

Population 5,001 - 10,000 Category | City of Hartsville

Downtown Revitalization

Four years ago, leading employers in the City of Hartsville threatened to leave because the atmosphere of the city made it difficult to recruit workers. Hartsville lacked shopping, entertainment and general liveliness downtown. That's when city officials, private investors and other stakeholders decided to tackle the problem.

In the beginning of the effort, officials moved Hartsville City Hall operations from an outlying site to a beautiful, but empty, downtown building. Other actions were set in motion. The city and non-profit Community Foundation for a Better Hartsville established and funded Startsville, a business incubator that provides mentoring, funding and other assistance to new businesses. Main Street Hartsville, which previously operated as an entity separate from the city, became a city department that focuses on improving the downtown through economic restructuring, promotions and beautification. This move better aligned Main Street's work with the vision of the city.

Together Main Street Hartsville and Startsville began the StartUp Hartsville competition. Funded by a grant from the S.C. Department of Commerce, the program offers entrepreneurs a chance to win a forgivable \$12,000 loan to occupy an empty downtown space. The city has also created a new department called Business Navigator to provide a central location for businesses to get information about permitting, licensing, building codes and business incentives.

The efforts worked, and now officials from other cities and towns are visiting Hartsville to pick up revitalization lessons.

Since the beginning of the project, more than 40 new businesses, including the Hampton Inn and the Mantissa Executives Suites and Spa, have opened downtown. Hartsville leaders are now eyeing an expansion of the downtown, because nearly all formerly empty storefronts are occupied. Properties one block from the downtown will be developed into retail and housing, showing that by improving the city's core, success will ripple to other areas of the city.

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