

EL CARRIEL

Greenville Area SBDC Client
Primary Consultant: Marco Ríos
elcarielsc.com



PAULA TRUJILLO

RESULTS:

\$450,000
CAPITAL INVESTMENT

32
JOBS CREATED

\$2,761,166
2024 ANNUAL SALES

BUSINESS EXPANDED

With SC SBDC support, Trujillo's results have been impressive: with a total investment of \$650,000, sales soared to \$2.76 million in 2024, 32 new jobs were created—12 in the original location and 20 in the new— and El Carriel expanded its footprint while staying true to its mission of daily serving authentic, Colombian meals. "On opening day, we brought in \$12,000—and we don't even sell alcohol!" Trujillo recalled proudly.

Now, she is already planning her next move. "I'm working with two realtors to find a third location in Simpsonville or Taylors," Trujillo said. "I've learned how important it is to invest in marketing and in my people. Every dollar I invest comes back."

Ríos and the SC SBDC continue to support Trujillo's journey, advising her on financial strategies, staffing, and marketing as she prepares for her next expansion. "We're aiming for each location to reach \$10K in daily sales," Ríos said. "Paula's energy and drive make that goal very real."

Looking ahead, Trujillo envisions El Carriel as a growing regional brand—bringing her culture, food, and family spirit to even more communities across South Carolina.

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

When Paula Trujillo opened her Colombian restaurant, El Carriel, in 2013, she wanted it to feel like home—where workers could find a hearty, homemade meal every day, not just on special occasions. After nearly a decade of success in Mauldin, SC, Trujillo, fueled by her passion for food, family and community, set her sights on opening a second location.

"I grew up in New York City after moving from Colombia at seven," Trujillo shared. "Later, I worked as a nurse, but we saw an opportunity. Instead of running a shop, we decided to follow our love of cooking and open a restaurant. My whole family—my aunt, my cousins, everyone—cooks!"

While her first location thrived with \$2.2 million in profits in 2023, Trujillo knew expanding would be challenging. She connected with Marco Ríos, Hispanic Outreach Business Consultant with the SC SBDC, after meeting him at a local networking event. "Marco gave out many tips during the meeting," Trujillo said. "He really made me think differently about preparing for expansion."

Trujillo turned to Ríos for guidance in navigating the complex steps of opening a second location. Together, they worked on financial projections, prepared loan applications and developed a marketing strategy. "It was more about guiding her," Ríos said. "Paula did the hard work. She's a doer, not just a thinker."

Only a few months later, with Ríos's help, Trujillo secured a second loan for \$450,000 from Travelers Rest Bank and personally invested another \$200,000 to remodel and open her second restaurant on White Horse Road—only 15 minutes from her original location. After four months of renovations, El Carriel's new location opened in July 2024, achieving strong daily sales that quickly matched the original restaurant's revenue.

"I'm super appreciative of Hispanic Outreach Business Consultant Marcos Ríos for the support, advice and constant encouragement he provided. He gave me the confidence to not give up when I was in doubt of opening another business. I'm grateful that he was part of my business journey and helped me accomplish my goal."

Paula Trujillo
Owner, El Carriel

SERVICES PROVIDED:

- Business Expansion
- Strategic Planning
- Financial Projections
- Business Accounting