



## Charleston Story Ideas

### **Sustainability, Green Development and Restoration At Its Finest**

[Noisette](#), a unique public-private partnership between the City of North Charleston and the Noisette Company, involves a 3,000-acre area targeted for integrated restoration as a sustainable community. The master plan includes 350 acres of the former Charleston Naval Base (being redeveloped by Noisette) plus about 2,600 adjacent acres (a wide mix of neighborhoods, retail areas, industries, schools, municipal buildings and parks being redeveloped by the City).

As a conglomerate of several distinct neighborhoods, Noisette is aiming to become a city inside a city. One such neighborhood, [Mixson Avenue](#), is inspired by the oldest neighborhoods of Charleston and incorporates sustainable building materials such as AAC (autoclaved aerated concrete) block. With [Oak Terrace Preserve](#) developer John Knott, known for his completely green development, Dewese Island, took on the challenge of creating a similar green community in a pre-existing urban setting.

The larger Noisette community is ambitious in other ways, with a vision of becoming socially and economically sustainable in addition to its environmental goals. Proof of this economic sustainability is the cluster of artists and restoration elements that are migrating to the Noisette campus. For example, gathering on the site of the former Navy base are:

- the [American College of Buildings Arts](#), the first four-year college dedicated to historic preservation;
- the [Clemson University Restoration Institute](#), a research campus dedicated to restoration ecology, renewable energy, advanced materials, healthy communities and historic restoration;
- and a number of small “green” businesses.

### **National Model Port Security Initiative**

Charleston is home to one of the largest container ports on the East Coast, which makes it a perfect testing ground for one of the more advanced security programs in the country. Project Seahawk is the nation's first intermodal transportation and port security taskforce and operations center. It operates under the U.S. Department of Justice and brings together 50+ Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies (including U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement, U.S. Customs & Border Protection, U.S. Coast Guard, S.C. Law Enforcement Division, local law enforcement, the State Ports Authority and other agencies) to help track suspicious activity and detect potential threats on shipping vessels.

Interagency cooperation, something at which Seahawk excels, has been identified as one of the country's weaknesses immediately following a terrorist attack or natural disaster. Project SeaHawk is serving as a model for the creation of other centers at major ports throughout the country.

### **Global Trade Resulting in Industrial Real Estate Boom**

The Port of Charleston is a key driver of the local economy and is the impetus behind a vigorous regional industrial market, which continues to expand in a time of growing international trade:

- About 16 million square feet of speculative industrial space is currently slated for development, with 1 million already under construction.

- The [South Carolina State Ports Authority](#) recently broken ground on a new container terminal in North Charleston that will increase capacity by almost 50 percent, resulting in close to one million additional TEUs annually.
- The crown jewel is Hillwood Development's plan to build a large port-driven industrial park on 750 acres of land, including more than 8 million square feet of industrial real estate and up to 1 million square feet of office and retail space. Initial construction for the development, which ranks among the largest commercial real estate ventures ever in South Carolina, should begin by mid-2008.

### **Economic Evolution: From Brawn to Brains**

While traditionally known as a port and military town with primarily blue-collar jobs, Charleston's economy is rapidly diversifying to include a dynamic knowledge-based component.

A 1993 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision to close the Charleston Naval Base and Shipyard meant the possible loss of more than 22,000 military and civilian jobs. This then-devastating blow led to a concerted three-county effort to expand the local economy while also spawning a more supportive, entrepreneurial business climate.

One outcome of BRAC 1993 was the siting of the East Coast headquarters for SPAWAR, the [U.S. Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center](#), in the region which is feeding the growth of an advanced security industry. Companies like [Scientific Research Corporation](#) (SRC) and [Force Protection](#) are bringing in millions of dollars in defense and homeland security money from the Federal government, often contracting with smaller local companies and circulating the money within the region.

Other high-tech industries, particularly the biosciences, are also growing steadily here. Again, partnerships with Federal organizations, such as the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration and the National Institute for Health, are helping to bring in the money that is encouraging this growth.

The entrepreneurial climate has combined with the long-time local arts scene to generate an overall "creative cluster." In recent years, a strong network of digital media and design businesses have been born, as well as a collection of preservation and sustainability resources, such as colleges, research entities and private companies.

While knowledge-based industries continue to grow and thrive in Charleston, the historically strong industries – logistics & manufacturing – remain healthy and have maintained their international composition. The [South Carolina State Ports Authority](#) has recently broken ground on a new container terminal in North Charleston that will increase capacity by almost 50 percent, resulting in close to one million additional TEUs annually.

All of this comes on top of per capita income growth ranked fifth best in the nation and the trend of coastal population growth all over the South. The latter has created a demand for a series of major planned communities, such as those called [Noisette](#) and [Magnolia](#), all over the region.

*For more information about the Charleston region or to set up a media interview, please contact Karen Kuchenbecker at [karenk@crda.org](mailto:karenk@crda.org) or 843.760.4534.*