Planned Commission Briefing Memorandum
Horry County, South Carolina

Date: June 25, 2020
From: Planning
Division: Infrastructure and Regulation
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Regarding: Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Rural Land Use Definition

ISSUE:

Should Horry County amend the Rural future land use definition to allow for 10,000 sq. ft residential lots?

CONCLUSION:

Per the direction of Planning Commission, a revision to the Rural future land use definition of the Comprehensive Plan has been drafted to accommodate 10,000 sq ft residential lots.

BACKGROUND:

Imagine 2040 was adopted by County Council on December 10, 2019. It was developed in accordance to requirements established through the SC Planning Enabling Legislation. The plan identifies the appropriate uses and densities throughout the County based on public input and direction by the Imagine 2040 Steering Committee. On April 2, 2020 during the review of the Multi-Residential District (MRD1) zoning text amendment, Planning Commission directed staff to revise the Rural future land use definition to allow for 10,000 sq ft residential lots.

ANALYSIS:

The Imagine 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes three future land use types that address the rural portions of the County, allowing for a step-down in development intensity from urban and suburban areas. These land use definitions include Rural Activity Centers, Rural Communities, and Rural. Rural Activity Centers are intended to accommodate commercial activity and meet the needs of surrounding residents. Rural Communities are intended to accommodate 14,500 sq ft residential lots or greater, in addition to some minor commercial activity along major arterial roadways. 10,000 sq ft residential lots are allowable if designed to meet sustainable development criteria that minimizes impacts on the surrounding areas. Rural areas are intended to preserve the large residential lots (½ acre and larger) and the agrarian character of western Horry County.

The Rural future land use definition has been revised to allow for Multi-Residential District 1 (MRD1), which is proposed to include 14,500 sq ft lot major residential subdivisions with the ability to allow for 10,000 sq ft lot subdivisions if impacts to surrounding land uses and community character are minimized. The future land use amendment would allow for MRD1 near Rural Activity Centers and Rural Communities where similar development intensity or zoning is present. This is to prevent leap-frog development and minimize suburban sprawl into Rural areas.
Rural areas should support the preservation of farmland and prime agricultural soils, in addition to the preservation of other natural resources, scenic views, and cultural and historic resources. Land development should retain the rural character by retaining large tracts of land, preserving wide natural buffers between differing land uses, and discouraging land uses that are incompatible to adjacent agricultural uses. Commercial development and services are allowable in Rural Activity Centers, primarily located at historic rural crossroads.

**Desired Development Pattern**
Active working lands, such as farms and forests, and large single family lots or family subdivisions with a minimum lot size of ½ an acre or maximum of 2 net units per acre. New master planned subdivisions of 14,500 sq ft lots or greater may be allowable along major arterial roadways and directly adjacent to Rural Activity Centers, Rural Communities, or similarly developed land if impacts are minimized to preserve the rural character and natural resources.

**Recommended Land Uses**
- **Primary Land Uses:** Agriculture, timberland, and their support uses and services, including, but not limited to crop and livestock processing facilities, stables, veterinary services and farm equipment sales. Single-family detached houses, including mobile homes, on individual large lots.
- **Secondary Land Uses:** Agritourism and eco-tourism uses.
- **Conditional Land Uses:** Rural amusement, outdoor shooting ranges, campgrounds, and mining operations, and single family detached subdivisions.

**Transportation**
These areas have limited opportunities for alternative transportation, unless an identified project within a transportation plan or located adjacent to schools, parks, or other community facilities.

**Policy Guidance**
1. Protect active agricultural and forestry operations, prime farmland, and erodible soils, in addition to other important natural features.
2. Major residential subdivisions are discouraged to minimize the impact on public services and infrastructure.
3. As an exception, major, master planned developments with lot sizes 14,500 sq ft or greater may be considered appropriate if located along major arterial roadways and directly adjacent to Rural Activity Centers, Rural Communities, or similarly developed land. A proposed development would need to preserve the rural character and viewshed, as opposed to developing a conventional suburban neighborhood in a rural setting. MRD1 development may allow for 10,000 sq ft lots, in exchange for large buffers with limited opacity to minimize impacts on dissimilar uses and visual impacts from collector and arterial roadways, preservation of contiguous open spaces, and other sustainable development criteria. In all cases, the availability of adequate public infrastructure and services, especially in regards to public safety, road capacity, water and sewer, and schools, should be taken into account prior to the approval of major residential rezoning requests.
4. If rural amusement, outdoor shooting ranges, campgrounds, or mining operations are pursued, an evaluation of the surrounding natural resources and communities should strongly be taken into consideration.

**Relevant Plans**
Highway 319 Rural Heritage Area Plan, Mount Vernon Rural Area Management Plan, Northeast Area Transportation Plan

**Example Zoning Districts of Similar Character**
AG1, AG2, AG4-7, RE, CP, CO1, SF/MSF40, SF/MSF 20, MRD1