

The Economic Development Strategic Plan

2008

*Prepared by the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development in collaboration
With the BB&T Center for Economic and Community Development at Coastal Carolina
University*

**Horry County, SC
Executive Summary**



PROJECT BACKGROUND

In January 2008, the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development and the BB&T Center for Economic and Community Development at Coastal Carolina University (CCU) teamed together to facilitate the creation of a strategic plan for economic development in Horry County. **The purpose of this endeavor is to identify and prioritize issues surrounding economic development and to build consensus around a set of actions that may be taken in the pursuit of a collective economic vision.** Building consensus through such a plan ensures that the collaborative resources of numerous public service entities and their private partners may be efficiently leveraged to overcome the barriers and challenges to continued economic prosperity.

Over the course of the ten months, staff from the Clemson Extension Service and Coastal Carolina University guided a strategic plan taskforce through numerous exercises associated with the plan's creation. In addition to organizing the planning process, facilitators from each institution conducted research and analysis associated with priority issues identified by the taskforce. This report summarizes the initial findings of the assembled taskforce and makes recommendations for the sustained pursuit of economic development projects, programs and policies that will enhance the economic conditions necessary for growth and expansion of all sectors of the economy in Horry County.

METHODOLOGY

Initiated through a collaborative memorandum of understanding signed by officials from Horry County government, Coastal Carolina University and Clemson University, **The Economic Development Strategic Plan for Horry County** is the result of planning by numerous local business leaders, public servants and community advocates.

A Taskforce composed of community and business leaders from around the county was convened to establish a planning framework, develop of common economic vision, review quantitative data necessary for benchmarking economic conditions, establish goals and strategies related to the plans primary focus areas and to design a framework through which economic development policies, projects and programs may be sustained in support of stated goals.

Within the overall taskforce, subcommittees were established on the basis of priority issue areas identified by the Taskforce at-large. Equipped with data presented by Coastal Carolina and Clemson University economists, Taskforce members established individual goals sets related to the following ten focus areas: business, collaboration, cultural resources, implementation, infrastructure, education, healthcare, natural resources, tourism, and transportation.

Strategies were developed in response to information garnered through numerous group planning exercises, similar planning studies and reports, outside research, and individual subcommittee meetings. Final recommendations were drafted upon reaching a consensus of all Taskforce participants and the following document has been prepared for public review and input.

The resulting economic development vision, goals, strategies, implementation matrix and supporting research is intended to be a framework through which future economic development planning may be pursued in Horry County. Future modification and revision are critical to sustaining the organizational momentum that is required in pursuit of the goals and strategies contained within.

The Economic Development Strategic Plan for Horry County was guided by a taskforce of representatives from public and private sector business, education and government institutions. **The Strategic Plan Taskforce** was assembled at the beginning of the process and provided not only the bulk of information that follows, but leadership and insight that has been invaluable to this project. Representatives from the following organization participated in this economic development planning effort:

AvCraft
BB&T
Burroughs and Chapin
City of Conway
City of Myrtle Beach
City of North Myrtle Beach
Coastal Carolina University
Conway Chamber of Commerce
Conway Medical Center
COAST RTA
Grand Strand Regional
Grand Strand Technology Council
Grand Strand Water and Sewer Authority
Holliday Associates
Horry Arts and Cultural Enhancement
Horry County Planning
Horry County Pride
Horry County Schools
Horry Georgetown Technical College
Horry Solid Waste Authority
Horry Telephone Cooperative
Little River Medical Center
Loris Healthcare System
Metglas Inc.
Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce
Myrtle Beach Golf Holiday
Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development
Northeast Strategic Alliance
North Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce
Santee Cooper
SCORE
The Jackson Companies
Town of Aynor
The Yahnis Corporation
Waccamaw Council of Governments
Waccamaw Regional Education Consortium
Waccamaw River Keeper
Wildlife Action

Priority Areas

The following nine priority areas were identified by taskforce participants as those for which strategies should be developed to enhance the economic development conditions in the communities that make up Horry County.

1. Business and Entrepreneurship
2. Collaboration
3. Cultural Assets
4. Education
5. Healthcare
6. Infrastructure
7. Natural Resources
8. Tourism
9. Transportation

Planning Framework



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OUTCOMES

1. Economic Diversity

An economy is made up of many different kinds of activity, and the economic structure varies greatly across local areas. Understanding the structure of the local economy is critical for understanding both the long- and short-term performance of an economy, as well as the long- and short-term challenges and opportunities facing an economy.

For example, an economy that is heavily dependent on manufacturing activity is likely facing decades-long challenges in terms of job losses and plant closures. An economy heavily dependent on tourism is likely more susceptible to swings in nationwide consumer income and spending trends when compared to an area that has a large government or military presence. Industry diversification is commonly viewed as a goal of economic development. Generally, a diverse local economy is likely to be a more stable economy, one that is less susceptible to industry specific shocks that could cause volatility in more specialized economies.

To examine the diversity of Horry County's economy, Table 1 provides the employment share for each of 21 industries. Also provided is the corresponding employment share for the United States. The industries are ranked from largest to smallest in terms of industry size in Horry County. All data are from 2006 and are provided by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Table 1: Employment Shares by Sector: Horry County and U.S.- 2006	Horry County	United States
<i>Accommodation and Food Services</i>	19.2	6.7
<i>Retail Trade</i>	15.0	10.8
<i>Construction</i>	11.1	6.5
<i>Government</i>	9.7	13.5
<i>Real Estate</i>	7.2	4.3
<i>Health Care</i>	5.7	9.9
<i>Administrative and Waste Services</i>	5.5	6.0
<i>Other Services</i>	5.1	5.7
<i>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</i>	4.3	2.0
<i>Finance and Insurance</i>	3.8	4.7
<i>Professional and Technical Services</i>	3.4	6.6
<i>Manufacturing</i>	2.9	8.3
<i>Wholesale Trade</i>	2.1	3.7
<i>Transportation and Warehousing</i>	1.4	3.2
<i>Information</i>	1.3	2.0
<i>Agriculture</i>	1.0	1.6
<i>Management of Companies</i>	0.5	1.1
<i>Private Educational Services</i>	0.5	2.1
<i>Forestry and Fishing</i>	0.3	0.6
<i>Utilities</i>	0.2	0.3
<i>Mining</i>	0.1	0.5

The three largest economic sectors in Horry County are: **Accommodation and Food Services** (19.2 percent of all jobs), **Retail Trade** (15.0 percent of all jobs), and **Construction** (11.1 percent of all jobs). Taken together, these three sectors account for 45.2 percent of total employment in Horry County. Nationally, these same three sectors make up 24.0 percent of total employment.

Meanwhile, Horry County has a below average presence of other sectors, including Manufacturing, Professional and Technical Services, Finance and Insurance, Health Care, and Government.



Overall, these employment shares suggest that Horry County's economy is relatively concentrated in a few large sectors. Importantly, these sectors are tied to tourism and housing. As the experience of 2008 indicates, an area heavily reliant on sectors such as tourism and housing stands to bear the brunt of national downturns that affect these activities. While tourism will always be an important driver of the Horry County economy, it is also important for the area to strive to diversify to help insulate the local economy from future downturns in housing, consumer spending, and tourism. Further, diversifying Horry County's economy can result in higher wages and faster growth in key measures of living standards such as per capita income and median household income.

Economic Development Levels

Organizational Development

Creating and maintaining a recognized and legitimate forum for exchanging ideas and addressing the needs of the community.

Product Development

Investments that are maintained, upgraded, or developed by labor and capital to improve the community. Includes infrastructure, downtown areas, gateways, business parks, or speculative buildings.

Market Development

Activities that focus on recruiting individuals who would enhance the economy, such as retired citizens or lone eagles, and enlarging the market area in which they could receive products and services.

Business Development

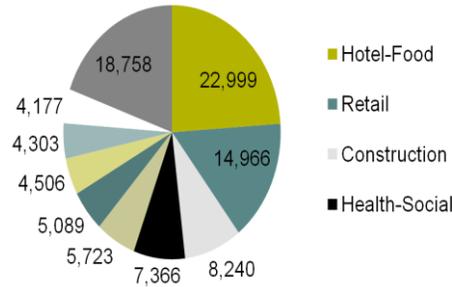
Programs that nurture businesses growth and investment. These core activities include business attraction, retention and expansion, tourism, and startup and emerging businesses.

Workforce Development

This includes partnerships between business, education, and government so that all residents can be contributing members of the local economy

2. Attracting and Retaining a Talented Workforce

One of the major obstacles for many local areas working to diversify its economy and achieve higher wages is the availability and quality of the local workforce. The path towards greater prosperity differs across local areas. In many rural parts of South Carolina, for example, one of the major challenges lies in the number of jobs available for citizens. Consider nearby Marion County. There, the estimated labor force participation rate stood at just 51.3 percent during 2005. In this situation, almost any job growth will translate into improved living standards and higher per capita income, even if those new jobs pay at or below average wages. This is because Marion County is faced with such a large percentage of the working age population that is currently detached from the labor force



In Horry County, on the other hand, the estimated labor force participation rate during 2005 was 66.1 percent, higher or similar to both the state and national averages. In this case, the only way to achieve higher per capita income and improved living standards is to attract not just more jobs, but also higher paying jobs.

While increasing the diversity of the local economy can help support higher wages, the greatest positive impact on wages is through increased worker productivity. In any economy at or near full employment, sustainable gains in living standards come about via gains in worker productivity. These gains in productivity are driven by technological advances and – perhaps most

importantly – through gains in human capital. Investments in human capital – through a commitment to improving education and labor skills – result in payoffs in the form of greater productivity, higher wages, and increased per capita income levels.

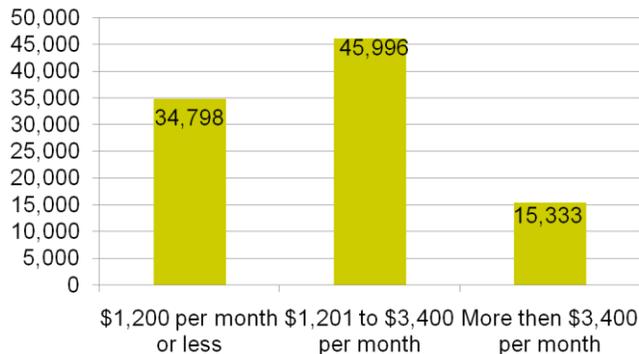


Table 2 provides a snapshot of educational attainment levels in Horry County relative to the national average during 2006. While Horry County compares favorably in many respects, it does have a below average presence of residents with at least a bachelor's degree. In Horry County, 22.3 percent of the population aged 25 and above had at least a bachelor's degree. Nationally, this figure stood at 27.0 percent. A further challenge for Horry County is that its neighboring counties, including traditional sources of labor into Horry County, have considerably lower levels of educational attainment. In Marion County during 2000 (latest available data), only 68.0 percent of the population 25 years and older were high school graduates, and only 10.2 percent had at least a bachelor's degree.



For Horry County to achieve its goals of increasing economic diversity and realizing gains in per capita income, it must provide productive workers with relevant skill sets.

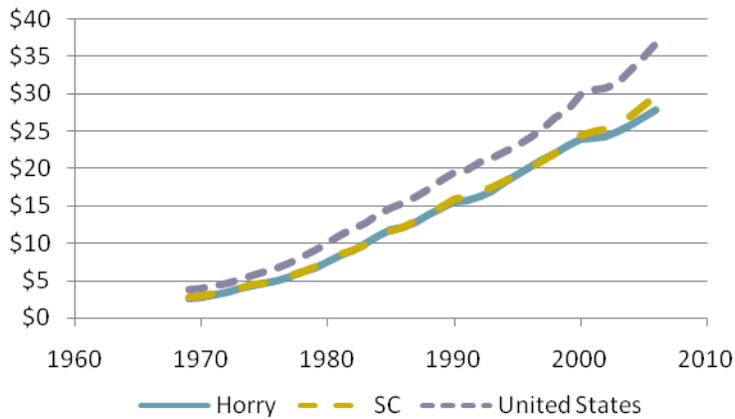
1. Maintaining Quality of Place

The quality of life in Horry County has long been one of the area's most important assets. It is absolutely crucial that economic development within Horry County builds upon, maintains, and enhances the quality of life. The long-term success of the area will always be linked with the fortunes of tourism. Again, while diversifying the economy into other areas is critical, Horry County's tourism industry will always be the main driver of the local economy. This is due to the natural amenities of the area.

Quality of place may be defined as those characteristics of a community or region that make it distinctive from other places and attractive as an area to reside, work, and/or visit. Quality of place encompasses a community's environment, civic traditions, cultural amenities, and recreational opportunities. It is multidimensional and includes both tangible and intangible factors. That makes measuring it inherently difficult. Unlike traditional economic factors such as tax rates and workforce size, which can be assigned numeric values, quality of place data are not uniformly specified and documented, and make it tough to compare one place to another.

Table 2: Educational Attainment Level for Ages 25 and Over 2006	Horry County	United States
Less than 9 th Grade	5.2	6.5
9 th to 12 th grade, no diploma	10.2	9.4
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	34.0	30.2
Some college, no degree	18.8	19.5
Associates degree	9.3	7.4
Bachelor's degree	15.4	17.1
Graduate or professional degree	6.9	9.9

Per Capita Income Comparison



Though it may be tough place a finite value on the beauty of beaches in Garden City or Myrtle Beach or the quaint charm associated with Conway Riverfront, the value is present and transferrable to economic development activity across the spectrum. Whether the objective is maintaining a level of attractiveness to incoming tourist, retirees or a skilled-workforce or sustaining a desirable quality of life for permanent population, “quality of place is” is a crucial component of the economic development dynamic.

The following categorized goals and strategies are the result of ten months of work with local and state researchers, local community and business professionals and government leaders. With the planning framework in place and benchmark data available to inform decisions, the Strategic Plan Taskforce was charged with developing actionable strategies that allow Horry County communities to affect the above-mentioned outcomes.

PRIORITY AREA 1: BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

1.1 Develop a public campaign that highlights the importance of a diversified economy;

- Showcase local entrepreneurs to visitors;
- Refine County’s economic marketing messages to be consistent with the county’s targeted value-added industry clusters;

1.2 Market Horry County as a place to start and expand a high value business;

- Form a work-group subcommittee that will develop a plan for building and supporting entrepreneurship in the county and region;
- Further develop business retention and expansion programs;

1.3 Foster entrepreneurial networks;

- Establish a forum for entrepreneurs to network with each other and use this and other means to raise awareness in the community about small business resources available to prospective and small business owners;
- Support Horry Industrial Alliance efforts to meet the needs of existing industries;

1.4 Establish a culture of entrepreneurship and strengthen infrastructure in support of small business and entrepreneurs;

- Support the development of entrepreneurial education curriculum in Horry County Schools, and higher education institutions;
- Establish incubator space for lifestyle businesses and entrepreneurial small business enterprises;
- Develop a sustainable local funding source for entrepreneurs and small businesses and leverage all potential financial resources;
- Develop a matrix of available services and their targeted entrepreneur levels to understand the network of service and identify gaps;

1.5 Develop a research based approach to identifying and strengthening target business sectors for recruitment, retention, expansion, and growth

- Complete a target industry study that identifies market opportunities for new business
- recruitment and expansion;
- Actively recruit companies identified in updated target industry studies for the County;

PRIORITY AREA 2: COLLABORATION

2.1 Work to improve relationships between all levels of government

- Use an existing forum (e.g. Horry County League of Cities, Coastal Alliance) to bring together all units of local government on a regularly scheduled basis to discuss planning, issues and strategies;
- Convene a regional economic council to discuss long term strategies related to regional and collaborative economic development initiatives;

2.2 Identify and quantify the benefits and cost of various levels of collaboration

- a) Conduct a categorized assessment of the cost and benefits of various levels of collaboration with respect to the provision and acquisition of public goods and services;

2.3 Develop strategies to build coalitions for reform of land use laws and protection of the environment.

- a) Convene topic based roundtable discussions between peer departments of local governments and public service entities (i.e. planning roundtable, public safety roundtable, recreation roundtable, etc.);
- b) Conduct an objective assessment of potential positive and negative attributes associated with consolidation of land planning activities;

2.4 Provide more consolidated and streamlined regulations and practices representing the various citizen interests.

- a) Identify opportunities for consolidated incentive, licensing and permitting programs applicable to projects with significant economic impact;
- b) Establish a forum through which citizens and professionals working in the development sector may remain current on the application of various planning tools in communities that make up the region (i.e. planning leadership programs, land use academy, etc.);
- c) Support the development of new business and industry partnerships that enhance the economic development environment in Horry County;
- d) Develop a regional land planning matrix that identifies consistency between land planning policies and differentiates the geographic application of regulations;

PRIORITY AREA 3: CULTURAL ASSETS

3.1 Identify and organize information on local cultural resources and opportunities

- a) Support Horry County Arts and Cultural Enhancement (ACE) in the organization, management and funding of cultural assets.
- b) Locate and secure a facility for operational support.
- c) Provide for future expansion of facilities to include strategically located satellite kiosks and information stations.
- d) Create the funding necessary for program facilities and required staff.

3.2 Encourage and nurture growth and diversity of public and private cultural assets

- a) Promote the value of partnerships and collaborations among arts organizations and their communities;
- b) Support city, county and state community efforts to utilize arts to attract and grow business
- c) Promote cultural tourism as a core strategy for economic development;
- d) Partner with area chambers and business organizations to promote tourism as an arts destination;
- e) Create an artist's incubator and associated cooperative organizational structure;

- f) Identify public and private funds for incubator facility acquisition where artists have private, below market rate studios and shared common exhibition spaces;
- g) Offer business training programs to creative artisans with interest in sustaining both virtual and actual studio space;

3.3 Facilitate the development of expanded eco-tourism and outdoor recreation business opportunities in both coastal and inland areas of the county;

- a) Develop an eco-tourism marketing campaign that targets specific markets and demographics;
- b) Work with state and local tourism entities to develop and implement the campaign;
- c) Maintain eco-tourism niche small business training programs in support of new entrepreneurial enterprise development;
- d) Work with local and state tourism entities and higher education institutions to complete an eco-tourism product development concept including: access, infrastructure, business expansion, new business opportunities, and a resource inventory

3.4 Enhance K-12-curriculum centered on local/state/regional cultural significance;

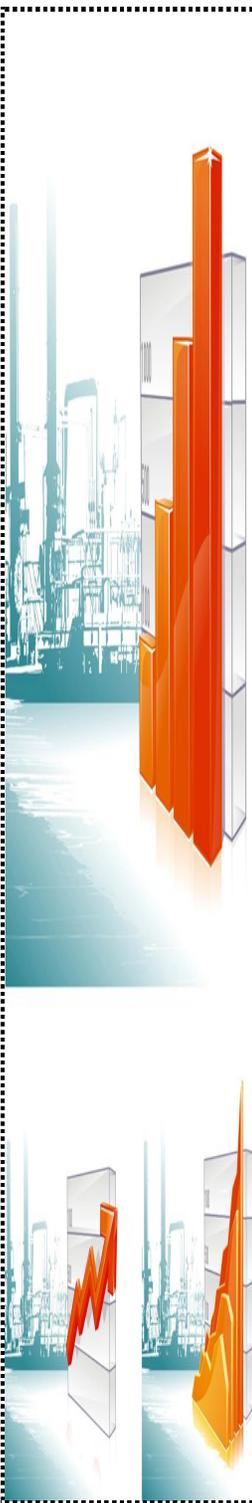
- a) Work with Horry County Schools to ensure continued support for arts programs as part of the overall curriculum;
- b) Establish a business and arts partnerships that showcases art created in schools in both public and private business settings;
- c) Create an arts mentoring program that transitions student artisans with identified skills into developmental training programs or workforce opportunities that nurture creative skills;
- d) Sponsor an arts education scholarship that makes additional training possible for local students that wish to develop their creative skills into a career;
- e) Create incentives for teachers to participate in Arts in Education programs;

PRIORITY AREA 4: EDUCATION

4.1 Ensure that every community recognizes the value of education and the need for all public and private schools to prepare students to be competitive in the rapidly changing world of the 21st century.

- a) Create organized forums through which greater parent teacher communication may be fostered;
- b) Utilize resources available through local faith-based and community organizations to sponsor parent/teacher engagement activities and





programs.

- c) Work with the local and statewide industry organizations to market opportunities in the manufacturing sector to students, parents, and teachers;
- d) Collaborate with local Chamber of Commerce, business and industry organizations to host an annual job fair focused on workforce opportunities in career clusters identified by the Education and Economic Development Act (EEDA);
- e) Engage local utility providers and community business leaders in the support of a Business and Education Partnership that supports an emphasis on math, science and technology curriculum and creates greater awareness of affiliated career clusters;

4.2 Ensure that students are work and college ready, prepared for literacy in a digital age, prepared to be critical thinkers and are prepared to be effective communicators.

- a) Conduct an educational needs assessment and gap analysis of local employers;
- b) Conduct staff development programs that make connections between 21st Century skills, workforce demands, and curriculum attributes;
- c) Evaluate existing curriculum for consistency with current and future workforce needs and modify accordingly;
- d) Partner with local higher education institutions to maintain and expand early college high-school and scholars academy programs;
- e) Work with the Academy for Arts, Science, and Technology and the Academy for Academics and Technology to offer innovative science, math and technology based curriculum and certifications that meet the needs of regional employers;
- f) Develop dual enrollment opportunities at local higher education institutions in support of both the K-16 education model and employer demands in the workforce;
- g) Sustain continuing education opportunities that inform career counselors about opportunities associated with all career clusters identified by EEDA;
- h) Make GED programs accessible to all participants through the development of education and employers partnership programs;
- i) Form a Higher Education Partnership that formalizes existing relationships between Horry County Schools and local institutions;



4.3 Work with economic development entities and business organizations to market the achievements of programs in Horry's public and private schools and make the fundamental connection between education and economic prosperity;

- a) Develop a marketing campaign for premier achievements and unique program opportunities in public and private school systems;
- b) Maintain benchmark achievement data that may be utilized by economic development entities to highlight the quality of local schools systems
- c) Work with local and regional economic development organizations to articulate the importance of education to workforce and entrepreneurial development; produce digital marketing materials that may be used in economic recruitment activities;
- a) Work with through higher education partnership to highlight K-14 comprehensive educational opportunities in the County;
- b) Market opportunities and achievements in special needs and other niche education program available through public and private school systems;
- c) Produce a categorized education opportunities piece that identifies all program offerings in primary, secondary, adult education, continuing education, and alternative education sectors;

PRIORITY AREA 5: HEALTHCARE

5.1 Form a healthcare consortium that focuses on community wellness and prevention, decreases health disparities, improves access and increase availability of specialty care.

- a) Conduct a community needs assessment to identify consistent healthcare indicators that may be used to address needs through collaborative outreach;
- b) Develop collaborative outreach programs focused on mitigating issues identified in the community needs assessment;

5.2 Partner with educational institutions to expand the variety of health careers and educational programs currently offered.

- a) Work with local higher education institutions to create and promote additional healthcare training programs to meet the needs of the growing healthcare sector;
- b) Establish a partnership among local hospital systems, CCU, HGTC and SC Hospital Association that identifies training program needs and opportunities;
- c) Explore the utilization of cutting-edge medical technology and practices such as telemedicine and virtual surgery; develop training programs in support of such initiatives;
- d) Conduct a needs assessment of educational program offerings at all local institutions and develop programs to fill training gaps;

5.3 Create a resource guide for the general public and healthcare providers outlining all available healthcare resources in the county.

- a) Establish a coalition of all healthcare service providers including the United Way and the American Red Cross that provides printed healthcare resource guide in local libraries, post offices and online;

- b) Work with a coalition of healthcare service providers to develop a web-based community healthcare portal that serves as a singular resource for all healthcare related information in the county;

5.4 Establish a plan to increase fiscal support through local/state legislature, public and private sector foundations and grants to increase capacity to serve underinsured;

- a) Work through a local healthcare coalition to seek network funding in support of identified needs;
- b) Work with the SC Hospital Association to educate local and state policy makers about community healthcare needs and plan for the equitable application of funding resources in response to such needs;

5.5 Increase healthcare industry capacity in Horry County to meet growing demand and create quality jobs and strategically located facilities.

- a) Conduct a study that establishes an empirical connection between residential and commercial growth and the expansion of the healthcare sector locally; use study to support the creation of new jobs and service opportunities in the healthcare sector;
- b) Work with healthcare partners and community organizations to acquire necessary funding for facilities that offer primary and preventative healthcare programs and services to serve uninsured and underinsured populations.

PRIORITY AREA 6: INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 Develop sufficient revenue resources to enable public infrastructure to be used as a competitive advantage with respect to economic development;

- a) Study the development and application of alternative tax structure to accommodate targeted growth;
- b) Encourage the development of a written financial plan for the construction and maintenance of county infrastructure;
- c) Build political support for capital investment in the proposed airport and marine industrial parks and other infrastructure dependent economic development initiatives;
- d) Make targeted infrastructure investments in areas identified for business growth;

6.2 Maintain state of the art communication technologies and encourage leading-edge communication technologies;

- a) Work with technology service providers to identify community best practices related to the provision of cutting edge communication technology infrastructure;
- b) Target new industry recruitment and entrepreneurial start-ups with consistent communications technology needs;
- c) Build a model technology district with associated communications technology in strategic areas of the county;

6.3 Expand public safety services county-wide (fire, police, EMS);

- a) Support the expansion of police, fire, and emergency medical services staffing and pay levels in order to maintain a highly qualified professional personnel;
- b) Determine best practices associated with the provision of county-wide public safety services and index current levels of service with desired level of service;

6.4 Protect natural water resources through high levels of waste water treatment and stormwater control and maintain sufficient water supply for public consumption and fire protection;

- a) Determine water resource needs necessary to accommodate expanded residential, commercial and industrial capacity and growth;

6.5 Encourage the generation and utilization of environmentally sensitive, cost-effective electrical power and alternative domestic fuel sources;

- a) Study the utility infrastructure needs for target industry models and provide necessary transmission systems;
- b) Utilize alternative fuel source transmission systems as marketable asset when recruiting industry to specific sites;
- c) Study the design of a lead certified smart park that meets the specific infrastructure needs of target industries;
- d) Engage state research institutions in order to pilot innovative alternative fuels source and transmission programs at industrial park facilities;
- e) Utilize relationships with research institutions to market industrial park locations as industry/research cluster opportunities;



6.6 Coordinate and facilitate the development of workforce housing to help attract new industries and larger scale businesses;

- a) Facilitate the location and development of workforce housing in close proximity to new industrial and business sites;
- b) Encourage the location of new workforce housing developments with the development community and local planning offices;
- c) Coordinate workforce housing locations with public transportation services to minimize the impact of additional daily home to work trips.

PRIORITY AREA 7: NATURAL RESOURCES

7.1 Acquire ecologically sensitive and regionally important lands with significant natural resources and ecosystems for the protection of human and ecological benefits and services;

- a) Develop a county-wide land acquisition program based on prioritized/categorized tracts identified through the local open space programs;
- b) Work with local government entities and planning authorities to develop a multi-tiered open space linkage program that accounts for open space networks in all jurisdictions;
- c) Create a management plan associated with public properties identified for acquisition through open space planning efforts;

7.2 Maintain an ample supply of clean drinking water for use by the people of Harry County while improving water quality of all surface waters and ground water sources;

- a) Conduct a water resources study that assesses capacity and quality of all ground and surface water bodies, watershed resources and navigable waterways;
- b) Engage a consortium of water based business and institutional interests to sustain a water quality education program that seeks to mitigate impaired conditions in local water bodies;
- c) Develop a comprehensive water quality monitoring network for point and non point source pollutants in impaired water bodies;
- d) Organize a volunteer network of retiree stakeholders interested in the improvement of water quality and monitoring exercises (see Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement, EASI);

7.3 Achieve an optimum ratio for diverse land use to include agricultural, forest open space, scenic areas, recreational lands, and sensitive ecological areas;

- a) Conduct a natural resource asset valuation study for all components of ecosystems that may be viewed as environmental capital with respect to the local and regional economy;
- b) Use innovative planning tools and other regulatory mechanisms to prohibit the development of areas deemed to be of critical importance to local ecosystem;

7.4 Reduce pollutant contributions from point and mobile source air pollutants;

- a) Convene a Green Industry Council to oversee the implementation of incentives, credits and opportunities related to the pursuit of environmentally sensitive business practices;
- b) Identify renewable energy and fuel opportunities that may be harnessed by local business and industry;
- c) Conduct an organized public awareness campaign associated with all pollutants to local ecosystems highlighting that connection between economic development and environmental quality;

- d) Ensure accuracy and accountability of data maintained by state and local environmental agencies;
- e) Conduct an epidemiology study in support of the connection between environmental quality prevailing health issues; use information to mitigate negative circumstances and as leverage to strengthen policies affecting the environment;
- f) Administer Green Certification Program to reward pursuit of environmentally sensitive design and development;

7.5 Enhance and expand eco-tourism business opportunities and resource education/awareness events that highlight the preservation and wise use of the county's natural resource base;

- a) Convene a nature based tourism partnership that focuses on the development of new heritage tourism, ecotourism and agritourism enterprises;
- b) Create a comprehensive public /private litter control and enforcement program modeled after successful initiatives in other areas;
- c) Engage corporate and business interests in making the fundamental connection between litter, environmental quality and economic development initiatives;
- d) Encourage urban adaptability for resource education programs such as 4-H and FFA to encourage integration into metropolitan school systems;

PRIORITY AREA 8: TOURISM

8.1 Collaborate with state and local tourism partners to market Grand Strand tourism opportunities to a diversity of tourism markets and demographics.

- a) Engage a diversity of regional tourism interests in the formation of a Grand Strand Tourism Alliance for the purpose of collaborative marketing, planning and product development;
- b) Convene a Tourism Leadership Council to serve as think-tank for strategic planning related to all components of the tourism industry;
- c) **8.2 Work with public and private sector tourism interests to promote the tourism industry;**
 - a) Work with state officials to market tourism as a significant component of a diversified economic development strategy; particularly in areas facing decline of traditional industry;
 - b) Celebrate the tourism heritage of coastal communities by sponsoring a yearly tourism symposium hosted by the local collaborative interests;



- c) Seek public and private funding in support of collaborative initiatives;

8.3 Enhance tourism market sustainability, diversification, and expansion;

- a) Conduct a comprehensive demographics and market analysis for all tourism products and geographies that make up the region;
- b) Create a tourism master plan that focuses new product development, tourism market diversification, collaborative marketing, tourism asset sustainability, and tourism cluster expansion;
- c) Highlight unique features of community identity for all areas that make up Horry County as a distinct marketable feature of a diversified tourism strategy;
- d) Utilize student resources available through local resort tourism programs to conduct a regular survey / questionnaire program to inform product development;
- e) Seek the assistance of international tourism consultant to assess tourist product offering and target market to appropriate demographics based on assessment;
- f) Develop a countywide litter clean-up initiative for all local waterways and public lands in support of the development of new outdoor recreation and ecotourism opportunities;

8.4 Expand tourism season to cover the entire year with a diversity of tourism program and product offerings;

- a) Host regionally impacting activities such as road races, biathlon/triathlon events, golf tournaments, fishing tournaments and outdoor sporting events in the off-season;

8.5 Accommodate all convention related business travel through the expansion of current tourism infrastructure and development of new conference capacity;

- a) Seek the development of premier entertainment venue to host large capacity sports and entertainment opportunities;
- b) Conduct an economic impact study associated with the expansion and/or new development of convention center facilities;
- c) Develop a tourism preamble to win support of local leadership and policy makers for the purposes of prioritizing capital improvements to the tourism infrastructure;



PRIORITY AREA 9: TRANSPORTATION

9.1 Work with local, state and federal leaders to secure the development of direct interstate access to the communities of the Grand Strand.

- a) Place a reporting member on I-73 Committee formed by the MB Chamber;
- b) I-74 from I-95 to Carolina Bays North Extension;
- c) Actively seek dedicated funding for prioritization of I-73 segments from I-95 to the beach; make connection with SC 22.

9.2 Facilitate needed expansion and growth of Myrtle Beach International Airport

- a) Marketing through a partnership with the state, NESAs, MBREDC that reaches out to industry associations, public and private;
- b) Work with local business organizations to supply the empirical data in support of expanded air passenger and freight capacity at all local airport facilities ;

9.3 Facilitate the development of a comprehensive transit network in the form of light rail and buses.

- a) Seek long –term dedicated funding for COAST RTA through Coastal Alliance; use funding to leverage additional

federal/state transportation resources;

- b) Study feasibility of increased rail capacity for existing railroad infrastructure; Study the acquisition of additional railroad right-of-way property associated with new light rail, passenger and freight routes;

9.4 Ensure primary and secondary road interconnectivity between neighborhoods and communities (reduce the number of cul-de-sac communities).

- a) Consider interagency planning relative interconnectivity for neighborhoods;
- b) Convene a collaborative leadership council that integrates land use and transportation policy issues with existing planning tools and practices;
- c) Tap into Green-TEA resources to promote connections between neighborhood walkability and healthcare issues;
- d) Promote outreach initiatives focused on educating the development community about planning policies and growth strategies;
- e) Encourage the development of planning ordinance that require roadway connectivity in compliance with comprehensive planning objectives;



9.5 Acquire government incentives to increase mass transit, and energy efficient and economical transportation.

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- a) Facilitate the development of alternative fuel infrastructure and fleet development for local, state and federal entities;
 - b) Encourage the expansion of alternative fuel distribution capacity at strategic distribution nodes;
 - c) Work with regional transit authority, educational institutions and municipalities to increase ridership through the development of comprehensive signage, wayfinding and marketing programs associated with transit operations;

9.6 Take proactive steps to mitigate traffic congestion along primary transportation corridors.

- a) Promote high density transportation measures along primary traffic corridors such as US 17 and US 501 (HOV lanes, etc.);
- b) Require the inclusion of design elements that eliminate traffic congestion along major transportation corridors when adjacent properties are developed (i.e. frontage road segments, limited access, curb-cut consolidation, parallel routes, etc.);
- c) Encourage frontage road build-out along US 501;
- d) Encourage the development of parallel routes to primary beach corridors such as Postal Way and International Drive;
- e) Pursue the development of the Southern Evacuation Life Line Route as a limited access parallel alternative to US 501;
- f) Encourage the application of flex time standards to limit congestive build-up along primary corridors;
- g) Encourage the fuel conservation measures such as HOV lane development, park and ride facilities, van pooling opportunities, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



Throughout the course of the planning process it has become clear that in order to sustain the momentum generated by this initial collaboration and to achieve implementation of objectives contained therein, a culture of visionary leadership must be nurtured in both the public sector and business community. In some cases strengthening existing relationships and collaborations may satisfy such needs, however in others the formation of new partnerships and associated organizations may more effectively catalyze the achievement of a collective economic vision.

Information on the limitations of previous planning initiatives should inform the implementation strategy associated with this project. Likewise, examples garnered from similar processes in other geographies are extremely helpful in terms of providing a model through which the most appropriate actions may be taken here. The following information concerns organizations established to deal with similar issues related to economic and community development. In some cases these groups were formed around collateral planning initiatives and in others planning was an objective of the group's formation.

Implementation Alternatives

As is the case with many of the initiatives above, the overall posture espoused by the strategies in this document is based on the fundamental understanding that economic development is dependent on collaboration. Public-private partnerships that go beyond the conventional relationships maintained by the business and government organizations are essential to overcome the competitive environment. A number of alternatives exist for formation of an organizational mechanism whose specific purpose is to sustain the collaborative momentum created through this planning process and monitor the progress towards the achievement of strategies therein.

Alternative 1:

A limited framework for collaborative economic development planning exists in the Taskforce convened to develop this plan. Monitoring the progress towards achievement of strategies that involve, private business organizations, civic groups, government entities, and non-profit organizations goes well beyond the group's primary objectives and should involve many other elements of the community. In a formally organized capacity, the Strategic Plan Taskforce may serve the monitoring purpose.

Extending the focus of the Strategic Plan Taskforce beyond planning stages to include monitoring and reporting of progress towards goals achievement, advocacy for specific strategies of the plan, and the pursuit of resources to sustain its projects and programs will undoubtedly require the assistance of, at a minimum, part-time staff. Resources from all strategic partners including government and business organizations will be required to maintain staff and group activities.

Alternative 2:

Many collaborative organizations including the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments, the League of Cities, the Coastal Alliance, the Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation and Chambers of Commerce maintain economic development program and planning functions in Horry County. An existing entity such as the ones listed above may be the best vehicle to house the group associated with implementation of this plan. As opposed to developing a formal group structure from the ground up, the duties associated with implementation may be maintained in a subcommittee format.

In some cases the jurisdictional constraints that exist with respect to the focus of program activity in the above mentioned groups will require that the group itself become more inclusive of entities and areas not previously included. For instance, if the Strategic Plan were to become a program hosted by the League of Cities, then group membership would have to be expanded to include Horry County Representation. Likewise the Coastal Alliances current makeup includes primarily coastal jurisdictions and would require expansion to include inland areas that are included in this plan.

As with Alternative 1, this option will require a staff function that is not currently maintained by the above mentioned organizations. Accordingly existing staff responsibilities will have to be expanded to include the Strategic Plan program or new staff will have to be hired by the

organization. Under either circumstance additional resources will be required from strategic partners including government organizations to maintain this new staff function. The limitation of autonomy under this alternative may not be seen as preferable when it comes to program focus and expenditure of resources.

Alternative 3

As indicated above, many similar planning efforts have resulted in the formation of new groups to oversee the implementation and monitoring phases. In some cases the autonomy of such an independent group was seen as desirable with respect to the types of activity the groups wished to conduct. In other cases no existing group format was in place to house the program that was envisioned.

The purpose of these volunteer organizations is largely focused on the achievement of both a physical, social and regulatory environment necessary to meet the community's need for business growth and sustainability. In some cases these groups pursue distinct activities that are not covered by other economic development organizations. In other cases the groups supplement efforts maintained by local government and business organizations. In all cases, the focus is on mitigating the competitive environment rather than complicating it by supplanting existing organizations.

In order to overcome the programmatic and resource constraints that exist with other alternatives, it may be advantageous to form a new entity whose purpose is molded around that of the Strategic Plan and whose representation includes all public and private entities with a stake in the achievement of planned strategies.

The non-profit, dues based nature of such organizations provides some of the resources required to maintain necessary staff functions and creates the opportunity for pursuit of other funding mechanisms not available to primary government entities. Likewise non-profit status

allows the group to pursue both government and foundation grant resources that are not available to private entities.

Implementation Conclusion

The organizational framework created to sustain this initial economic development planning effort will determine whether the strategies contained therein are achieved in the realization of a cohesive economic vision. Without such structural support the effort is subject to the limiting factors that have made previous efforts only marginally successful. Each alternative provides a model for such structure. Regardless of which option is pursued, the role of the group in the implementation phase should include but are not limited to the activities listed in the **Table 3**.

This Report Was Made Possible by the following Institutions & Organizations

Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development (CIECD)

The Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development (CIECD) connects the resources of Clemson University, and other Cooperative Extensions agencies, to the needs of South Carolina communities. There are three major "umbrellas" under which the different programs of the CIECD are housed: Community Outreach, Institute Initiatives, and Research. Community Outreach programs are programs we have been asked to conduct by the communities that are our stakeholders. Institute Initiatives are programs that we have initiated to fill a particular need. Research is the development of new information that can be used to help grow communities.

BB&T Center for Economic and Community Development

The BB&T Center for Economic and Community Development was created by the Horry County Higher Education Commission in 1988 to conduct applied research and offer special services that are relevant to the need of the region. The Center acts as an information center for economic data for the region and serves as a bridge between the university and the community. The Center also works to place the university in a position to provide the expertise necessary for community leaders to achieve their goals of regional economic success and diversity, and enhance the quality of life for the region.

Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation

The Myrtle Beach Regional Economic Development Corporation was formed in 2005 after a comprehensive independent analysis aimed at increasing development effectiveness. The MBREDC is a public/private partnership that is dedicated to strengthening and promoting Horry County's economic growth through new business recruitment and existing industry retention and expansion efforts.

The Myrtle Beach Regional EDC is dedicated to meeting the needs of today's industry and creating a competitive and diversified business climate in Horry County.

Table 3: Implementation Steps

1.	Build public and private support for economic development efforts outlined in the plan
2.	Proactively seek participation of key partners in collaborative efforts, programs and projects
3.	Facilitate the achievement of priority strategies highlighted in the implementation matrix
4.	Attain financial resources necessary to sustain economic planning efforts on a continual basis
5.	Monitor and report on the progress of strategy/goals achievement to local business and government leadership
6.	Establish a framework and process for regular review and revision of economic development strategies
7.	Engage civic and community organizations as implementation partners

EDA University Center for Economic Development (UCED)

The EDA University Center for Economic Development (UCED) was established in 2006 as a joint program of the Clemson University Regional Economic Development Research Laboratory (REDRL) and the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development (CIECD). The UCED's principal objective is to foster economic development in South Carolina by providing research and technical assistance to organizations and areas concerned with job and income creation.

The UCED is located in the Department of Applied Economics and Statistics, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. Funding for the Center is provided by Clemson University and the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce.



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