

## Columbia, SC

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*Previous GTCA City 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2019*

### The Church in Columbia

The church in Columbia was established in 1987 after a group of saints migrated to the area in the mid-1980s to join some local saints. The church has met in the saints' homes and in a small business owned by saints for many years. Recently, the church obtained a meeting hall that can seat approximately 100 saints. There is room to care for the children, and it is suitable for larger gatherings. It also has a large number of parking spaces. About 22 saints currently gather on Lord's Day mornings, including about 6 children. Saints also meet in small groups in the homes for prayer and vital group meetings. The racial composition of the church is about 50% White, with the other 50% a mix of Asian, Black, and Hispanic.

For many years, there has been a burden for the main campus here—the University of South Carolina—but there has never been a club or campus team. The burden for the campus is even stronger now, thanks to the Lord's operating in the migration of saints here and the purchase of a house close to the campus. We also have a brother who is a faculty member at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine.



### Location

Columbia is the capital of South Carolina. It is located in the midlands of South Carolina, surrounded by the Congaree River to the south and the Saluda and Broad Rivers to the north and east. It also is home to Lake Murray, a man-made lake that is a great attraction to fishermen and boaters alike. To the east is the Atlantic Ocean, and to the northwest are the Blue Ridge Mountains. Driving times to several localities in the region are: Simpsonville, SC—1:40; Augusta, GA—1:30; Charlotte, NC—1:45; Chapel Hill, NC—3:45; Raleigh, NC—3:20; Atlanta, GA—3:30; Athens, GA—3:00; Chattanooga, TN—5:40; and Knoxville, TN—4:30.

### Climate

Columbia has four distinct but mild seasons. Springs are mild, with highs in the 70s and 80s and an abundance of blossoming hardwood trees. Winters are crisp, with a few overnight freezes, daytime highs in the 50s, and occasionally one or two days of light sleet or snow per year. Summers are humid with highs averaging in the high 80s to mid-90s. Falls are beautiful, with highs averaging in the 70s and a great deal of outdoor color. Average annual rainfall is about 46 inches, but Columbia is also a sunny city with 60% average daily sunshine.

### Health

Columbia's two major healthcare systems, Palmetto Health and Greenville Health System, recently merged to form Prisma Health. The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in Charleston is one of the top hospitals in the Southeast US, providing top medical care and specialized care. Columbia is home to the William Jennings Bryan Dorn VA hospital.

## Demographics

Columbia has a population of 133,451, and the metro area has a population of 767,598. It is the second most populous city in South Carolina behind Charleston, and it has had a steady annual growth rate of 1.2%. The racial makeup of the Columbia metro area is 48.1% White, 39.2% Black, 6.3% Hispanic, 3.8% Asian, and 2.6% mixed or other.

## Economy

A Forbes report named Columbia one of the top 100 places to start a career or do business, and the city is also ranked in the top 100 as far as job growth. Columbia is flourishing with government, military, law, banking, and education jobs.

The following are some of the top companies to work for in Columbia:

State of South Carolina	University of South Carolina	Richland County School District	Prisma Health	BlueCross BlueShield of SC
Amazon	Scana Energy	Verizon Wireless	Lexington Medical Center	Wells Fargo
Lowes	U.S. Department of the Army	AgFirst Farm Credit Bank	BB&T	First Citizens Bank & Trust Company

While the job outlook in Columbia is very positive, the cost of living remains very reasonable. The income tax rate in South Carolina is variable to 7%. In Richland and Lexington counties, the sales tax is 8% and the property tax rate is 0.59%, one of the lowest rates in the US.

## Transportation

Columbia Metropolitan Airport is a small but busy metro airport that travels to most major hubs, with reasonable fares for its size. Flights from top airlines such as American Airlines, Delta, and United are the most common.

Columbia has a bus system (COMET) that goes throughout Richland County, and another bus system for the university that travels to all major campus buildings and parking structures. Columbia also has a Greyhound bus station and an Amtrak train, which can travel long distances.

The major highways in Columbia form a beltway around the city that exit toward the major cities of Charleston, Greenville, Charlotte, Augusta, and Atlanta. The three interstate highways in Columbia are I-77, I-20, and I-26.

## Interesting Places in Columbia

Listed below are a variety of special places to visit in Columbia and its surrounding areas.

Science and nature: Edventure, SCETV, IT-oLogy, McKissick Museum, Congaree National Park, Saluda Shoals Park, Sesquicentennial Park, Lake Murray, South Carolina State Museum, Nature Conservancy, and Harbison National Forest

Arts and culture: Workshop Theatre, Columbia Museum of Art, Koger Center for the Arts, Colonial Life Arena, Columbia Festival for the Arts, and the South Carolina State Fair

Professional sports: Columbia Fireflies (minor league baseball) and Lexington Blowfish (summer collegiate baseball)

South Carolina attractions and vacation destinations: Myrtle Beach, Blue Ridge Mountains, Charleston, Riverbanks Zoo, Lake Murray, Lake Marion, Edisto Beach, Hunting Island, Hilton Head Island,, State Capitol, Governor’s Mansion, Isle of Palms and many state parks

### **Christians**

Columbia is located in the Bible Belt, and an overwhelming 78% of people profess to be Christian. There are many old historic churches in South Carolina, though most of them are in Charleston.



### **Campuses**

Columbia’s major university is the University of South Carolina (USC), which has over 29,500 undergraduates enrolled. There is also the USC School of Medicine, which is ranked #2 in South Carolina.

Midlands Technical College has approximately 15,000 students. Columbia College is a small Methodist College with 1,500 students. Other colleges and universities in Columbia include Allen University, Benedict College, Columbia International University, Lutheran Theological Seminary, WL Bonner College, South University, ECPI University, and University of Phoenix.

### **Schools**

Public Schools: The major school districts in Columbia are the Richland and Lexington school districts. School quality varies throughout the area and there are numerous magnet, charter, lottery, and IB programs to choose from.

County private schools: Columbia has a number of quality private schools, most of which are Christian schools. Heathwood Hall, Hammond, and Ben Lippen are the top private schools in Columbia.

Homeschooling: Homeschooling is legal in South Carolina, and many Christian families consider this option the best for educating their children. Usually this is carried out in coordination with the local school districts.

### **Housing**

Columbia offers a variety of housing types and options. There are new houses being built in many of the suburban areas, such as Irmo, Lexington, Chapin, and Northeast Columbia. There is also historic Columbia, located close to the university area, which is popular but expensive.

The chart below has a list of some areas of interest in housing in the Columbia metro area:

<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Median home price / rent</b>	<b>Families Nearby</b>	<b>Min. to Meeting Hall</b>	<b>Min. to USC</b>	<b>Public Schools</b>	<b>Family Friendly</b>
Northeast	\$212,000 / \$1,250	2	10-15	15-20	B	A
Irmo	\$186,000 / \$980	3	30-35	25-30	A	A
Lexington	\$167,000 / \$940	1	30-35	20-30	B+	A
University	\$363,967 / \$1,600	1	15-20	5-10	B-	A
Southeast	\$210,100 / \$1,158	1	20-25	10-15	B-	A-
Chapin/Ballentine	\$255,800 / \$1,335	1	40-45	30-35	A	A+
West Columbia	\$166,941 / \$907	0	25-30	10-15	B	B
Forest Acres	\$340,712 / \$1,420	0	15-20	10-15	B	A
Shandon	\$287,000/\$1,300	0	15-20	5-10	B-	A