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AREA GROWTH RANKED 4TH IN NATION BY DATA

REGION'S CONTINUING EXPANSION
CHALLENGES PLANNERS, MARKETERS

| Rank | Metro area | Population 2005 | Population 2006 | Percent change |
|------|--|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | St. George, Utah | 119,188 | 126,312 | 6% |
| 2 | Bend, Ore. | 141,288 | 149,140 | 5.6% |
| 3 | Cape Coral-Fort Myers, Fla. | 544,196 | 571,344 | 5% |
| 4 | Myrtle Beach-Conway— North Myrtle Beach, S.C. | 227,520 | 238,493 | 4.8% |
| 5 | Baton Rouge, La. | 731,322 | 766,514 | 4.8% |
| 6 | Prescott, Ariz. | 198,841 | 208,014 | 4.6% |
| 7 | Raleigh-Cary N.C. | 951,809 | 991,551 | 4.5% |
| 8 | Ocala, Fla. | 303,448 | 316,183 | 4.2% |
| 9 | Gainesville, Ga. | 166,302 | 173,256 | 4.2% |
| 10 | Phoenix Mesa Scottsdale, Ariz. | 3,878,525 | 4,039,182 | 4.1% |
| 13 | Charlotte-Gastonia- Concord, N.C.-S.C. | 1,521,474 | 1,583,015 | 4% |
| 86 | Columbia, S.C. | 690,959 | 703,771 | 1.9% |

From 2005 to 2006, the Myrtle Beach area was the fourth-fastest-growing area in the nation, according to data from the U.S. Census Bureau released today. The Metropolitan Statistical Area identified as Myrtle Beach-Conway — North Myrtle Beach ranked 17th in the nation between 2000 and 2006, according to Census Bureau data. The news of a 21 percent population jump since 2000 will come as no big surprise to those who travel the roads, squeeze into the schools or stand in line at the area's home improvement stores and restaurants.

Here's something else not likely to shock you: The boom isn't going to stop anytime soon, thanks to the region's geography, weather, quality of life and seemingly endless supply of retiring baby boomers, experts said. All of which creates a challenge for planners and marketers trying to attract visitors, residents and jobs while maintaining that environment that drew people here in

the first place. "Everything has changed a lot, just since I've been here in the past eight years," said Sunshine Morris, who moved here to attend Horry-Georgetown Technical College and stuck around. "I do think it is getting busier, but I'm in the hospitality industry, so the busier we get, the more money we make. Granted, I have to leave earlier for work." The growth can mostly be attributed to the rapid influx of retirees, said Bob Becker, director of the Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University. Their movement has created more jobs in the service sector, bringing even more people to the area that weren't already there. "It's an attractive area, and the growth will continue," he said. "The numbers are going to increase as we see the baby boomers retire." And many of them aren't looking to retire in Florida, making the Carolinas one of the prime coastal destinations on the East Coast, he said. Since much of the land along Georgia's coast is wetland that cannot be developed, and much of North Carolina's coastline is protected by barrier islands, South Carolina is the next most logical option. "Hurricanes have gotten people thinking about a lot of issues in Florida. So, we are seeing a lot of redirection to the Carolinas," Becker said.

The market's diversity is what makes the Myrtle Beach area such an attractive spot in the state, said Gary Loftus, director of the Coastal Federal Center for Economic & Community Development. "Quality of life is overused, but it surely applies," he said. "It's so much better here than where they came from. We are offering more and more for everybody, in addition to golf. We've got the entertainment venues. There is more and more coming that people enjoy," Loftus said.

Horry County planners said the growth isn't anything new. "We have seen this for the past 20 years, the growth in Horry County," said Adam Parness, chairman of the Horry County Planning Commission. The County is going through a building boom, he said, drawing people from states such as New York, New Jersey and Ohio. Many retirees are looking to move to Horry County rather than Florida or the Gulf Coast because of hurricanes that have damaged those areas in recent years, said Janet Carter, county planning director. "If you want to move south, to the beautiful weather, without those



negatives, Horry County is probably your best bet,” Carter said. She said there is a wide range of housing available to newcomers, from condos in the Grande Dunes to mobile homes. The shopping, beach, golfing and availability of jobs also make the Myrtle Beach area attractive to young families, Parness said. “Especially with all the jobs available in our market and our area and the amenities that are provided here in Myrtle Beach and Horry County, it makes it an excellent place to start your family or to start a new life,” Parness said. Of course, along with growth comes the need for infrastructure, such as schools, roads and stormwater drainage, Carter said. The county should begin constructing roads on it, Ride 2 project list within the year, once local 1 percent sales tax starts being collected in May, she said. County planners are also working on a

comprehensive plan to deal with growth through 2025, Carter said. The Horry County School District expects a need for between 9 and 19 new schools in the next decade to accommodate between 11,000 and 20,000 new students, according to district projections.

Locals have learned to adjust in their growing community. They enjoy the benefits the growth brings – new stores and attractions – while dealing with the drawbacks, such as busier roads and longer lines at restaurants. New homes are planned near Sarah Wakefield’s house in Pine Lakes, one of the beach’s oldest neighborhoods. She doesn’t mind, enjoying the convenience of having grocery and drug stores right around the corner. “I’ve learned to avoid the heavy traffic times,” said Wakefield, who moved into Pine Lakes in 1985.

After living in surging areas such as Orlando, Fla., and Atlanta, Tammy O’Hare doesn’t understand the grumblings over Myrtle Beach’s growth spurt. She moved here nearly three years ago and is ready to have restaurants such as P.F. Chang’s, which plans to open in The Market Common, and experience a major theme park when the Hard Rock Park opens next year. “This is Orlando in the ‘70s,” she said. “It’s funny to me when people say, ‘It took 15 minutes to get from A to B on [U.S.] 501.’ Try sitting for an hour and a half on [Interstate] 4 in Orlando.” Myrtle Beach native Candi Cannon has watched as the beach grew up. All the new development doesn’t make her want to move away. “I’ve always wanted to live in a big city,” she said while pushing her 2-year-old son, Tre, in a stroller along S.C. 707. “Who’s to say in 20 more years what it will be?”

Growth from 2000 to 2006

Out of 100 metropolitan statistical area’s growth, Myrtle Beach—Conway—North Myrtle Beach ranked 17th in 2000-2006

| Rank | Metro area | Population 2000 | Population 2006 | Percent change |
|------|--|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1 | St. George, Utah | 90,354 | 126,312 | 39.8% |
| 2 | Greeley, Colo. | 180,861 | 236,857 | 31% |
| 3 | Cape Coral—Fort Myers, Fla. | 440,888 | 571,344 | 29.6% |
| 4 | Bend, Ore. | 115,367 | 149,1401 | 29.3% |
| 5 | Las Vegas—Paradise, Nev. | 1,375,738 | 1,777,539 | 29.2% |
| 6 | Provo—Orem, Utah | 376,778 | 474,180 | 25.9% |
| 7 | Naples—Marco Island, Fla. | 251,377 | 314,649 | 25.2% |
| 8 | Raleigh—Cary, N.C. | 797,025 | 994,551 | 25.8% |
| 9 | Gainesville, Ga. | 139,315 | 173,256 | 24.4% |
| 10 | Phoenix Mesa Scottsdale, Ariz. | 3,251,876 | 4,039,182 | 24.2% |
| 17 | Myrtle Beach—Conway— North Myrtle Beach, S.C. | 196,629 | 238,493 | 21.3% |
| 25 | Charlotte—Gastonia— Concord, N.C.-S.C. | 1,330,403 | 1,583,016 | 19% |

