The Racepath Neighborhood Revitalization Plan





Horry County Planning and Zoning Department

County Council Adopted – 1/21/2014

INTRODUCTION TO AREA PLANS IN HORRY COUNTY

In an effort to keep pace with the changes that are occurring throughout Horry County, County Council has authorized the creation of area plans for a number of communities. This plan has been developed to address a community located in eastern Horry County; the Racepath Community.

Area plans are designed to give members of the community the opportunity to discuss the direction that growth and development should take in their area. Area plans also allow citizens to make recommendations to County Council on how questions regarding development in their community should be approached. Area plans can be used to cover elements of the Horry County Comprehensive Plan, such as the land use element, in greater detail; they can also address issues that community members feel are important which are not discussed in the Comprehensive Plan.

The plan can then be revised and additional comments sought. Once an area plan has been finalized and accepted by County Council, it becomes a component of the Comprehensive Plan

that may be referenced when decisions that affect the specified area are made.

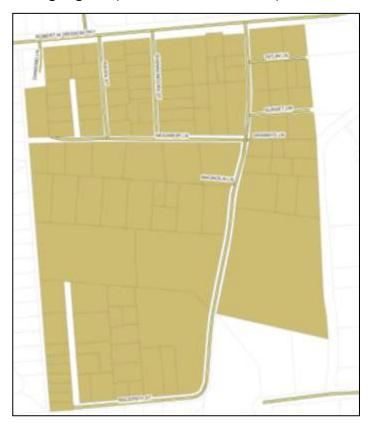
THE RACEPATH COMMUNITY PLANNING PROCESS

At the request of Horry County Council the Planning Department has undertaken a study of the Racepath Community; this plan represents the culmination of the planning effort.

Input was solicited and received from a multitude of individuals and groups within the Racepath Neighborhood over a nine month period including several community meetings during 2012 and 2013. During this time, a survey was conducted, soliciting responses from the neighborhood. From these responses, this plan was developed.

THE RACEPATH COMMUNITY

The Racepath Community is an unincorporated area of Horry County, completely surrounded by the incorporated city limits of Myrtle Beach. The community is bordered by Robert M. Grissom Parkway to the North, the backs of commercial buildings fronting Highway 501 to the East, Racepath Street to



the South and the Myrtle Beach neighborhood, Ramsey Acres, to the West.

Racepath is a "donut hole" of unincorporated Horry County property, surrounded entirely by the Myrtle Beach city limits. This jurisdictional donut hole means that the Racepath community does not receive city services, yet all of its neighbors do. Further, fire/rescue and police are serviced by Horry County rather than Myrtle Beach. Horry County responders must travel through the City to reach Racepath which may result in increased response time. Although the residents of Racepath may pay a slightly lesser tax rate and not be subject to the municipal code of the city, they also do not receive curbside garbage service and pay more money for their water and sewer services which are provided by the City of Myrtle Beach.

Racepath is comprised of 114 properties in approximately 50 acres. Eighty-eight properties in Racepath (77%) are smaller than ½ acre in size, twenty-two properties (19%) range between ½ acre and 2 acres in size, and the remaining four largest properties in Racepath range between 2 and over 6 acres in size. See Appendix One for a larger, detailed map of the Racepath Community.

The Racepath Community is an older, residential neighborhood with a low socio-economic standing and the majority of its residents are African-American. Most land-uses in the Racepath Community are of lower-density residential character, with the majority of dwelling units being old and in need of repairs. Along Robert M. Grissom Parkway, the neighborhood is platted into rectangular blocks with mostly stick-built houses. Further within Racepath, most lots are accessed only by Racepath Street and private shared-driveways. Lots are overcrowded with multiple, mainly manufactured homes. At least thirteen properties do not have road access and are landlocked.

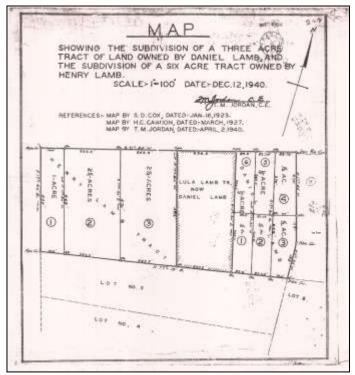
Recently, strides have been made to improve the quality of life in the Racepath Community. Facilities, such as the Racepath Community Park and Community Center provide much needed and appreciated space to live and play. Despite this effort, Racepath has been designated as a "Blighted Area" by standards defined in South Carolina Community Development Law.

It is the intent of this Neighborhood Plan to identify community goals, set measurable implementation strategies and to identify funding sources that will make the Racepath Community a better place.

HISTORY OF RACEPATH

The Racepath neighborhood developed out of tracts originally owned by Daniel Lamb in 1940. Over time, Lamb subdivided out parcels throughout the future Racepath community. By 1955, Lamb had divided the area between the streets that in the present day would be named Racepath Street, Shannondora Street, Grissom Parkway and Neighbor Lane into 12 lots. By 1966, Lamb had acquired and subdivided the property west adjacent to these tracts into 25 additional parcels. These two subdivisions also illustrate the roadways internal to the Racepath neighborhood which are now named Racepath Street, Neighbor Lane, Shannondora Street, Raven Street and Diamond Lane. These plats are attached in Appendices Six and Seven.

Zoning was not introduced into the Racepath community until 1987. Code Enforcement began in



Racepath in the early 1980s. Most of the structures that now exist in the neighborhood were built or moved into the area prior to 1980, meaning neither zoning nor code requirements were a consideration when the majority of the existing housing stock developed.

As the property which would become Racepath was divided by Daniel Lamb, houses and mobile homes were developed. Many of these original houses still

remain. The stick built homes in Racepath were typical of Southern lower income households. Mobile homes, too, were representative of the time period in which they were constructed. Maintenance of these homes, though, did not keep pace with the needs of the home, allowing them to fall into disrepair.

Most of the families that settled the Racepath neighborhood still live in the community. Properties and houses have been handed down from one generation to the next, many without Wills or the necessities of Probate Courts. This has resulted in increasingly complex property title confusion. These "Heirs' Property" parcels are throughout the Racepath Community. They prevent the large number of owners of these parcels from being able to sell the property, from receiving Federal Aid and from obtaining building permits.

POPULATION TRENDS IN THE RACEPATH COMMUNITY

The Racepath Community has experienced a significant population decrease of 30% since 2000. According to the 2010 Census, the Racepath Community has a population of 203 persons. In 2000, the population was 293.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The population reduction in the Racepath Community is atypical for Horry County and may be symptomatic of the issues giving rise to the need for this Neighborhood Plan.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT OPTIONS

The Racepath Neighborhood falls within a Federally designated Low to Moderate Income (LMI) area. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) determines LMI areas based upon family median income. The median family income for Horry County is \$51,400. LMI areas are those locations falling below 80% of the County's median family income, \$41,850. For the Census Tract that includes Racepath, the median family income is \$37,988. A

map showing all LMI areas in Horry County is attached as Appendix Five.

Because Racepath falls within an LMI area it is eligible for Federal Funding for a variety of projects within the community. Each year Horry County receives Federal funding from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to develop viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and expansion of economic opportunities, principally for low and moderate income persons. Horry County's Community Development office distributes this money to programs and projects in LMI areas through an annual competitive grant program.

Similar to the CDBG funding, HOME funding is Federal funding targeted at LMI areas and is designated for the creation of affordable housing for low income households.

Unfortunately, CDBG money cannot be used for any major repair, renovation or upgrade of mobile and manufactured homes. This policy, mandated by a Federal government agenda that looks to replace the nations mobile and manufactured housing stock with stick built homes, unfortunately prohibits curing

The Community Development Department also struggles to find partners willing to work on dilapidated mobile homes such as those found in Racepath.

HOME Funds can be used for major repairs of stick-built homes. These funds may provide much needed improvements to those homes within Racepath which qualify. HOME Funds also provide for Elderly Transport Units (ETU's) which provide temporary housing on site for the elderly who meet the necessary requirements of the ETU program.

Together CDBG and HOME may allow for significant investment of money into the Racepath Community.

The Racepath Community Neighborhood Plan addresses four broad topics:

- Public Safety
- Zoning & Code Enforcement
- Housing
- Public Infrastructure

Community goals are outlined under each topic and strategies for implementing these goals are detailed.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The first focus of this Area Plan is Public Safety. The Racepath Community has faced a crime problem for many years. Drug dealers openly sell drugs during all hours of the day and night. Illegal guns are toted throughout the streets of the community. In 1996, Horry County Police located a Community Oriented Policing Enforcement Unit (C.O.P.E.) within the neighborhood. The effect was profound. Crime dropped dramatically and the Racepath Community formed the Racepath Association which held "Take Back Our Streets" campaigns. Due to a series of circumstances including budget cuts and black mold, the COPE Unit was pulled from Racepath in 2005. Since its departure, crime has returned.

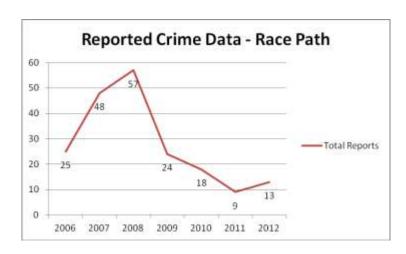
The City of Myrtle Beach has engaged in revitalization efforts in other neighborhoods surrounding Racepath. These efforts greatly improved the quality of life for the residents of those communities and reduced crime. Unfortunately, much of the criminal element moved to the Racepath neighborhood.

The residents of Racepath do not feel safe in their own community. Drug dealers, violence and

homelessness are an ever present threat, day and night. The Racepath Community is largely cut off from a strong police presence because it is geographically cut off from unincorporated Horry County and is surrounded entirely by the City of Myrtle Beach. This "donut hole" of non-city jurisdiction makes public safety a difficult dilemma.

Crime incident data indicates that the reporting of criminal activity has fallen in the Racepath Community since 2008. Rather than demonstrating a reduction in crime however, this data and information gathered from the community indicate that the reduction stems from an increasing fear to report crime in the Racepath neighborhood.

Although the primary focus of this plan must be to address the safety of the residents of this community, a secondary objective must be to empower the residents of the Racepath neighborhood.



COMMUNITY GOALS

- Increase the police presence in the Racepath Community.
- Encourage more community presence to combat negative elements.
- Encourage policy decisions that make Racepath a less inviting location for criminal activity.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Increase the police presence in the Racepath Community.

- Add a community police precinct within the neighborhood.
- Increase patrols throughout the community.
- Increase drug investigations and enforcement in the Racepath Community.
- Coordinate with the City of Myrtle Beach's Police force to assure that drug and criminal activity is not displaced to neighboring communities.
- Consider the installation of video cameras to assist in enforcement and prosecution of drug and violent crimes.
- Assure that a representative of the Horry County Police attend all community meetings.
- Consider adding additional police staff to more fully cover the Racepath neighborhood.

Encourage more community presence to combat negative elements

- Encourage Horry County Parks and Recreation to create and develop more after school programs for community youth.
- Work with the community to develop neighborhood watch programs



- focused on reporting and removing criminal and other suspicious activity from the neighborhood.
- Work with the community to organize litter cleanups to reduce the negative appearance of the neighborhood and foster community pride.
- Add entryway signage signifying entry into the Racepath neighborhood to foster community pride and an identifiable feature.

Encourage policy decisions that make Racepath a less inviting location for criminal activity.

- Utilize drug seizure and nuisance laws to seize and remove structures that are associated with drug and other criminal activity from the community.
- Encourage policy decisions that displace the criminal activity from the neighborhood.
- Work with private property owners to underbrush vacant lots to eliminate areas for criminal activity.
- Develop program to celebrate neighborhood accomplishments.
- Assure that any registered sex offenders within the Racepath community are in compliance with South Carolina Law.

Coordinate with the Horry County Court system to assign pretrial and probation community service workers to litter cleanup efforts.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

The majority of the Racepath Community is zoned MSF 6, allowing stick-built or manufactured homes on 6,000 square foot parcels. Despite this requirement, at least 20 parcels within this community have multiple structures on the same lot. One lot has a total of seven manufactured homes currently occupied on it, on less than an acre of property.

Zoning non-conformities are problematic from numerous standpoints, primarily the safety aspects of building separation. They create issues with building permitting and code enforcement. Fourteen homes were demolished in the Racepath Community in the last decade. These demolitions occurred because homes were not maintained and became unsafe, dangerous structures.

Many homes in the Racepath Community do not meet current building codes. Although assistance programs are available to financially help residents bring their homes up to code, non-compliance with zoning may prevent them from being able to receive building permits to repair or rehabilitate their homes.

Additional zoning districts may be considered which would allow for a wider variety of new housing stock without altering the density of housing currently allowed. The development of duplexes, apartments and other residential housing options may improve the likelihood of new investment within Racepath.

COMMUNITY GOALS

- Consider the adoption of policies and regulations that assist the community in resolving their existing zoning nonconformities.
- Encourage Code Enforcement to coordinate efforts with the community to resolve any code violations in a manner that does not result in displacement.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Consider the adoption of policies and regulations that assist the community in resolving their existing zoning nonconformities.



- Develop a Priority Investment Zone for the Racepath Community which would make many zoning legal nonconformities conform to zoning code.
- Work to prevent the dislocation of residents of the community due to zoning or other violations.
- Consider a community wide rezoning to a Multi-Residential Zoning District to allow for greater density development that more closely conforms to the needs of the neighborhood.

Encourage Code Enforcement to coordinate efforts with the community to resolve any code violations in a manner that does not result in displacement.

- Identify vacant and decrepit structures and work to remove or demolish them.
- Work with the community to identify potential code violations so that homeowners can work to address those problems before their homes become unsafe.
- Coordinate code enforcement with other funding entities such as CDBG to address possible violations without resulting in citations or potential condemnation.

Consider waiving or reducing fees to repair homes within the community.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Adequate housing is one of the biggest challenges for the residents of the Racepath Community today. Many homes within the Racepath community lack access to running water, sewer, heat, ventilation and light.

Horry County planning staff conducted a windshield survey of Racepath in October of 2012. Residential properties were evaluated for their structural conditions, their compliance with Building and Zoning Codes as well as their layout and livability. The results of this survey showed that a third (34%) of the residential properties in Racepath met the "Blighted" definition of the South Carolina Community Development Law (§ 31-10-10) due to being:

- Dilapidated
- Obsolete in meeting building of zoning codes
- Deteriorated
- Illegally used
- Abandoned; or,

• Lacking adequate ventilation, light or sanitary facilities.

An additional 13% of the surveyed properties are considered "Conservation Areas" defined by SC §31-10-10 as meeting a combination of three or more of above factors. Further, 29% of the structures were vacant. Combined, 76% of all properties are either "blighted", part of a "Conservation Area" or vacant. A number of structures are beyond repair and must be demolished.

Between 2001 and 2010, 7 homes were added to the residential home inventory and 14 were removed, resulting to a total of 112 residential structures in 2010.

Despite its problems, Racepath also has a number of well-kept houses. These mostly stick-built homes can be found within the three blocks of Robert M. Grissom Parkway. Many of these small detached single-family homes were built between 1940 and 1960 and are inhabited by an



aging population. A challenge and goal of this plan is to ensure that new owners will maintain these homes and prevent further dilapidation.

In stark contrast to the nicely platted and maintained properties and homes in the front section of Racepath, nineteen lots in Racepath are overcrowded with too many residential structures, primarily mobile homes. In several cases, homes have been placed across parcel lines of more than one lot.

As a result of its history, the Racepath Neighborhood and its residents have formed a close-knit community. Unfortunately, socioeconomic woes have led many of its residents to seek economic opportunities elsewhere, abandoning formerly occupied houses and properties. Today, despite the fact that some lots of Racepath are overcrowded, many other lots are vacant, undeveloped or simply abandoned.

One of the many results stemming from decades of socio-economic disinvestment in Racepath, the lack of adequate legal and/or regulatory

understanding of its residents has led to a myriad ownership issues due to the many heirs' properties in this community. Proper legal advice and the resolution of inadequate records and deeds could help solve the deadlock with many of these heirs' properties and could make lots developable for much needed new housing units.

COMMUNITY GOALS

- Encourage the repair and rehabilitation of existing housing inventory.
- Improve the quality and durability of housing stock in the Racepath Community.
- Increase the quantity of affordable housing.
- Resolve heirs property issues in the Racepath neighborhood.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Encourage the repair and rehabilitation of existing housing inventory.

& Coordinate with CDBG to locate



- additional funding sources to allow for the repair or rehabilitation of existing housing stock.
- Continue to fund repair and rehabilitation of housing within the Racepath Community with CDBG and HOME Funds.

Improve the quality and availability of housing stock in the Racepath Community.

- Remove dangerous and blighted structures where prudent.
- Encourage the development of a variety of permanent housing types in the Racepath neighborhood.
- Replace mobile and manufactured homes with more durable housing options.
- * Facilitate opportunities for home ownership.

Increase the quantity of affordable housing stock.

Coordinate with organizations to locate new affordable housing in the Racepath neighborhood.

- Encourage residential home developers to use zoning designations such as the MRD District that incentivize the development of affordable housing.
- Consider new incentives for the creation of affordable housing.
- Work with the Affordable and Workforce Housing Commission to study new ways to improve the quantity of new housing stock in the Racepath neighborhood.

Resolve heirs' property issues in the Racepath neighborhood.

Coordinate with the local and state Bar Associations to develop a pro bono Heirs Property Program to assist community members with their heirs' property issues.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Investment into the public infrastructure within the Racepath Community has been lacking for many years. There are currently no sidewalks in the neighborhood. The community center is a mobile home that was donated as surplus from Coastal Carolina University. Both the community center and community park are on leased lots. Stormwater systems are inadequate. Many roads that were proposed to be built in the 1940s have yet to be built, leaving parcels landlocked. The roads that have been built are substandard to current requirements.

Shannondora Street, Tatum Lane, Raven Street, and portions of Racepath Street and Neighbor Lane are part of the State Roadway System. All other roads in the Racepath Community are private roads, although Horry County does provide some maintenance to Magnolia Lane and sections of Racepath Street. A number of roads were platted by Daniel Lamb decades ago. Many of these roads were never built. Lamb also platted legal lots of record which required the building of

the aforementioned roads for access. Since the roadways were not built, a number of parcels in Racepath are landlocked.

Public street lights were installed along Racepath, Magnolia, Neighbor, Shannondora, and Raven Streets. These lights have bulletproof shields necessary to protect them. These lights are paid for by a private, anonymous resident.

A Community Center was opened in the Racepath neighborhood in 1996, with the aforementioned COPE Unit located within. For a number of reasons, the building that housed the Community Center was removed and replaced with a modular unit that was obtained from Coastal Carolina University. This building serves as the primary gathering place for community activity within the neighborhood including, summer camps, a computer lab, a small library and meeting facility.

A major infrastructure project is needed in Racepath that will improve the quality of life for its residents. Coordinating roadway, pedestrian and stormwater improvements would result in an immediate positive impact to the safety and aesthetic needs of the community.

No water or sewer service existed in Racepath as the community developed. Homes had wells and septic systems. Most homes now get their water from the City of Myrtle Beach, but although the city also offers public sewer service, many of the homes in Racepath remain on septic. Tap fees and a general distrust of the City of Myrtle Beach discourage residents from tying into the City Sewer Services. Inadequately sized and maintained septic tanks are still utilized throughout the Racepath community giving rise to environmental concerns.

After heavy rainfall events, low lying areas within Racepath often flood. Unfinished stormwater drainage caused by property ownership disputes and localized blockage caused by improperly discarded debris and litter have caused stormwater drainage ditches to function deficiently. Completing and maintaining the existing stormwater system will be crucial to ending the repetitive flood events.

Downstream water quality is a frequent concern, not for the Racepath neighborhood, but for the City of Myrtle Beach and Horry County at large. Addressing the existing stormwater issues may improve water quality and monitoring should take place to measure any potential results of such an effort.

A large percentage of the community walks to their destinations. However, there are no sidewalks constructed within the Racepath neighborhood. A safe pedestrian network should be considered, including the planting of street trees to buffer and shade the walkways. Sidewalk connections to destinations outside of Racepath should also be considered.

A County Park with a baseball field, pavilion and play ground is constructed in the middle of the community, however, it is developed on leased land. The current lease is near expiration and some concern exists over whether the lease will be renewed. Similarly, the existing community center is located on leased land near the entrance to the

Racepath neighborhood.

The existing park space is not functionally suitable for the needs of the Racepath neighborhood. The community frequently uses the pavilion, playground and basketball court amenities, but rarely uses the baseball fields. Any new park space should take into account the needs and wants of the community prior to the development of said site.

A permanent police substation should be part of any Community Center improvements in Racepath. Community-scale policing should go hand-in-hand with community events, such as afterschool programs, senior citizen events and other community information sessions and should be co-located in a Community Center that is spacious and fully functional for all community members.

A comprehensive approach to adding the needed infrastructure of Racepath should be undertaken. Sidewalks, street trees, street lights, drainage, roads, park space and a new Community Center should

be part of a phased capital investment plan to revitalize the Racepath Community.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

- Assure that adequate park and community space are provided within the Racepath neighborhood.
- Provide a safe and functioning stormwater network.
- Work toward providing a road system that is complete and up to Horry County standards.
- Assure that all necessary facilities are in place for full access to utilities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Assure that adequate park and community space are provided within the Racepath neighborhood.

Consider locating and purchasing land for a park within the Racepath Community.

- Consider locating and purchasing land for a Community Center within the Racepath Community.
- Determine the feasibility of co-locating both the park space and community center in same facility.

Provide a safe and functioning stormwater network.

- Coordinate with Horry County Stormwater Department to assure that proper drainage systems are installed and maintained within the Racepath neighborhood.
- Assure that stormwater and proper drainage is considered in any public infrastructure outlay in the Racepath Community.
- Coordinate with SCDOT on all stormwater/drainage improvements.
- Work to resolve Heirs' Property issues to allow for proper drainage easements.

Work toward providing a road system that is complete and up to Horry County standards.

- Research platted road rights-of-way within the Racepath Community.
- Coordinate with CDBG to improve roads within the community to County Standards.
- Consider adopting improved existing and new roadways into the County maintained road network.
- Assure that any new roads are constructed with sidewalks and street trees as a consideration.
- Assure that the streets are pedestrian friendly and safe.
- Assure that platted lots have road access.
- Coordinate with Coast RTA to assure that adequate public transportation is available.
- Coordinate with SCDOT on all roadway improvements.

Assure that all necessary facilities are in place for full access to utilities.

Explore financial assistance opportunities for water and sewer connection fees for all residents.



- Consider a Mesh Network of Internet service to provide less expensive, high speed internet to the Racepath neighborhood.
- Study existing septic tank systems for functionality and work to connect all homes to public sewer and water.

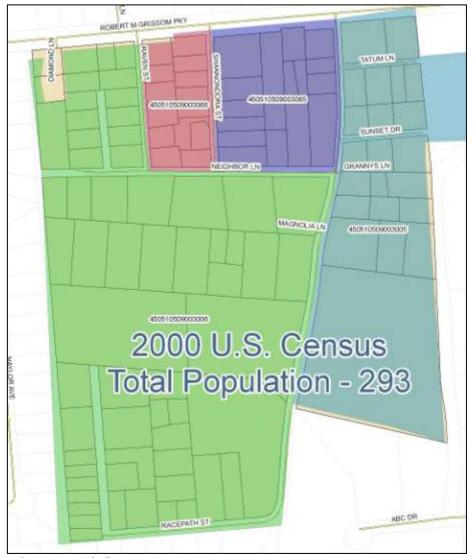


The Racepath Neighborhood





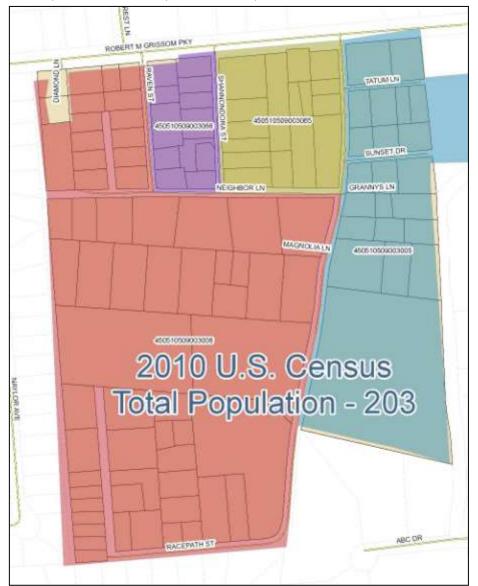
Racepath Community Census Map - 2000





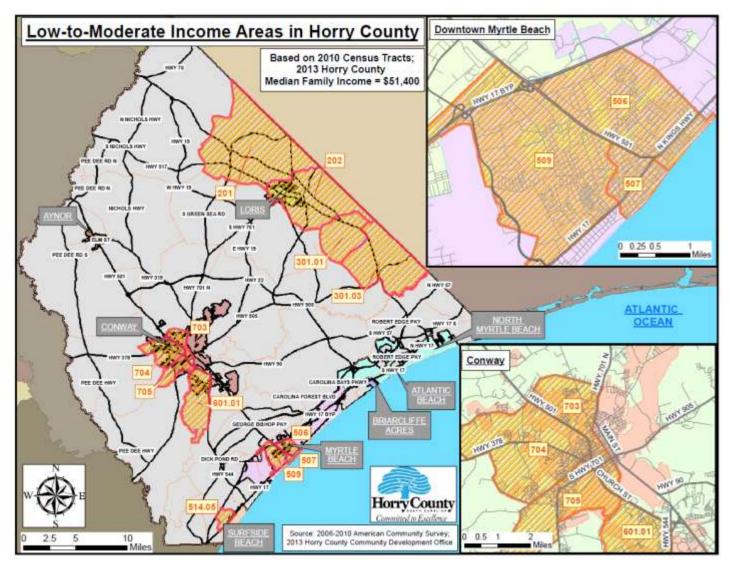
Source: US Census Bureau

Racepath Community Census Map - 2010





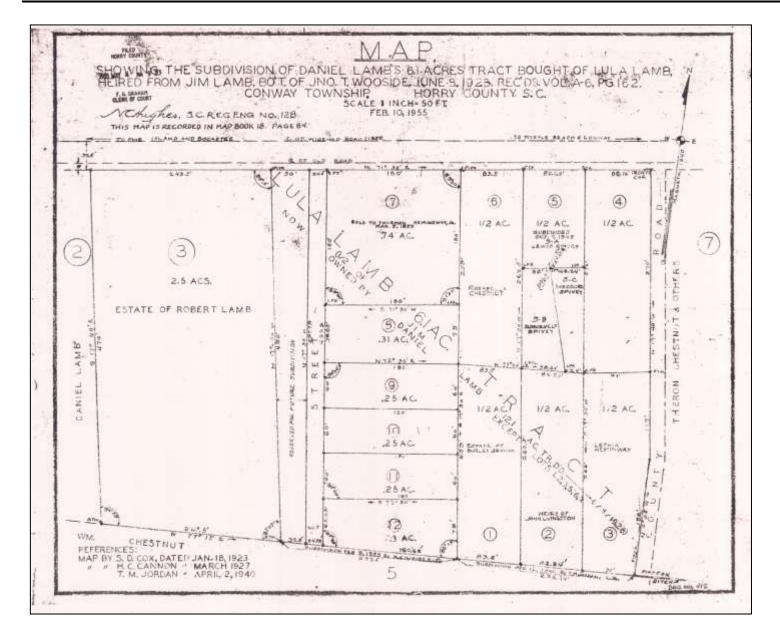
Source: US Census Bureau



Source: Horry County Community Development

The Racepath Neighborhood Revitalization Plan





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Potential new roads to be constructed in Racepath



