SOUTH CAROLINA Recycling Industry 2014 Economic Impact Study
Recycle. The word is self-explanatory: to cycle materials for use again and again. However, recycling is not just a process, but the opportunity to innovate, create jobs, be efficient, be sustainable, contribute to the community, save energy, avoid the landfill, cut costs and support growth, “again and again.”

Many see the social value of recycling, but few understand its economic impact. To better address this, four partners - S.C. Department of Commerce, S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, New Carolina and Recyclonomics SC - commissioned a 2014 update to a 2006 recycling industry economic impact study. The results are in and the growth is impressive.

Both studies were completed by economist Dr. Frank Hefner of the College of Charleston Department of Economics and Finance. In 2006, Dr. Hefner concluded, “That recycling is beneficial for the environment is a virtually uncontested proposition. What is becoming increasingly more obvious is that recycling contributes to the economic health of a state’s economy.” That conclusion holds true today as the recycling industry in South Carolina has grown from 340 firms in 2006 to more than 520 firms in 2014.

In the pages that follow we’ll not only share data that underscores why recycling matters for jobs and investment in South Carolina, but we’ll also track the lifecycle of recycled material and demonstrate how it impacts your life on a daily basis. Recycling is proof that small changes really do equal big returns.

The 2014 SC Recycling Industry Economic Impact Study is presented by:

- There are **22,403** jobs attributable to recycling in S.C.
- There is a total economic impact of **$13 billion** in the Palmetto State
- **44%** increase in recycling employment from 2006 to 2014 = **4.7%** annual growth rate
- Average annual wage is $**40,203** (vs. average wage in SC for all jobs of $38,700)
- A total of **$2.7 billion** in labor income generated annually*
- There are more than **520** recycling-related companies in S.C.
- **$329 million** in state & local taxes each year*
- The average number of employees per company is **63**, while the median number of employees is **14**
- **63.8%** of respondents indicate they are planning an expansion in 2014 at an average of **3.5** employees each - with 521 firms in the industry, this implies **332** firms will expand in 2014, projecting to add an additional **1,162** employees in 2014
- **89%** of respondents indicate recycling is a growing industry, with an average annual growth rate of **19%**
- In just 8 years, the industry has doubled its annual total economic impact: from **$6.5 billion** in 2006 to **$13 billion** in 2014

*R: Annual figures reflect 2013 data.
Research completed by economist Dr. Frank Hefner of the College of Charleston Department of Economics and Finance, April 2014.
WHAT HAPPENS TO RECYCLABLES?

City of Spartanburg

The City of Spartanburg is the only municipality in the Upstate to collect all forms of recyclables in a “fee-free” 96-gallon single-stream roll cart that the City provides to all residents. The City began single-stream pickup in 2010, and the average monthly recycling tonnage has increased every year since. The City collects glass, all plastics (1-7), paper, cardboard, aluminum and steel cans in the blue roll cart. When the program expanded to include glass and all plastics in May of 2012, the City saw a huge increase in monthly totals and in participation. cityofspartanburg.org

Sonoco Recycling

Sonoco Recycling Based right here in South Carolina, Sonoco is a multi-billion dollar global provider of consumer packaging, industrial products, protective solutions and display and packaging services. From Sonoco’s more than 335 operations in 53 countries, the company produces packaging for a variety of industries and many of the world’s most recognized brands, serving customers in 85 nations. sonocorecycling.com

Becker Complete

Located in the West Columbia, Becker Complete Compactor provides retail, installation and maintenance services on balers and compactors. Investing in waste and recycling equipment allows facilities to reduce their negative impact on the environment while also reducing their waste collection costs. Becker Complete Compactor’s service area spreads across North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. beckercomplete.com

WELLMAN Plastics Recycling LLC

Wellman Plastics Recycling is a leader in compounding and supplying both engineering and thermoplastic resins that are both cost effective and environmentally friendly. Through their EcoLon product line, Wellman Plastics Recycling is the only resin compounding in the market to offer a 100% Post-Consumer Recycled product. wellmanpr.com

Mid Carolina Steel & Recycling Co.

Mid Carolina Steel & Recycling Company is the largest privately owned recycling company in the Midlands area, providing recycling services to the public and to numerous businesses in the area. In addition to the recycling company, Mid-Carolina Steel & Recycling has an ornamental division in order to sell new and used structural steel to companies throughout the US. mid-carolinasteel.com

LEXINGTON Medical Center

Hospitals generate a lot of waste: up to 19 lbs per patient per day. LMC began an Environmental Awareness/Sustainability program facility-wide in 2003, and by 2013, recycled an impressive 42% of its total municipal waste volume. LMC has collection containers and bins throughout its 2,000,000 SF facility, and also hosts special recycling programs throughout the year to recycle less-commonly recycled goods, such as tennis shoes.

www.lexmed.com

VivaSC Recycling

VivaSC Recycling is South Carolina’s leading scrap recycling company, collecting, processing and recycling post-industrial rubber waste. This waste is manufactured by VivaSC Recycling to provide various environmentally friendly recycled rubber products for home, business and recreational use nationwide.

vivarecycling.com

Caraustar

Since its establishment in 1934, Caraustar has become one of the largest recyclers of recovered fibers in the US and one of the largest manufacturers of recycled paperboard and independently folding cartons in the US, as well as the second largest producer of tubes and cores in North America. Caraustar provides recycling services for both businesses and personal use, and supplies various paperboard-based industrial products and consumer packaging.

caraustar.com

Nucor

Nucor is both the largest steel recycling company and the largest manufacturer of steel products in North America, providing steel and steel products worldwide. Nucor has approximately 200 operating facilities internationally, 6 of which are located in South Carolina, allowing Nucor to have a steel production capability that exceeds 27 million tons.

nucor.com
Recyclables and recycled materials affect your life in more ways than you might think. They can show up in your lunchbox or your closet, on the playground or in your car, in the grocery store or at your office. Recycling affects our world in a major way.

1. In addition to recycling at home and at work, look for **recycling containers** wherever you are to recycle on the go.
2. **T-shirts** made from recycled plastic bottles are available from environmentally-friendly companies like SustainTex whose supply chain includes locally sourced manufactured textiles from Clover and Rock Hill.
3. **Magazines and newspapers** are frequently made from recycled paper. Paper is one of the most commonly recycled materials.
4. Many **food and product packages** are made from recycled materials AND can be recycled again, like plastic bottles, paper bags, aluminum cans, and boxes. Cylindrical food containers like this are made by Sonoco, headquartered in Hartsville.
5. You might be surprised to know that many common items are made from recycled materials. Even this **picnic table** was made from recycled milk jugs.
6. Americans use 100 billion disposable plastic bags each year – enough to blanket the earth several times. **Reusable grocery bags** help reduce the amount of plastic sent to landfills each year. The MY ECO Reusable Bag Set holds the equivalent of 30 disposable grocery bags.
7. Packing your lunch in **reusable bags and containers** reduces waste while keeping food cool and fresh.
8. Many **car parts** are made from recycled materials, such as the rubber lining found on the inside of your trunk. Companies like Sage Automotive Interiors, headquartered in Greenville, manufacture auto seat fabric from recycled materials. Meanwhile, manufacturers like BMW also have robust corporate sustainability programs, from clean production processes to green recycling practices.
9. Parks and playgrounds across the country are opting to use recycled tire **rubber surfacing products**, such as those offered by VivaSC in Moncks Corner. These surfaces offer long-lasting, safe and environmentally-friendly alternatives to concrete and wood mulch.

Special thanks to the Town of Lexington’s Willie B. Caractor Park, used as the backdrop for these photos.
**About S.C. Department of Commerce**

As South Carolina’s leading economic development agency, the Department of Commerce works to recruit new businesses and help existing businesses grow. Commerce has recruited world-class companies to South Carolina such as Boeing, Bridgestone, Continental, Monster.com, ZF Group, BMW and Google Inc. and also supports small and existing business, rural development initiatives and community development. Commerce partners with the S.C. Technical College System via readySC to support workforce training and recruiting, and with the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce, which provides worker training and employment opportunities within the state. South Carolina ranked first in the nation for attracting jobs through foreign investment, according to IBM-Plant Location International reports in both 2012 and 2013. The state won the Gold Shovel Award and the Project of Year Award from Area Development magazine in 2012. For more information, visit www.SCcommerce.com.

**About New Carolina**

New Carolina is a statewide, business-led organization that identifies, launches and builds scale behind economic growth initiatives. The organization’s signature work is in the development of regional industries through clusters, as well as programs that address systemic issues threatening South Carolina’s economic progress. For more information, visit www.newcarolina.org.

**About RecyclonomicsSC**

RecyclonomicsSC is a non-profit organization formed to increase recycling in South Carolina in order to improve the economy of our state. By establishing policy, building networks, promoting market development and leveraging existing infrastructure, RecyclonomicsSC’s mission is to expand and strengthen South Carolina’s recycling industry and spark economic growth. To learn more, visit www.RecyclonomicsSC.com.