

Bamberg County Promise Zone Town Hall

Voorhees College, July 8, 2015

Facilitators: Charles Weathers, Andy Brack

Q: What are Bamberg County's strengths?

- Vegetation
- Resourcefulness
- Adequate space for growth
- Recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, sports programs. "We're right on the river."
- Edisto River, natural resources.
- Abundance of educational institutions
- Clean air; a local non-smoking initiative
- Passion for art and local culture
- Good, friendly people
- Strong, religious base; churches work together
- Strong industries that are hiring
- We're near ports, highways
- Strong support for sports among youth
 - they are hungry for activities
 - bright and innovative high achievers who don't let poverty get in the way
 - they give back
- Beautiful, clean county
- Pride in yards
- We're positive about the education that our kids get
- Working together through the SouthernCarolina Alliance
- The county's five mayors get together monthly (they're also in a choral group)
- Churches worship together during Lent
- We salute history and pull it together

Q: What is your vision for Bamberg County for 2035?

- Offer jobs for college graduates so young people don't have to leave
- A hospital in this area
- One school district -- or there may need to be three or four to accommodate population growth of future
- Light railroad from here to Charleston
- Free high-speed Internet for everyone
- A distribution center here that supplies area states

- Small FEMA center here (to work with emergency management education program at colleges)
- A centralized YMCA
- Communities working together for the good of everyone
- More youth activities
- 100% literacy
- More jobs in the industries for everyone (not just college graduates)
- A 90% decrease in crime
- Countywide water and sewer
- More senior-related programs
- Improve housing stock
- More skilled workers
- Expansion of offerings of two colleges here
- Countywide transportation system
- Quality, early child care
- Reduction of teenage pregnancies
- Amenities, such as theaters restaurants parks
- Full industrial parks
- A broader tax base for there to be less of a tax burden on residents
- Community-friendly banking
- Health care for everyone
- Growth of church participation and involvement
- Revitalization of downtowns

Q: What would you do to grow jobs in Bamberg County?

- Bring in private industry
- Tax incentives for industries
- Have a water system that is up to par
- Better schools
- Better housing
- Provide more vocational education training
- Become a bedroom community
- Have a more bedroom community
- Have a more educated workforce
- Patronize local businesses instead of going out of the county
- Microloan programs to start businesses
- A good health care program to address disparities
- Infrastructure improvements
- Reduce taxes
- Take advantage of tourism opportunities to increase jobs

- Use the abandoned railroad corridor
- Focus on quality of life and transit opportunities
- Have a strong arts and culture expansion as an attraction
- Have a (regional) school of the arts
- Train now for the jobs of future

Q: What would you suggest to improve education in Bamberg County?

- Stronger infrastructure and programs
- Recruit and retain faculty
- Improve programs at all levels
- Develop more skills programs
- Building early intervention and positive learning experiences
- More parental support
- More well-rounded child development and child development centers
- County should be more workforce-focused
- Have more youth apprenticeships so youths won't have to move and can live near home down the road
- Project-based learning
- Have two career tracks for students at schools
- Survey colleges to make sure they're getting what they need from local high school students
- More school collaboration
- Ensure the State provides equitable funding
- Safety and security
- Have a Bamberg County Career Center
- Competitive salaries for educators
- Spread administrative cost among schools but keep identities of communities
- Recruit and retain good educators
- Hold the state's feet to the fire on (providing more) school funding

Q: How would you reduce crime in Bamberg County?

- Community policing, which starts at home
- More jobs in education
- Be more focused on the bad crimes, instead of petty crimes, and be more vigilant
- Have more positive role models for children in homes
- More parental involvement
- Basic citizenship training
- There's a need for more and improved mental health services

- Provide more positive activities for youths, such as movies (there's not much for them to do to "keep out of trouble")
- Keep drugs out of the county
- Have additional law-enforcement
- Strengthen families through things like community service programs for kids, after-school programs, mentoring for boys, and drug rehabilitation programs
- Build a community regional center for Bamberg, Barnwell and Colleton counties that includes a youth sports program
- Have a program for ex-offenders so that they do not repeat crimes
- More parenting education programs
- Summer programs for youths so they can work
- More working (by authorities) with the businesses in the community

Q: Other things that would help Bamberg County

- Having a hospital would help economic development
- Having high-speed Internet capacity would help attract industries. Without it, they will turn away.

Q: What are some impediments or barriers to change in Barnwell County?

- Negative attitudes on change
- The relationships between cities and towns,
- It's tough to get past being a newcomer -- people have to get out of a "stuck mindset"
- Fear of change -- some people are just reluctant to change
- We lack the practice of celebrating what works – we need to show our bright spots and improve the perception of the county through a public relations campaign
- Lack of collaboration among towns
- Don't duplicate resources
- Not having matching money could be a barrier for grants
- Not having a clear understanding of what change mean could be a barrier
- Not having the money to visit Kentucky to learn what they're doing could hurt
- Political influence can be a barrier
- People don't seem to have respect for each other

Q: Why haven't you gotten through these barriers?

- Negative attitudes and some people don't want change,
- "If you don't change, you're going to die"

- Concentrate on the positive
- We haven't learned to economize
- To counter the trend of people not wanting to change, “we have to have radical intervention and build momentum”

Q: If you had only One Big Idea to make the county better, what would it be?

- Working together
- Work across church lines
- Mindset change
- Have a good school district
- Have light rail that connects SRS and Charleston
- Youth apprenticeships
- A local hospital
- Tax incentives for industry to move here
- Expansion of the airport
- A state-of-the-art hospital
- An emergency room (which might be the first step)