Horry County is under intense development pressure. Population projections predict an increase to more than half-a-million residents in Horry County by 2040. Future development, services, and infrastructure must be thoughtfully planned. The IMAGINE 2040 Comprehensive Plan can best be described as a framework for the County’s future. It will directly inform current and future decisions. The purpose of the Horry County IMAGINE 2040 Comprehensive Plan is to enable government officials and citizens to effectively manage natural, cultural, economic and fiscal resources in light of growth, change and an inexact future. IMAGINE 2040 defines the County’s biggest assets and challenges for the future while making recommendations about the type and character of development appropriate in different areas of the County.

The goals, objectives and strategies in this document are aimed at promoting safe and healthy communities that preserve and build on the County’s unique sense of place; and promoting sustainable economic opportunities that allow all County residents to thrive and prosper. IMAGINE 2040 identifies ways to maximize the County’s strengths and improve weaknesses. It is a vital document because it contains guidance for the future while making recommendations about the type and character of development appropriate in different areas of the County.

AUTHORITY OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANS
In 1994, the County was granted the authority by the State of South Carolina to prepare and maintain a comprehensive plan through the South Carolina Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act (S.C. Code Title 6, Chapter 29). The Act consolidated formerly separate legislative acts regarding the local authority to create comprehensive plans. The comprehensive plan is adopted by ordinance as a means to guide public policy, forming the legal basis for any future land use ordinances, including rezoning requests. In order for local land use regulations to be valid, they must be adopted in accordance with a locally adopted plan. That plan is based upon and includes appropriate studies of the location and the extent of present and anticipated population, social, economic and environmental resources, and the current issues and concerns of the community.

PURPOSE AND INTENT
The IMAGINE 2040 Comprehensive Plan will guide public decision-making affecting the quality of life in Horry County through the year 2040. The Plan identifies the community’s vision for the future. The vision articulates the essential components of the quality of life in Horry County, as identified by the community, and serves as the touchstone for the Plan. The various elements of the Plan are designed to accomplish this vision by articulating goals for the future regarding the pattern, quality, and intensity of land uses, the provision of public facilities and services, economic development, availability of housing, and preservation of natural and cultural resources. The Plan also establishes strategies or actions and implementation tools to enable the County to achieve the vision set out in this Plan. The components of the Plan focus on real actions the County can achieve given the appropriate time and resources. The strategies in the Plan are tied together in a comprehensive manner and are executed through both the land use and priority investment chapters.

“It is the function and duty of the local planning commission… to undertake a continuing planning program for the physical, social, and economic growth, development and redevelopment of the area within its jurisdiction. The plans and programs must be designed to promote public health, safety, morals, convenience, prosperity, or the general welfare as well as the efficiency and economy of its area of jurisdiction. Specific planning elements must be based upon careful and comprehensive surveys and studies of existing conditions and probable future development and include recommended means of implementation.”

-South Carolina Local Government Planning Enabling Act of 1994
Horry County has a long history of land use planning. The County established zoning for the urbanizing areas of the County in 1987 and later adopted zoning for the entire County in 2002. This document builds on comprehensive and regional planning efforts conducted over the last 40 years. Horry County’s first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1976, with subsequent plans being adopted in 1983, 1995, 1999, and 2008. IMAGINE 2040 relies upon those previous efforts and the many neighborhood and area plans that have been developed in recent years to guide quality growth.

**PLANNING AND REGULATORY HISTORY**

The history of land use planning in Horry County has evolved over the last few decades. The **1976 Land Use Plan** was the first land use plan adopted in Horry County. This plan was intended to provide a framework for the growth and development of the County with recommendations for which areas of the county should be reserved for specific types of development and preservation. The 1976 plan divided the County into 14 planning districts, for which a detailed analysis of existing conditions and future potential was outlined.

The 1976 Future Land Use Plan was followed by the **1989 Land Use Plan**. Dividing the County into eight planning districts, this Plan outlined critical areas of concern in each district as well as outlining the current residential growth in each district. The 1989 Plan contained an even more detailed analysis of
existing land uses and their future potential. This Plan was the first to include a Future Land Use Map and future land use designations as well as outlines for potential policy guidance.

The 1995 Comprehensive Plan was the first truly comprehensive plan written for Horry County. Just four years later, the 1999 Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The first of the “modern” Comprehensive Plans, this Plan followed a similar format to IMAGINE 2040, including the population, economic, natural resources, cultural resources, community facilities, housing, and land use chapters. This was the first Plan to outline goals and implementation strategies.

The latest Comprehensive Plan, Envision 2025, again follows a similar format to IMAGINE 2040 in that it contains many of the same chapters (with the exception of the Transportation and Priority Investment Chapters which were new additions mandated by the State of South Carolina, and the Public Safety Chapter which is an addition determined necessary by the IMAGINE 2040 Committee). The Land Use Chapter from Envision 2025 followed a corridor strategy which highlighted urban, suburban, and rural roadways as well as urban, transitional, and rural areas for future types and intensities of development. An important component of Envision 2025 was the designated Economic Activity Centers, many of which have transitioned into the IMAGINE 2040 Future Land Use Map.
THE PROCESS
Creating this Comprehensive Plan was a three-step process during which planning staff and IMAGINE 2040 Steering Committee Members conducted a thorough inventory of existing conditions, updated statistical information, researched, and drafted each of the twelve chapters. Multiple opportunities for public comment were provided throughout the process. A timeline (shown below) and process graphic (shown to the right) explain this in greater detail.

IMAGINE 2040 STEERING COMMITTEE
The IMAGINE 2040 Steering Committee was established by the Planning Commission in December 2017. The fourteen-person committee was comprised of a variety of expertise, including real estate, economic development, environmental, agricultural professionals, and community volunteers. The Steering Committee met eleven times spread over six months. Each meeting was open to the public and advertised on the County Meetings Calendar. Meeting topics included specific examinations of each of the twelve chapters. Meetings were held on the following dates:
- January 11th, 3:00-4:30pm
- February 22nd, 4:30-6:00pm
- March 29th, 4:30-6:00pm
- April 19th, 4:30-6:00pm
- April 26th, 4:30-6:00pm
- May 31st, 4:30-6:00pm
- June 28th, 4:30-6:00pm
- July 12th, 4:30-6:00pm
- July 26th, 11:00am-3:00pm
- August 16th, 4:30-6:00pm

IMAGINE 2040 Process Began
- November 2017 - January 2018
  - Plan branding and Repackaging
- December 2017
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Established
- November 2017
  - Staff presents plan update process to Planning Commission
- September 2017 - January 2018
  - Staff analyzes analysis of existing conditions
- February 2018
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Public Input - Open House Summary, Population, Housing, & Cultural Resources Elements
- January 2018
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Plan Introduction, Process & Visioning
- January - February 2018
  - Public Input: Open Houses, Government & Justice Center, North Strand Recreation Center, Carolina Forest Recreation Center
- January 2018 - March 2018
  - Public Input: Community Survey
- June 2018
  - Public Input: Open House at Justice Center
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Open House Summary, Future Land Use Map & Definitions, Vision & Overarching Goals
- May 2018
  - Public Input: Land Use Workshop
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Future Land Use Scenarios & Definitions
- April 2018
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Natural Resources & Economic Development Elements
- March 2018
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Public Input - Survey Summary, Transportation Element
- June 2019
  - County Council 3rd Reading
- April - May 2019
  - County Council 1st Reading
- March 2019
  - I&ER Committee
- December 2018
  - Planning Commission Public Hearing & Resolution to County Council
- October 2018 - November 2019
  - Planning Commission Workshop
  - Planning Commission 30 Day Public Comment Period
- July 2018 - August 2018
  - IMAGINE 2040 Committee Meetings: Future Land Use Goals & Strategies, Final Draft Resolution to Planning Commission

IMAGINE 2040 Adoption
- June 2019
  - County Council 3rd Reading
PUBLIC INPUT

Public participation and community involvement is an important component in the comprehensive planning process. The Public Input Summary details all of the key public participation findings.

Public input for the IMAGINE 2040 Comprehensive Plan was gathered via four main methods:

1. **Public Meetings.** Open houses were held at four locations over the course of a two week period at the beginning of the rewriting process. A fifth open house was held in June to summarize findings and the draft Plan chapters. Open houses were held on the following dates:
   - January 25th, 2018 5:00-6:30pm
   - January 29th, 2018 5:00-6:30pm
   - January 31st, 2018 3:00-4:30pm
   - February 5th, 2018 5:00-6:30pm
   - June 14th, 2018 5:00-6:30pm

2. **Online and Paper Surveys.** A 27 question online survey addressed topics of general demographics, visioning, land use, visual preferences, redevelopment, as well as future needs and concerns. A paper version of the survey was produced and was available at the Planning and Zoning Office, public open houses, and various community groups to distribute. Data gathered from the National Citizens Survey (NCS) was used to influence the IMAGINE 2040 survey. Targeted advertising was used to distribute the survey link. The NCS was also used to influence the IMAGINE 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

3. **Public Comments.** The public was encouraged to submit comments throughout the planning process. Comment forms were available at each of the Open Houses and Steering Committee Meetings. In addition, the public had the opportunity to provide comments via a Land Use Mapping Workshop that took place in May. The public was encouraged to email additional comments to IMAGINE2040@horrycounty.org, call and speak directly with a planner, or mail comments to the Planning Department.

4. **Land Use Mapping Workshop.** With the assistance of staff, the Committee oversaw the Land Use Mapping Workshop with invited attendees from various institutions, corporations, industries, agencies, local governments, and the public. Approximately 143 potential participants were invited via email and/or letter. Of those 143, 104 participants RSVP’ed their intended attendance before the event. There were approximately 119 total attendees, not including staff and facilitators. Many IMAGINE 2040 Steering Committee Members were also in attendance. Attendees were broken into groups, each representative of a wide array of disciplines, and given instructions for mapping future land uses. Groups were asked to map a variety of future development types as well as determine potential locations for needed community services and facilities. Attendees of the Land Use Mapping Workshop were asked to identify locations where they desired future residential, commercial, industrial, downtown districts, conservation, recreational uses, and commu-
Public Engagement

Equally important to encouraging and receiving public input was maintaining open communication and keeping the public informed about the current status of the comprehensive planning process. An email-update list was created via a surveymonkey.com sign-up form for those interested in staying updated. Social media posts advertising the open houses, IMAGINE 2040 Steering Committee Meetings, distributing the survey link, and email update sign-up were frequently posted on the Horry County Planning and Zoning Facebook page.

Press releases with links to the online survey and information about the open houses were released in December and January. Social media posts were frequently released advertising the survey and open houses. Fliers were distributed at County owned properties including libraries and recreation centers throughout the County. Post card fliers were mailed to over 400 local churches advertising the open houses and survey. An advertisement was run on the Government Information Channel. The survey and open houses were also advertised on the Horry County Government web-page as well as at various other public functions and community group meetings.

Please see the separate Public Input Summary document for additional analysis and findings from the public input opportunities.

Another aspect of maintaining open communication was the creation and maintenance of the IMAGINE 2040 webpage. The webpage link was shared multiple times throughout the process on social media pages, in community groups, and contained links to the County Meeting Calendar and Survey. Along with email, the webpage served as the primary avenue to share updates and the status of the Plan.

ADOPITION AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

The draft IMAGINE 2040 was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission on December 6, 2018. The Planning Commission held two workshops in addition to the public hearing and 30-day public comment period. The following were the meeting dates:
- October 4th, 2018 5:30-7:00pm Draft distribution
- October 25th, 2018 4:30-6:30pm Workshop
- November 29th, 2018 3:00-4:30pm Workshop
- December 6th, 2018 5:30-7:00pm Public Hearing

The Infrastructure and Regulation Committee recommended the adoption of the plan on XXXX.

After recommendation by the IMAGINE 2040 Steering Committee, the Planning Commission, and the Infrastructure and Regulation Committee the Plan was presented to Horry County Council on the following dates:
- XXXX First Reading
- XXXX Second Reading and Public Hearing
- XXXX Third Reading and Adoption

GUIDE TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Plan is a guide for public decision-making. Specifically, the County’s elected and appointed officials should use the Plan to evaluate future proposals or policy changes to ensure consistent decisions are made. Furthermore, the Plan provides guidance to land owners and developers on what is appropriate development in the County. This Plan contains a few terms that are used to describe the various policy recommendations:

Vision: the comprehensive, overarching statement of the desired future of the County. The ultimate set of ideals to which the County should aspire.

Goal: a statement of desired end-state or target. Tied very closely to the vision statement and focused on a specific element of the Plan. Provides particular guidance for where the County should be in the future, and sets the tone for the individual strategies for each chapter.

Objective: a recommended course of action or task the County or its designated agency could undertake in pursuit of a Goal and the Vision. Provides focused and achievable guidance on specific topics under the Plan element headings. Ties the implementation of the Plan to the Goals and Vision.

Strategy: specific courses of action to achieve a specific Objective.

The Plan is provided as a comprehensive guide for the County but specific recommendations may apply more in one circumstance than another. The Plan dedicates a chapter section to each element that includes background and conclusions that informed the development of the goals, objectives, and strategies.
THE VISION
The vision for IMAGINE 2040 touches on all of the major topics examined by the Committee as well as those highlighted through public input. The vision for Horry County is as follows:

“Horry County will sustain and enhance the quality of life for our residents and visitors by fostering healthy and safe communities, preserving our natural assets and rural heritage, encouraging business growth and economic diversification, and providing services and public facilities that will protect and strengthen our future.”

OVERARCHING GOALS OF THE PLAN
The guiding principles of the Plan enhance and promote the vision. The principles are the overarching goals of the Plan and are as follows:

Community Character
‘Promote a sense of place within our existing and emerging communities by preserving and cultivating their unique character and identities.’

Rural Preservation
‘Preserve rural areas and lifestyles, along with natural resources and assets, through land use decisions and policies.’

Revitalization, Redevelopment, and Infill
‘Encourage and support community revitalization, redevelopment, and infill development that stabilizes and improves property values, promotes additional reinvestment, and enhances quality of life for our residents.’

Healthy, Livable Communities
‘Foster the development of healthy, livable communities in which residents and visitors alike have access to a variety of housing and transportation options, facilities and services, culture and arts, and recreational and natural assets.’

Safe Communities
‘Protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents and visitors by providing adequate public safety facilities and services, enforcing and improving regulations, and minimizing incompatible land uses.’

Community Facilities and Services
‘Coordinate growth and infrastructure improvements to efficiently and equitably meet the public facility and service needs of our existing and future populations.’

Mobility and Transportation
‘Promote development patterns and fund infrastructure projects that result in a well-integrated and maintained transportation system.’

Environmental Sustainability
‘Encourage and incentivize sustainable development activities that minimize and mitigate the impact on the natural environment and avoid adverse impacts on existing development.’

Economic Growth
‘Develop a more diversified and resilient economy that supports the recruitment and retention of businesses, encourages new investments, capitalizes and expands upon our existing niches, and ultimately results in greater economic stability of our residents and local businesses.’

Community Engagement
‘Create an environment in which residents, businesses, and other stakeholders are engaging and informed of planning efforts, regulatory changes, infrastructure projects, and volunteer and partnership opportunities.’
PLAN ELEMENTS

Comprehensive Plans in South Carolina are required to have a minimum of nine elements - population, land use, natural resources, cultural resources, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, community facilities, and priority investment. In addition to these required nine elements, IMAGINE 2040 includes a public safety chapter.

**The Population Chapter** analyzes historic and current population, demographic trends, and provides reasonable projections of future population growth. This includes the number, size, and characteristics of households, education levels, income characteristics, race, ethnicity, sex, and age distribution. Each of the following chapters of this plan utilize these projections to help shape their recommendations.

**The Cultural Resources Chapter** focuses on preserving and enhancing the County’s cultural resources. This includes historic sites and structures, beach culture, agricultural heritage, the visual and performing arts community, cultural and outdoor facilities; special events, venues and festivals; historic places and buildings; cultural groups, societies and organizations; unique areas of natural, scenic or archaeological value; and various educational, religious or entertainment offerings.

**The Natural Resources Chapter** examines the physical environment of Horry County and discusses the need to balance development with ecosystem concerns that will provide healthy functioning landscapes and water features for future generations. The following informational topics are analyzed: soil types; wetlands; coastal resources; agriculture; forest land; plant and animal habitats; floodplains; scenic areas; and air and water quality.

**The Housing Chapter** includes an analysis of the location, type, age, condition, tenure, and affordability of housing. It also includes an analysis of the regulatory environment to determine unnecessary barriers to the provision of affordable housing.

**The Community Facilities Chapter** provides an assessment of existing conditions, projects future needs based on projected population growth, and provides recommendations on how to implement and fund these proposals. It analyzes existing and future needs for water supply, waste water treatment, solid waste collection and disposal, medical services, general government facilities, education facilities, parks, and libraries.
The Public Safety Chapter provides an assessment of existing services by Police, Fire and Rescue, Animal Control, and Emergency Management. It highlights existing needs, projects future needs based on population and development trends, and provides recommendations on how to better serve the people of Horry County in the future.

The Transportation Chapter offers strategies to maximize the efficiency of the County’s road network while promoting policies for alternative transportation choices to reduce dependency on automobiles. It provides an analysis of the County’s existing road network while assessing existing deficiencies, and outlining future needs.

The Economic Development Chapter promotes diverse, resilient economic policies that encourage quality job creation which allow citizens to remain in Horry County in employment that requires knowledge, talent, training, and compensates with higher-paying jobs. This chapter provides an analysis of the current economic condition while focusing on how to build on the County’s existing assets along with diversifying its economic base.

The Priority Investment Chapter ties the capital improvement needs identified in other chapter to forecasted revenues for the next ten years. It is, in essence, a ten-year Capital Improvements Plan that is meant to guide the County’s five-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and annual budgeting processes.

The Land Use Chapter outlines policies that build on the recommendations of previous plans, land development studies, and public input. The recommendations within this element are critical to providing Horry County direction. This chapter provides an analysis of existing development patterns, recent planning, plan implementation efforts, a vision for future land use, and growth management policies.

### PLAN AMENDMENTS, REVIEWS, AND UPDATES
In accordance with the provisions of the South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act, the Planning Commission must review the Comprehensive Plan at least every 5 years, and update the Plan when appropriate, or at least every 10 years. Beyond the required 5-year review, Planning Commission and County Council may opt to update the Plan or components of it if there are significant changes in the economy, development trends, or the completion of major infrastructure projects. All area, community, and neighborhood plans, in addition to specialty plans like the Historic Preservation Plan, Parks and Open Space Plan, and Beach Management Plan shall be adopted as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.