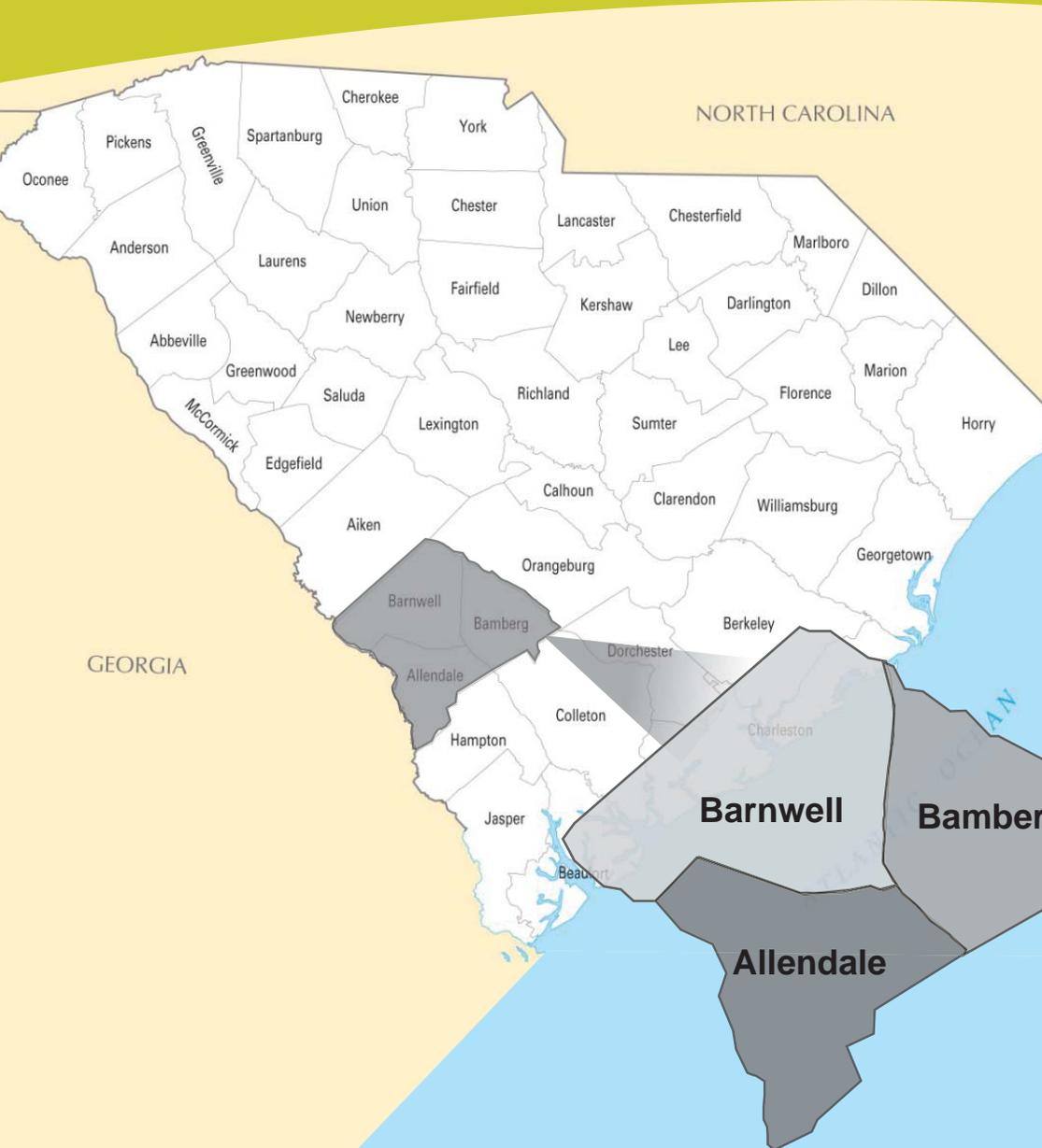




Joseph Outreach

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE STUDY FINAL REPORT



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## Summary

The initial purpose of this Rural Development Initiative Study was to explore the feasibility and economic viability of constructing and staffing a centralized, healthcare facility with emergency services in the South Carolina Promise Zone (rural, underserved counties of Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell, South Carolina).

During the research process, it became apparent that a centralized facility of similar nature, named Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center, was being constructed. Therefore, the purpose of this study shifted to assess potential gaps in service and additional offerings needed to better meet the needs of the community and ensure the success of Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center.

The Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center is a free-standing medical facility currently under construction along Highway 70 between Denmark and Barnwell. Construction is expected to be completed in March 2019. It will serve Bamberg and Barnwell counties. The purpose of the facility is to provide emergency and outpatient diagnostic services. Research detailed in the Interim Report revealed these limited services would leave service gaps in the healthcare of the community. To further substantiate the need, meetings were held with the administrator at The Regional Medical Center in Orangeburg, Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance, Low Country Health Care Systems, the USDA Rural Development, and various community leaders. Documented feedback from these consultations support the need of the additional services listed below.

- Additional primary care physicians, supplemented by a nurse practitioner, in the Bamberg/Barnwell area
- Behavioral health services
- Specialty services, including obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, cardiology, orthopedics
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to transport patients in Bamberg and Barnwell counties to the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center and other facilities as required

This report is a supplement to the previously submitted Joseph Outreach Interim Report. It considers the findings of the interim report and outlines three options that meet the needs listed above.

**Option 1:** The Regional Medical Center will build out and lease office space within the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center facility to medical practitioners, namely primary care and behavioral health physicians, and other medical service providers as needed.

**Option 2:** Purchase property on the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center's site from Regional Medical Center to construct a building to house medical practices, namely primary care and behavioral health physicians, and other medical service providers as needed, including EMS.

**Option 3:** Purchase Property and construct a medical office near Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center to house medical practices, namely primary care and behavioral health physicians, and other medical service providers as needed, including EMS.

## Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center

On August 8, 2017, Regional Medical Center held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the construction of the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center. Due to the closing of several medical facilities, the tri-county area of Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell counties had a critical need medical treatment for residents. The 20,500 square-foot, freestanding 24/7 emergency department was funded by the State of South Carolina through a one-time \$4.6 million Transformation Fund Grant to The Regional Medical Center.

The facility will respond to medical emergencies, provide limited outpatient diagnostic services.



*Facility progress as of September 2018*



The Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center will be a positive start to address healthcare concerns in the area. In addition to the benefits, there are challenges as well. Both are listed in the chart below.

### Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center Pros and Cons

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding of \$4.6 million</li> <li>• Freestanding emergency department opened 24/7</li> <li>• Doctors trained in emergency care</li> <li>• Helipad</li> <li>• Offers CT scans, X-rays, ultrasound diagnostic imaging, and laboratory services</li> <li>• 8 to 9 treatment rooms</li> <li>• \$100,000 USDA grant for medical equipment</li> <li>• Supportive services for inpatient and other required services provided by The Regional Medical Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only 2 beds for observation</li> <li>• Limited primary care physicians for follow-up</li> <li>• Facility projected to operate at a substantial loss</li> <li>• Recruitment and retention of medical personnel will be a challenge</li> </ul>

## Unaddressed Healthcare Needs

Although the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center will serve as a medical boom in the area, it can not address other far-reaching healthcare needs. Those needs include accessible facilities to care for primary, preventive, chronic, mental, pediatric, and women's health and social concerns that plague rural areas. The data reflect significant disparities in Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell counties, especially when compared to other counties within the state.

### **Specific Health Care Needs: Children Care**

Children in rural counties are less likely to have regular health care visits. Due to socioeconomic circumstances, many children in poorer areas are either uninsured or have public insurance which puts them at a greater risk for decreased access to health care, delays in treatment, and inadequate immunization. Lack of sufficient pediatric and mental health care in rural counties leave children facing problems including, but not limited to:

- Childhood obesity
- Respiratory illnesses
- Immunization deficiencies
- Nutritional issues
- Decreased literacy rates
- Increased suicide rates

### **Specific Health Care Needs: Senior Population**

Rural areas in the United States are experiencing a shift in demographics in that they are now facing an aging population. Geriatric care has become one of the greatest areas of need in rural counties. More rural residents experience higher levels of people who have arthritis, asthma, heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, some type of disability — all of which affect the geriatric population in greater numbers.

### **Specific Health Care Needs: Women's Health**

Women in rural areas are less likely to receive regular pap tests, mammograms, or adequate prenatal care due to inaccessibility. People that live in rural counties have farther to travel and are less likely to be insured. Additionally, there is the issue of limited or no transportation.

### **Specific Healthcare Needs: Primary Care Physicians**

The three specific healthcare needs identified above can all be managed with sufficient primary care within the tri-county area. South Carolina's rural counties suffer from a lack of primary care physicians. Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell are not exception. In fact, the region leads the state in inadequate primary care. That's why the options outlined in this report include facilities to house primary care physicians as a means to addressing a greater issue.

Research shows that Bamberg and Barnwell counties continue to lose primary care physicians, and Allendale currently only has two. This is a stark contrast to more urban counties which have as many as 500 primary care physicians in the area.

Because of the rural setting and lower socioeconomic status of the affected areas, primary innovative incentives need to be put in place to not only recruit but to retain qualified primary care physicians to

move to the area to provide long-term, doctor-patient relationship sustainability. Specific funding sources will need to be explored in order to incentivize and retain qualified primary care physicians.

## Opportunities for Partnerships and Collaboration

Medical centers and healthcare facilities in rural counties experience unique challenges. Oftentimes, they are unable to recruit and retain adequately trained medical practitioners. The success of a project of this scope requires strategic partnerships with known and respected educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and other organizations committed to health and welfare of the community. Establishing mutually beneficial relationships and alliances with local colleges and technical schools help to maintain an educated and trained workforce. Strategic relationships, partnerships, and collaborative effort can occur with institutions within miles of Bamberg and Barnwell counties, to a few hours away. All organizations can provide support to training and maintaining suitable medical staff. Below is a list of partners needed to foster strategic relationships.

- Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center
- Denmark Technical College
- Voorhees College
- Medical University of South Carolina
- Denmark Health Care System
- Lowcountry Health Care Systems
- Edisto Health District
- The Regional Medical Center of Orangeburg
- Family Health Centers
- Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance
- Richland Memorial
- County Mental Health Offices
- County EMS Services

## Potential Funding to Address Additional Needs

The study identified potential funding to assist with the development of additional services required of the area:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- United State Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- South Carolina Department of Commerce
- Opportunity Tax Credit
- Medical University of South Carolina
- Telehealth Programs
- Regional Medical Center
- 10-20-30 Formula to fight Persistent Poverty

## Options

In consideration of the research included in the Interim Report, the three options list below are recommended.

**Option 1:** The Regional Medical Center will build out and lease office space within the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center facility to medical practitioners, namely primary care and behavioral health physicians, and other medical service providers as needed.

**Option 2:** Purchase property on the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center's site from Regional Medical Center to construct a building to house medical practices, namely primary care and behavioral health physicians, and other medical service providers as needed, including EMS.

**Option 3:** Purchase Property and construct a medical office near Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center to house medical practices, namely primary care and behavioral health physicians, and other medical service providers as needed, including EMS.

To determine the most viable option, cost and financing must be taken into consideration. This report attempted to calculate those costs, but a more industry-specific research is required for an accurate cost analysis.

## Next Steps

In conclusion, viable options are available, and the choice is relegated to a group decision. Regardless of the decision, a collaborative effort is imperative to assure the success of the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center. Members of the study offer these recommendations for next steps:

1. Develop a cost analysis of each option.
2. Develop a strategic plan for Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell, counties to address the healthcare needs and implement strategies to meet the identified needs of the plan.
3. Develop a healthcare relationship with Medical University of South Carolina or Palmetto Health Richland/Greenville to meet the needs of the area to include primary care, obstetrics/gynecology, pediatrics, behavioral health, and other specialty services in partnership with The Regional Medical Center.
4. Seek funding to purchase land and consequently construct a multi-purpose building onsite or adjacent to the Bamberg Barnwell Emergency Medical Center.
5. Identify the owner of the multi-purpose building; it has been suggested that Southern Alliance maybe amenable to ownership.
6. Develop a physician recruitment strategy to include nurse practitioners for the rural area.
7. Provide facilitation for team building and trust development necessary to design a vision for the future of healthcare through collaboration in the area.
8. Begin a strategy to identify and get consensus for an Ambulance Emergency Service