THE STEPHANIE WILSON TEAM | eXp REALTY

WHERE SHOULD YOU LIVE IN UPSTATE SOUTH CAROLINA?

A practical comparison of Greenville, Pickens, Anderson, Spartanburg, Laurens and Greenwood Counties.



HOUSING • EMPLOYMENT • EDUCATION • SAFETY • COST OF LIVING • RECREATION • LIFESTYLE

An independent, data-informed relocation resource. October 2026 edition.

Start here: choose the lifestyle, then the address

Upstate South Carolina is not one housing market or one lifestyle. Its six featured counties range from Greenville's urban amenities to the Blue Ridge foothills, Lake Hartwell recreation, Spartanburg's employment corridors, Laurens County's rural landscapes and Lake Greenwood's waterfront communities.

This guide compares counties, then points to individual cities and neighborhoods. A county-wide statistic is not a neighborhood-level prediction. Use this guide to narrow the search, then examine individual properties, school assignments, commute routes, taxes and local conditions.

At-a-glance county comparison

Greenville	Urban center + diverse suburbs	Greenville, Greer, Simpsonville, Travelers Rest	Dining, culture, broad employment access
Pickens	Foothills + university influence	Clemson, Easley, Pickens, Liberty	Trails, college-town amenities, mountains
Anderson	Lake Hartwell + industry	Anderson, Pendleton, Williamston	Boating, fishing, lake access
Spartanburg	Industry + revitalizing downtown	Spartanburg, Inman, Duncan, Woodruff	Career corridors, varied housing
Laurens	Small towns + rural acreage	Laurens, Clinton, Gray Court	Land, quieter settings, small towns
Greenwood	Lake + healthcare + small city	Greenwood, Ninety Six	Lake recreation, smaller-city lifestyle

How to use the guide: Compare objective housing and employment data first; review each county profile; shortlist two or three areas; then use the linked resources and IDX searches to investigate actual listings.

Contents

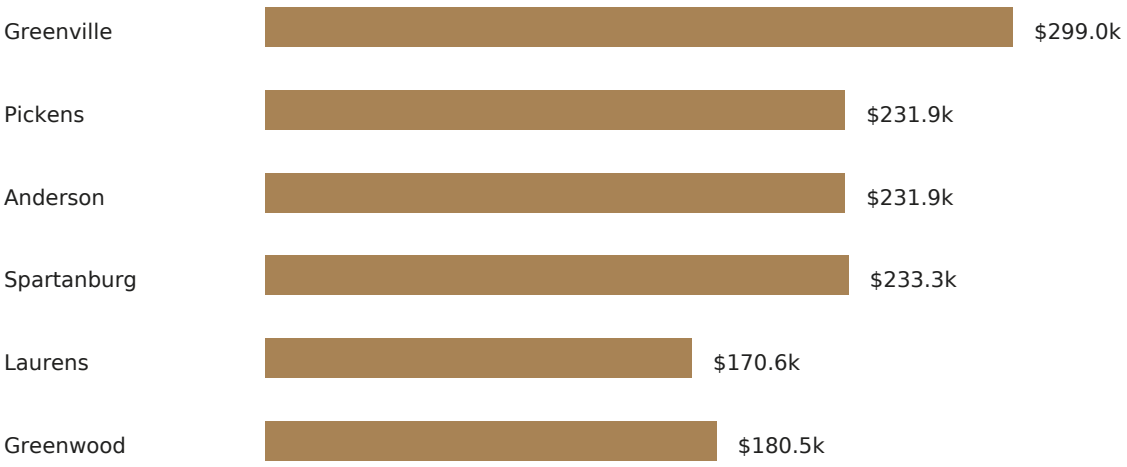
1. Quick comparisons and housing costs • 2. Employment and economy • 3. Crime and schools • 4. Six county profiles • 5. Lifestyle matching • 6. Relocation checklist • 7. Source directory and property searches

Housing and affordability: the six-county picture

The values below are U.S. Census ACS 2020–2024 estimates, not October 2026 MLS median sale prices. The median owner-occupied value describes the value of all owner-occupied housing, not what today's listed homes cost. Monthly owner costs with a mortgage reflect surveyed owner households, not a quote for a new buyer.

COUNTY	MEDIAN HOME VALUE	MONTHLY OWNER COST WITH MORTGAGE	MEDIAN GROSS RENT
Greenville	$299,000	$1,561	$1,262
Pickens	$231,900	$1,391	$972
Anderson	$231,900	$1,389	$989
Spartanburg	$233,300	$1,401	$1,084
Laurens	$170,600	$1,178	$880
Greenwood	$180,500	$1,227	$898

Original chart: median owner-occupied housing value



Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, 2020–2024 ACS. Chart and graphic design are original.

Affordability means more than price

Compare mortgage principal and interest, down payment, insurance, county and municipal taxes, HOA fees, utilities, vehicle costs and commuting. Waterfront, golf, mountain-view and new-construction properties can command premiums within otherwise lower-priced counties.

For buyers relocating from another state, estimate net income after South Carolina taxes and verify vehicle registration, insurance, and primary-residence property-tax eligibility with appropriate agencies.

Employment and economic opportunity

Upstate employment spans advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, education, retail, hospitality and professional services. Job opportunities vary by occupation and commute corridor; a county unemployment rate is a useful indicator, not a guarantee of employment.

Comparable unemployment rates — March 2026

Greenville	3.7%	Corporate offices, healthcare, professional services, manufacturing
Pickens	3.9%	University-linked employment, manufacturing, local services
Anderson	3.8%	Manufacturing, healthcare, logistics and retail
Spartanburg	4.2%	Manufacturing, distribution, logistics, healthcare
Laurens	4.4%	Manufacturing, logistics, agriculture, local services
Greenwood	4.7%	Healthcare, manufacturing, education and services

Source: South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce, March 2026 county estimates, not seasonally adjusted. Monthly data are preliminary and may be revised.

Before accepting a job or selecting a home

Drive the intended commute at actual work hours. Check road access, remote-work broadband availability, professional licensing requirements, childcare needs, and proximity to medical services. Interstate corridors can offer employment access while also creating traffic exposure.

Useful research links

SC Department of Employment and Workforce

Bureau of Labor Statistics: local area unemployment

SC Department of Commerce

Crime, public safety and due diligence

Safety varies within every county. Crime reporting is influenced by agency participation, jurisdiction boundaries, population, visitor activity and the type of offense. A countywide crime count is not a valid measure of risk at an individual address.

South Carolina Law Enforcement Division's 2024 statewide report documented decreases in several violent and property crime categories compared with 2023. That statewide trend should not be assumed to apply equally to every neighborhood.

How to investigate a prospective location

1. Review the SLED crime data for the relevant law-enforcement jurisdiction and year. 2. Compare rates and trends, not just raw incident counts. 3. Review the jurisdiction's reporting coverage. 4. Visit the area at different times. 5. Ask about lighting, road safety, emergency response and flood exposure.

SLED crime data and annual reports

FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer viewer

Education: compare schools, not county labels

School attendance boundaries may cross municipal boundaries and can change. County names alone do not determine school assignment. The state publishes school and district report cards with academic indicators and other context; the 2025–2026 report cards were released in October 2026.

For any property, verify the exact assigned schools directly with the district. Compare program offerings, transportation, special education, extracurricular opportunities and individual school results.

South Carolina School Report Cards

South Carolina Department of Education

Higher education across the six counties

Examples include Clemson University (Pickens), Furman University and Bob Jones University (Greenville), Wofford College and University of South Carolina Upstate (Spartanburg), Anderson University (Anderson), Presbyterian College (Laurens), and Lander University (Greenwood). Confirm specific programs and campus offerings directly.

Greenville County

Metro convenience with foothill escapes

Communities to explore: Greenville • Greer • Simpsonville • Mauldin • Travelers Rest • Fountain Inn

Greenville County offers the region's most developed concentration of downtown cultural attractions, dining, healthcare and corporate services. Downtown Greenville, suburban growth corridors and northern foothill communities deliver substantially different living experiences.

Economy and employment

Professional services, healthcare, manufacturing, retail and hospitality; diverse employers across the Greenville–Spartanburg corridor.

Recreation, culture and entertainment

Downtown Greenville arts and dining, Falls Park, the Swamp Rabbit Trail, Paris Mountain State Park and nearby foothill access.

Housing choices

Downtown condos and historic neighborhoods; suburban subdivisions; newer construction; northern acreage and mountain-adjacent homes.

Potential lifestyle fit

Buyers seeking city amenities, cultural activities, access to employers or a choice between urban and suburban settings.

What to verify before buying

Consider higher typical housing values than the other five counties, traffic on major corridors, and wide variation in school zones and local taxes.

Snapshot: 2020–2024 Census housing measures

$299,000	$1,561	$1,262

Values are county-wide Census estimates, not current asking prices or MLS sale medians.

Search and verify

Explore homes with The Stephanie Wilson Team

Verify local school performance

Pickens County

Foothills, university energy and outdoor access

Communities to explore: Clemson • Easley • Pickens • Liberty • Central • Six Mile

Pickens County blends university activity and established communities with foothill terrain and access to hiking and lakes. Easley offers a more suburban setting, while Clemson and Central have a strong university influence.

Economy and employment

Education, healthcare, manufacturing, retail and services; some residents commute toward Greenville or Anderson.

Recreation, culture and entertainment

Table Rock State Park, mountain trails, Lake Keowee access, Clemson athletics and cultural events.

Housing choices

Small-city homes, suburban neighborhoods, wooded acreage and foothill properties; lake-adjacent options vary by location.

Potential lifestyle fit

Outdoor enthusiasts, university-connected buyers, hikers and people who want foothill proximity.

What to verify before buying

Mountain roads and terrain can affect access; verify internet, slope, drainage and travel times. University-area rental demand can influence neighborhoods.

Snapshot: 2020–2024 Census housing measures



$231,900	$1,391	$972

Values are county-wide Census estimates, not current asking prices or MLS sale medians.

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Anderson County

Lake Hartwell recreation with working-city amenities

Communities to explore: Anderson • Pendleton • Williamston • Belton • Honea Path

Anderson County combines Lake Hartwell recreation with industrial employment, historic towns and a range of suburban and rural housing. Anderson city offers services and amenities, while lakefront locations vary greatly in cost and access.

Economy and employment

Manufacturing, healthcare, education, retail and distribution; regional commuting options.

Recreation, culture and entertainment

Lake Hartwell boating and fishing, parks, downtown Anderson activities and Pendleton's historic setting.

Housing choices

Lakefront residences, established city neighborhoods, subdivisions, farms and rural parcels.

Potential lifestyle fit

Boaters, anglers, lake-lifestyle buyers and people wanting a mix of employment access and outdoor recreation.

What to verify before buying

Verify shoreline ownership, dock permits, lake access and flood considerations. Water views do not necessarily mean deeded waterfront.

Snapshot: 2020–2024 Census housing measures



$231,900	$1,389	$989

Values are county-wide Census estimates, not current asking prices or MLS sale medians.

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Spartanburg County

Employment corridors and small-city culture

Communities to explore: Spartanburg • Boiling Springs • Duncan • Inman • Lyman • Woodruff

Spartanburg County includes a growing manufacturing and logistics base, a downtown cultural district and expanding suburban communities. Housing ranges from established city neighborhoods to newer homes near major employment routes.

Economy and employment

Manufacturing, distribution, logistics, healthcare, education and services.

Recreation, culture and entertainment

Downtown Spartanburg arts, trails and greenways, college events, parks and access to nearby foothill recreation.

Housing choices

Historic city homes, newer subdivisions, golf-oriented neighborhoods and rural tracts.

Potential lifestyle fit

Career-oriented households, commuters and buyers seeking diverse price points and suburban options.

What to verify before buying

Commute patterns near I-85 and industrial corridors matter. Compare specific districts and neighborhoods rather than countywide averages.

Snapshot: 2020–2024 Census housing measures

$233,300	$1,401	$1,084

Values are county-wide Census estimates, not current asking prices or MLS sale medians.

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Laurens County

Small-town living, acreage and quieter surroundings

Communities to explore: Laurens • Clinton • Gray Court • Waterloo

Laurens County offers smaller towns, agricultural landscapes and rural parcels within reach of regional employment corridors. It is especially relevant to buyers whose priorities include land, lower-density surroundings and a small-town pace.

Economy and employment

Manufacturing, agriculture, local commerce, distribution and commuting to nearby counties.

Recreation, culture and entertainment

Historic downtowns, local festivals, parks, rural recreation and regional lake access.

Housing choices

Older homes, modest subdivisions, farms, wooded acreage and homes on larger lots.

Potential lifestyle fit

Acreage seekers, rural-lifestyle buyers, hobby farmers and people who prioritize space.

What to verify before buying

Check utilities, septic and well requirements, broadband, emergency services and commute distances. Acreage may add maintenance costs.

Snapshot: 2020–2024 Census housing measures

$170,600	$1,178	$880

Values are county-wide Census estimates, not current asking prices or MLS sale medians.

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Greenwood County

Lake Greenwood and a distinctive small-city rhythm

Communities to explore: Greenwood • Ninety Six • Hodges • Ware Shoals area

Greenwood County centers on a regional small city with healthcare, education, manufacturing and nearby Lake Greenwood recreation. Its lake communities offer a different lifestyle from the urban core.

Economy and employment

Healthcare, manufacturing, education, retail and local services.

Recreation, culture and entertainment

Lake Greenwood boating and fishing, downtown Greenwood events, cultural venues and historic Ninety Six.

Housing choices

Established neighborhoods, lakefront homes, golf/lifestyle communities, rural properties and residential lots.

Potential lifestyle fit

Lake enthusiasts, retirees seeking a smaller-city setting, and buyers interested in outdoor recreation.

What to verify before buying

Lake properties require careful review of dock rights, water access, insurance and HOA or club dues; healthcare proximity differs by address.

Snapshot: 2020–2024 Census housing measures



$180,500	$1,227	$898

Values are county-wide Census estimates, not current asking prices or MLS sale medians.

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Which county fits your priorities?

The suggestions below describe places to investigate, not demographic recommendations or guarantees. Buyers of any background may find excellent options in every county.

Downtown dining, arts and walkability	Greenville; Spartanburg	Most prominent urban cultural cores among the six
Lake boating and fishing	Anderson; Greenwood; parts of Pickens	Lake Hartwell, Lake Greenwood, Lake Keowee access
Mountain trails and foothills	Pickens; northern Greenville	State parks, trails and Blue Ridge foothills
University environment	Pickens; Greenville; Spartanburg	Clemson and multiple other universities
Rural acreage or hobby farm	Laurens; rural Anderson, Spartanburg, Greenwood	More lower-density areas and agricultural settings
Retirement with a smaller-city feel	Greenwood; Anderson; Pickens-area towns	Smaller urban centers and recreational options
Employment corridors	Greenville; Spartanburg; Anderson	Manufacturing, services and regional job concentrations
Golf and planned lifestyle communities	Greenville; Pickens; Anderson; Greenwood	Private clubs and amenity-oriented neighborhoods

A five-question decision exercise

1. What monthly housing payment is comfortable after taxes, insurance, maintenance and utilities?

2. How far are you willing to travel for work, healthcare, schools and groceries?

3. Which three amenities will you actually use every week?

4. Do you prefer downtown walkability, suburban convenience, lakefront recreation or rural privacy?

5. Which tradeoffs are acceptable: higher price, longer commute, HOA dues, steep terrain or fewer nearby services?

A practical relocation checklist

90–120 days before moving

Set a total budget; identify work and school needs; compare counties; obtain financing preapproval; shortlist neighborhoods and available homes.

60–90 days before moving

Visit at different times; test commutes; confirm school assignment; research insurance, property taxes, HOA rules, broadband and utilities.

30–60 days before moving

Inspect property systems and drainage; verify surveys, easements, septic/well records, flood zones, dock permits or acreage restrictions where relevant.

Before closing

Confirm property-tax classification and any eligibility requirements; verify homeowners insurance and closing costs; arrange utilities and address updates.

After moving

Update driver and vehicle records, voter registration where applicable, healthcare providers, school enrollment and local emergency contacts.

Special property checks

Waterfront: shoreline setbacks, dock permits, water levels, insurance, easements. Mountain: slope, access roads, erosion, drainage. Rural: septic capacity, well yield, zoning, livestock restrictions, internet. Golf communities: membership is not always included with homeownership; verify dues and privileges.

Housing and lending caution

Financing, taxes, insurance and real estate markets change. Ask qualified lenders, tax professionals, insurance providers and local officials for property-specific figures. This guide is informational and is not legal, financial or school-assignment advice.

Research directory and clickable resources

Select a link in the downloaded PDF to visit an official or primary-source resource. The GoDaddy embedded viewer may not activate all hyperlinks; download the guide to use them.

Census QuickFacts: Greenville

Census QuickFacts: Pickens

Census QuickFacts: Anderson

Census QuickFacts: Spartanburg

Census QuickFacts: Laurens

Census QuickFacts: Greenwood

SC Department of Employment and Workforce

SC school and district report cards

SLED crime data

South Carolina Department of Commerce

South Carolina State Parks

SC Department of Natural Resources

FEMA Flood Map Service Center

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Methods and data notes

Housing figures: Census QuickFacts 2020–2024 ACS five-year estimates, accessed October 2026. Unemployment: SC Department of Employment and Workforce March 2026 county rates, not seasonally adjusted. Crime: SLED 2024 annual reporting; no unsupported county safety rankings are presented. Education: SC 2025–2026 school report cards. Narrative lifestyle characterizations are editorial descriptions, not scored rankings.

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