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**CONWAY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**



**Conway SC – The Next Decade**

by Devin Parks, *Director of Economic Development, Conway Chamber of Commerce*

Personally, I believe the 2020's will be one the most defining decades that Conway, SC has ever seen. Over the past decade, Horry County has welcomed an estimated 100,000 new residents, building permits are being submitted faster than local governments can process, local Universities and Technical Colleges' enrollment rates have increased exponentially, average wages and median incomes have increased and there are no signs of this trend slowing down anytime soon. From 2010-2019, the Myrtle Beach-Conway-North Myrtle Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area was ranked second in the entire country in population growth percentage increases. Long gone are the days when Carolina Forest was literally a forest and catching just one Hwy 501 traffic light from the beach to Conway was considered an inconvenience.

The upcoming census report will likely put Conway over the 25,000-population hump, opening the city up to recruitment opportunities with regional and national site selectors that would have thrown

Conway in the "pass" pile based on that statistic alone. In many aspects, the last ten years of growth in the Carolina Forest area is tantamount to what can be expected for Conway over the next ten years. At the end of the day, economic development is all about improving the quality of life for its citizens. The meetings, lobbying, contracts, negotiations etc. are simply the means to this end. In no way am I implying or assigning blame to any official or entity, but I have to believe if the decision makers could go back in time, developing Carolina Forest's infrastructure to correlate with the rapid increase in population and business growth would have been on the top of their list. After all, if we recruit your

favorite store to open a mile from your house, but it takes 20 minutes of sitting in traffic to get there, have we really improved your quality of life?

At the Conway Chamber of Commerce, these are the kind topics we discuss on a weekly basis. Although it may



not be as apparent to all Horry County residents, if you live and/or work in Conway it is evident that the need for an additional bridge over the Waccamaw River has gone from moderate to critical. As the article in the Nov./Dec. issue of BIS already addressed our Lake Busbee Bridge and Bypass proposal, I will spare the details and simply ask you to visit [www.conwayscnw.com/bypass](http://www.conwayscnw.com/bypass) and sign our petition! Here, you can view a six-minute video detailing why this bypass and bridge is so important and how we aim to see this plan come to fruition.

As we dive into a new decade, I am very optimistic for the City of Conway's future. Of course, having 40,000 square feet of mixed-use retail recently available



for lease like the Jerry Cox building in downtown or the new Kingston Park project are encouraging, but its more than that. Last year I was fortunate enough to be involved in the downtown Conway Kingston Park project, where I witnessed over five separate public and private

entities set aside personal agendas to work together to achieve a common goal. This collaborative mindset coupled with sound decision making and responsible recruitment will help tip the scales from

simply managing future growth to thriving as a result.

For further information or if you just have a question call (843) 248-2273 or email [DParks@ConwaySCChamber.com](mailto:DParks@ConwaySCChamber.com).



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