort County’s aging population can be attributed to several factors; primarily the County’s popularity as a retirement destination. Other factors include the advance of the Baby Boom generation and improvements in the standard of living as Beaufort has transformed from a poor rural county to a relatively prosperous urbanizing county.

In 2011, the first Baby Boomers will turn 65. The US Census predicts that the 65 and older population will grow from 34.9 million (one in eight Americans) to 53.7 million (one in six) by 2020. This national demographic trend is anticipated to have a significant impact and policy implications on Beaufort County and the surrounding region. The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), through a series of public meetings, developed a set of strategies to deal with the issue of an aging population. The ARC “Lifelong Communities” program was set up with the goal to develop communities where older adults can age in place. Many of these strategies have land use, housing and transportation components and are very relevant to Beaufort County. The following is a summary of some of the “Lifelong Communities Strategies and Solutions”:

- **Land Use Issues:** Strategies are aimed at developing walkable communities to eliminate the need for older adults to drive; and to develop land use policies that promote a diversity of housing choices so that older adults can live near children and grandchildren.
- **Transportation:** Transportation strategies include enhancing public transportation options to better serve older adults; Integrating modifications to new and existing roadways to reduce accidents and assist older drivers (left hand turn lanes, improved signage, and lighting); and improving sidewalk infrastructure.
- **Housing:** Housing strategies are aimed at allowing older adults to age at home or in proximity to their families. Strategies include incentivizing accessory dwelling units; expanding housing rehabilitation programs, including weatherization, to help older adults to stay in their houses; and providing incentives to develop housing for seniors³.

These strategies will be addressed further in the Land Use, Transportation, Housing and Energy chapters of this plan.

³ Atlanta Regional Commission. “Lifelong Communities: A Regional Approach to Aging: Strategies and Solutions,” http://www.atlantaregional.com/documents/ag_llc_solutions_strategies_5_13_08.pdf

Household size

An average household in Beaufort County in 2008 contained 2.41 persons compared to 2.84 in 1970. This reduction in household size mirrors the national trend of a growing number of smaller families, single parent households and an aging population. This downward trend will likely continue as the County's population ages.

Figure 3-7: Comparison of Persons per Household 1980-2008

	1980	1990	2000	2008
United States	2.75	2.63	2.59	2.61
South Carolina	2.93	2.68	2.53	2.52
Beaufort County	2.84	2.59	2.51	2.41

Race and ethnicity

Population growth over the last 30 years has brought about several changes to the racial and ethnic makeup of the County. From 1980 to 2008, Beaufort County's white population grew by 155% while the black population grew by only 39%. In 1980, one third of all Beaufort County residents were African-American compared to 20% in 2007. This demographic change is largely due to the influx of new residents, including retirees, from other parts of the county.

Figure 3-8: Racial Trends 1980-2008

	1980	1990	2000	2008
White	42,454	59,843	85,451	108,366
Black	21,504	24,582	29,005	29,864
Asian, Pacific Islander	610	813	1,016	1,196
Native American	161	251	321	254
Other	635	936	4,823	7,063

Another significant trend is the growth of Beaufort County's Hispanic community. Nationally, the Hispanic population is the fastest growing demographic segment. Until the early 1990s, Hispanic immigration was largely limited to southwestern states, and a handful of other states including Florida and Illinois. Since the early 1990's, there has been a significant growth in Hispanic immigration to other parts of the country including the southeast. For example, between 1990 and 2000, South Carolina's Hispanic population grew by 211% from 30,551 to 96,178. Within South Carolina, Beaufort County has the second largest Hispanic community (Figure 3-9).

Figure 3-9: Hispanic Population

	1980	1990	2000	2008
# of Hispanics	1,329	2,168	8,208	14,122
% of total population	2.0%	2.5%	6.7%	9.6%

Mexicans make up approximately 57% of the County's Hispanic population with Puerto Ricans (8.5%) making up the second largest group. Over 33% are from various countries in Central and South America. It is likely that the actual numbers and percentages of Hispanic residents are significantly higher than reported census data and estimates. National and regional evidence supports that this population is undercounted.

The recent growth of Beaufort County's Hispanic community poses several challenges to public policy makers. One challenge is the language barrier. According to recent data, 57% of foreign-born Hispanics in the southeast do not speak English or do not speak it fluently.⁴ This barrier presents a challenge to public service providers, public safety officials and teachers. Another concern is health care. Approximately 66% of Hispanics in the United States, who primarily speak Spanish, do not have a regular doctor; 45% have no insurance; and 33% use only public health services.⁵

Educational attainment

Another significant change over the last 30 years in Beaufort County's population is educational attainment. From 1980 to present, Beaufort County went from having nearly 30% of its population lacking a high school diploma to exceeding state and national averages in terms of the percentage of high school and college graduates (Figure 3-10). In 2000, 40% of Beaufort County's residents that were 65 years or older had a college degree compared to the only 33% of the general population. This statistic indicates that some of the improvements in educational attainment are a result of an influx of educated retirees.

⁴ "The Growing Hispanic Population in South Carolina: Trends and Issues", Richard D. Young, Institute of Public Service and Policy Research, University of South Carolina, 2005

⁵ "Uninsured Hispanics with limited English face formidable barriers to health care", The Commonwealth Fund, 2003

Figure 3-10: Comparison of Educational Attainment: 1980-2008

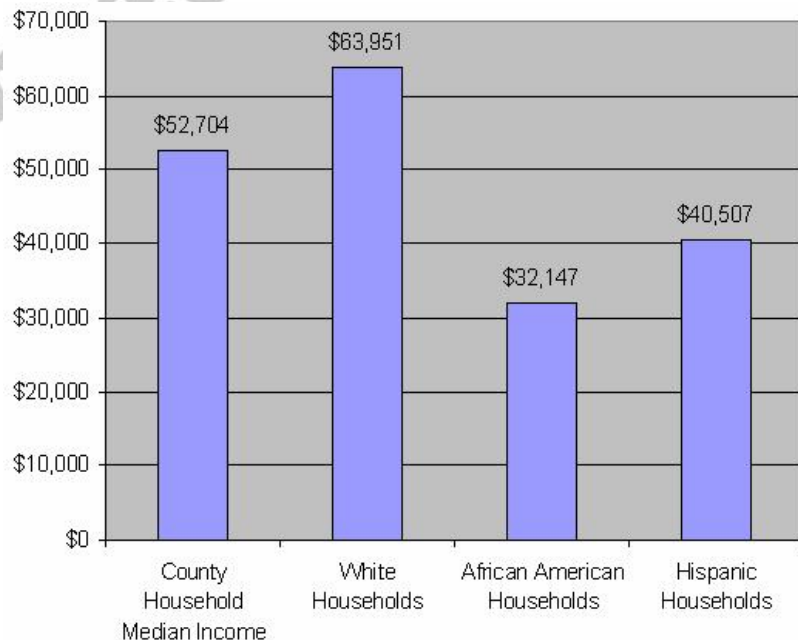
	1980	1990	2000	2008
No High School Diploma	28.0%	16.6%	12%	9.8%
High School Graduate	50.1%	56.8%	54.6%	53.3%
4-year College or greater	21.9%	26.5%	33.2%	36.9%

Income

In terms of per capita and median income, Beaufort County is the wealthiest in South Carolina. However, the County is unique in that only 56% of household income is derived from actual wages. A large percentage (30.6%) of personal income comes from interest, dividends and rent. This is indicative of the County's large retiree population. Beaufort County's median income was estimated to be \$65,150 in 2008. This is slightly higher than the national median income (\$63,211) and 19% higher than the state average (\$54,710). At the same time, statewide average weekly wages (\$668) exceed the County's average (\$595) by 12%. This data begins to indicate that Beaufort County's wealth does not evenly benefit all segments of the County's population.

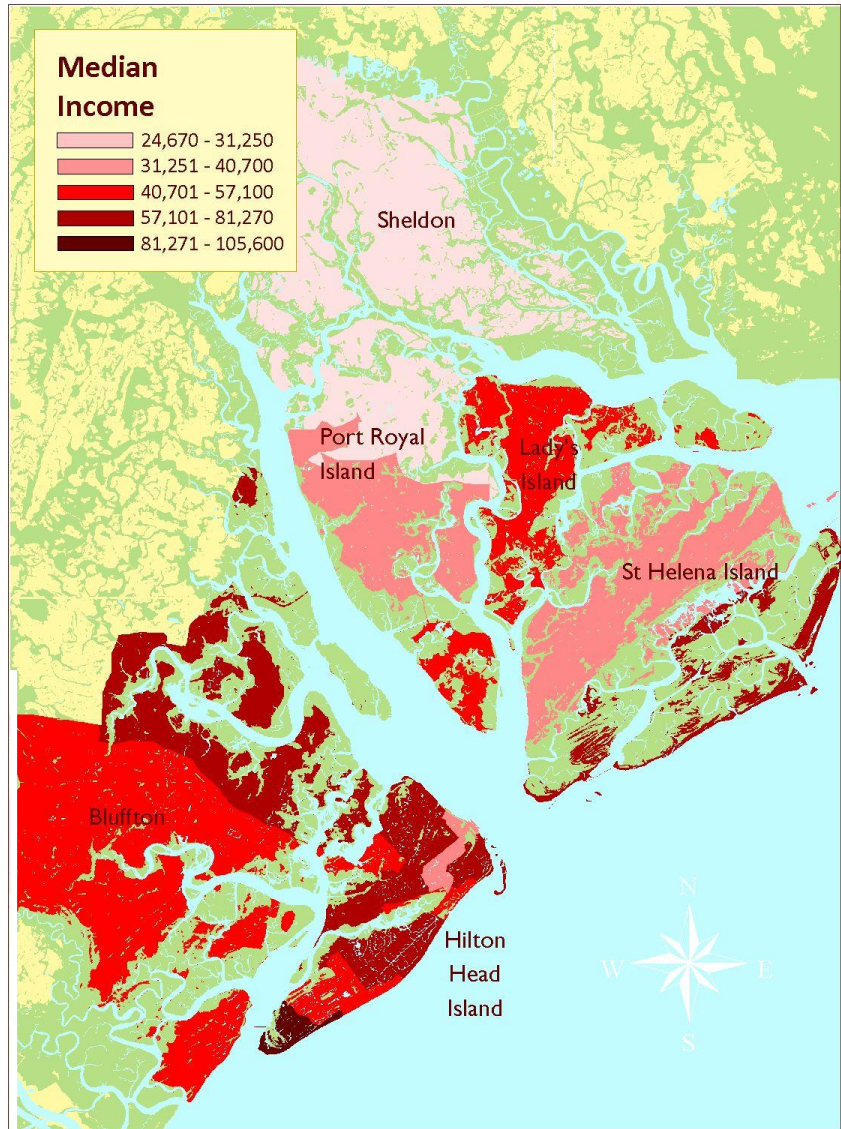
There is a disparity of income among racial and ethnic groups and among geographical regions of the County. Figure 3-11 shows that the median income for African American and Hispanic households is significantly lower than the County as a whole.

Figure 3-11: Comparison of Median Household Income among Racial and Ethnic Groups (2000 U.S. Census)



Map 3-2 indicates that wealth is not spread evenly countywide. Higher income households are generally concentrated in Southern Beaufort County. Rural communities, such as Sheldon and St. Helena Island have much lower household incomes than the County's median income.

Map 3-2: Median Income per Census Tract (2000 U.S. Census)



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