

INTRODUCTORY SECTION





Keith Bustraan
County Administrator

843.958-4000
Fax: 843.958-4004
kbustraan@charlestoncounty.org
Lonnie Hamilton III Public Services Building
4045 Bridge View Drive, Suite B238
North Charleston, SC 29405

December 19, 2016

To the members of County Council and the citizens of Charleston County, South Carolina:

State law requires that all general-purpose local governments publish at the close of each fiscal year a complete set of financial statements, presented in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), and audited in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards by a firm of licensed certified public accountants. Pursuant to this requirement, we hereby issue the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for Charleston County, South Carolina, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016.

This report consists of management's representations concerning the finances of the County. Consequently, management assumes full responsibility for the completeness and fairness of presentation of all of the information presented in this report. To provide a reasonable basis for making these representations, management of the County has established a comprehensive internal control framework that is designed to ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations and County policies, and safeguards the County's assets. It is designed to compile sufficient reliable information for the preparation of the County financial statements in conformity with GAAP. Because the cost of internal controls should not outweigh their benefits, the County's comprehensive framework of internal controls has been designed to provide reasonable rather than absolute assurance that the financial statements will be free from material misstatement. As management, we assert that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, this financial report is complete and accurate in all material respects, and presents fairly the financial position and results of operations of the various funds and component units of the County.

Charleston County's financial statements have been audited by Scott and Company LLC, a firm of licensed certified public accountants. The goal of the independent audit was to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements of the County for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2016, are free of material misstatement. The independent audit involved performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depended on auditor's judgment, including the assessment of risk of material misstatement to the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and significant estimates made by management, and evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. The independent auditor concluded, based upon the audit, that there was sufficient and appropriate evidence for rendering an unmodified opinion that Charleston County's financial statements for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2016, are fairly presented in conformity with GAAP. The independent auditor's report is presented as the first component of the financial section of this report.

The independent audit of the financial statements of Charleston County was part of a federally mandated "Single Audit" that is designed to meet the special needs of federal grantor agencies. The standards governing Single Audit engagements require the independent auditor to report not only on the fair presentation of the financial statements, but also on the audited government's internal controls and compliance with legal requirements, with special emphasis on internal controls and legal requirements involving the administration of federal awards. These reports are available in Charleston County's separately issued *Supplemental Federal Financial Assistance Reports*.

GAAP requires that management provide a narrative introduction, overview and analysis to accompany the basic financial statements in the form of Management's Discussion and Analysis (MD&A). This Letter of Transmittal is designed to complement, and should be read in conjunction with MD&A. Charleston County's MD&A can be found immediately following the report of the independent auditors.

PROFILE OF THE GOVERNMENT

The County of Charleston was established by the state of South Carolina on April 9, 1948, under the provisions of Act 681 of 1942. The County operates under a Council-Administrator form of government under the S.C Home Rule Act of 1975. Policy-making and legislative authority is vested in a governing council consisting of nine Council members. The Council is elected to single member districts on a partisan basis.

Charleston County Council is responsible for, among other duties, passing ordinances and policies, approving the budget, appointing committee members, and hiring the County's Clerk of Council, County Administrator, and appointing the Internal Auditor and Attorney. The Administrator is responsible for implementing the policies and ordinances of the governing council, overseeing the day-to-day operations of government (except those services provided by countywide elected officials), and for appointing the heads of the various non-elected or appointed County departments. The County has approximately 2,500 employees.

Charleston County provides or supports a broad range of services that include, but are not limited to:

- Public safety - countywide law enforcement (Sheriff's Office), detention facilities, emergency preparedness plans to include activation of the County's Emergency Operations Center in an event of a disaster, as well as fire protection in the Awendaw McClellanville Consolidated Fire Protection District, the East Cooper Fire District, the West St. Andrew's Fire District, and the Northern Charleston County Fire District
- Veterans' assistance
- Health-related assistance - Emergency Medical Services (EMS), alcohol and other drug abuse services, indigent health care, and social services
- Voter registration
- Rural street and drainage maintenance and urban maintenance upon request of the municipalities
- Waste disposal and recycling
- Planning and zoning administration
- Criminal, civil, probate, and family court administration in county Magistrates' court and in State courts with the support of the elected Clerk of Court
- Public defender assistance funding to the Public Defender's office, run by an appointed official
- Property assessments, tax billing (Auditor's office), collection and disbursement to appropriate entities/municipalities (Treasurer's office)
- Mosquito control

Blended component units, although legally separate entities, are, in substance, part of the primary government's operations and are included as part of the primary government. The Charleston Development Corporation has been shown in the government-wide statements in the governmental activities, and in the fund financial statements in other governmental funds.

Discretely presented component units are reported in a separate column in the Statement of Net Position and in the Statement of Activities in order to emphasize that they are legally separate from the primary government, and to differentiate their financial position and results of operations from those of the primary government.

The following entities are being reported as discretely presented component units:

- Charleston County Library (CCL)
- Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission (CCPRC)
- Cooper River Park and Playground Commission (CRPPC)
- North Charleston District (NCD)
- St. Andrew's Parish Parks and Playground Commission (SAPPPC)
- St. John's Fire District (SJFD)
- St. Paul's Fire District (SPFD)
- Charleston County Volunteer Rescue Squad (CCVRS)

Additional information on these eight legally separate entities can be found in Note I.B. in the Notes to Financial Statements starting on page 60.

The annual budget serves as the foundation for Charleston County's financial planning and control. All agencies of the County are required to submit requests for appropriation to the County's Budget Office by February 1 each year. The County Administrator presents the proposed budget to County Council for review during May. Council is required to hold public hearings on the proposed budget, and to adopt a final budget each year no later than June 30, which is the close of Charleston County's fiscal year. The appropriated budget is prepared by fund, function (e.g., public safety), and department (e.g., Sheriff's Office).

The legal level of budgetary control is determined by County Council at the individual fund level. Expenditures by department, sub-organizational level, and major category (personnel, operating, and capital outlay) are further defined in the budget document. The County Administrator has the authority to make transfers between major expenditure categories within departments and between departments within the same fund. The Administrator has further delegated to five Deputy County Administrators the authority to transfer between departments under their authority. County Council may effect changes in fund totals through amendment to the budget ordinance or the County Administrator has the authority to change fund totals, with the exception of the general fund, if available sources (revenues, transfer in, and fund balance) differ from the budget.

Budget-to-actual comparisons are provided in this report for each individual governmental fund for which an appropriated annual budget has been adopted. For the general fund, this comparison is presented on pages 42-44 as part of the Basic Financial Statements for the governmental funds. For governmental funds, other than the general fund, with appropriated annual budgets, this comparison is presented in the nonmajor governmental fund subsection of this report, which begins on page 149.

LOCAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND OUTLOOK

Charleston County has a robust and thriving economy driven by continued investment and expansion in growth industries and the stability and diverse backbone of mature industries. Growth industries include: Advanced Manufacturing (Aerospace and Automotive); Information Technology (IT) and High Tech; Defense, Intelligence & Cybersecurity; Warehouse, Distribution and Logistics; Corporate Headquarters and Back office, Medical and Life Sciences. These industries have led Charleston County's distinguished Economic Development success in recent years and are forecast to continue positive growth. Mature industries include: the Port of Charleston, Hospitality and Tourism, Military, Higher Education and Manufacturing which provide a solid foundation to the region's economic climate.

Economic Conditions and Outlook for Charleston County's Growth Industries:

Advanced Manufacturing- Encompassing the Aerospace and Automotive sectors, advanced manufacturing

continues on a positive growth trajectory with the arrival of top-tier aerospace suppliers investing since Boeing landed. Boeing's success in Charleston has resulted in continued investment toward new capabilities and facilities such as a paint facility, a research and technology campus, a design center, and a propulsion operation. As both Mercedes-Benz Vans and Volvo both build their manufacturing facilities in the Tri-County region, a healthy automotive supplier network will emerge to support these facilities.

IT & High Tech- The IT and high tech industry is progressing with the leadership of organizations such as the Charleston Digital Corridor amongst other entrepreneurial endeavors, as the vision of the "Silicon Harbor" is being adapted because of rapid growth in this industry. These technology companies, like BoomTown!, are often considered "homegrown," because talent and capital investment are sourced locally. The popularity of events like DIG South represent obvious expansion in entrepreneurial resources and interest in Charleston County's High Tech sector.

Defense, Intelligence & Cybersecurity- Defense industry continues to thrive in Charleston with intelligence and cybersecurity leading the way. Investments from this industry have bolstered the area's intelligence community as organizations such as the Charleston Defense Contractors Association continue to strengthen and add local synergy to the dynamic industry. Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center (SPAWAR) Atlantic alone has a \$3.4 billion statewide economic impact and supports over 27,400 jobs with a payroll of \$1.3 billion.

Warehouse, Distribution and Logistics- Firms serving the growing aerospace and automotive clusters continue to locate in Charleston County. Further, approximately 20 million square feet of additional industrial distribution space is slated for construction in the Charleston region during the next few years.

Medical & Life Sciences Industry – Managing over \$230 million in annual research funding, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) is a leading research and teaching hospital in the southeast. Technologies founded at MUSC have been the start to almost 40 new businesses in the area, while a Clemson University/MUSC partnership brings Clemson's engineering and MUSC's biomedicine capabilities together to foster a bioengineering knowledgebase in Charleston. Charleston continues to gain international recognition as an emerging biomedical market, and with the leadership of MUSC, Charleston is becoming a globally competitive location for biomedical business and talent.

The region's medical industry accounts for over ten percent of the area's total employment and is anchored by MUSC. The majority of this employment is currently in Charleston's seven area hospitals - five private regional hospitals, MUSC and the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. Charleston is home to more than 35 medical device and pharmaceutical manufacturers, and more than 50 research laboratories and development companies. Furthermore, the Foundation for Research Development is paving the way for investors, industry, and entrepreneurs to collaborate. MUSC's new \$350 million children's hospital is scheduled to open in 2019 as well.

Economic Conditions and Outlook for Charleston County's Mature Industries:

Port of Charleston – The Port of Charleston is the fourth largest container port along the U.S. East and Gulf Coasts while almost a quarter of the US population resides within 500 miles of Charleston, making the South Carolina Ports Authority (SCPA) a popular destination for outbound and inbound cargo. The SCPA is comprised of seaport facilities in the cities of Charleston, North Charleston and Georgetown. The SCPA owns and operates five facilities located in Charleston harbor and these facilities employ approximately 500 people. With facilities that handle containerized, break-bulk, project cargo and roll-on/roll-off cargoes, the SCPA annually handles system-wide shipments valued at \$63.6 billion and helps facilitate the employment of an estimated 260,800 residents of the State of South Carolina. The Port of Charleston's current \$2 billion capital improvement plan includes the only new container terminal on the East Coast and will expand capacity by 50 percent.

The Port of Charleston had a ten percent increase in cargo container volume in calendar year 2015. With the addition of the Inland Port in Greer, the Port of Charleston's reach is extended 212 miles inland and provides shippers with access to more than 95 million consumers within a one-day drive.

The Port of Charleston harbor deepening project will deepen the harbor to accommodate post-Panamax vessels that will have access to the East Coast once the Panama Canal expansion is completed. The construction phase is expected to begin in 2017, and will deliver a channel depth of 52 feet and entrance channel depth of 54 feet, as well as enlarged turning basins. Funding to deepen the harbor will come from both the Federal and State governments. The SCPA's fiscal year 2016 capital improvement program calls for \$165.6 million in development and enhancements of new and existing facilities, with \$73.3 million slated for the on-going construction of the new container terminal on the

former Navy Base. The new terminal is scheduled to open in 2019. “The harbor deepening project has progressed more quickly than any federal deepening project to date, with tremendous support by elected officials on all levels – local, state and federal – as well as business leaders and the community” (source:scspa.org).

Hospitality and Tourism Industry – With continued national recognition, the Charleston region attracted over 2.44 million visitors in 2015, up from 2.43 million visitors in 2014 generating an economic impact of \$3.68 billion. In 2015, hotel occupancy rates were 78.3 percent and the average daily rate for lodging was \$152.99. The average expenditure per visitor per trip was \$869. The hospitality industry directly employs 31,315 people in Charleston County, accounting for 15.9 percent of the workforce.

Restaurants in Charleston multiply and flourish, nourished by a constant flow of aspiring and accomplished chefs coupled with an increasingly affluent Charleston visitor. *The New York Times*, *Southern Living*, *Bon Appétit*, and *Wine Spectator* have all praised area restaurants where seafood, nouvelle and southern cooking predominate in the over 100 restaurants in downtown Charleston alone.

Charleston offers a vast array of festivals and events that bring tourists to the region. These include cultural events such as the annual Spoleto and Piccolo Spoleto festivals, as well as sports events like the Family Circle Cup (now Volvo Cars Open) tennis tournament, and the annual Cooper River Bridge Run.

In August 2012, the PGA Championship was held at Kiawah Island. Approximately 210,000 spectators visiting the Charleston area generated \$92 million in direct spending, \$26 million in labor income, and \$75 million in media exposure. The event was seen in 100 countries around the world. In 2015, the PGA announced that the 2021 PGA Championship will return to the Ocean Course on Kiawah Island.

Tourists arrive in Charleston from land, sea, and air. The region sees vast numbers of tourists who drive to Charleston for its charm and hospitality. In addition, the centrally located Charleston International Airport brings in tourists from around the world. The airport offers daily non-stop service to 19 cities and 24 airports in the United States and Canada. Carriers include American Eagle, Continental, Delta, JetBlue, United Express, US Airways and Southwest. In addition, Silver Airways started flying out of Charleston on March 19, 2015. Silver Airways is offering daily flights to Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa, and Orlando. New air service was added in November 2015. Alaska Airlines now offers flights between Charleston and Seattle. In addition, JetBlue offers daily nonstop service to Fort-Lauderdale-Hollywood (FLL) International Airport.

The Charleston International Airport saw a record number of arriving and departing passengers in 2015. A \$189 million expansion project added five new gates and an eight-lane consolidated security checkpoint in addition to other improvements to handle additional demand.

The past few years have seen the emergence of a new facet to Charleston's tourism market - the cruise ship industry. Both Carnival Cruise Lines and Celebrity Cruise Lines have chosen to make Charleston a departure and arrival point. In addition, many other cruise lines (Holland America, Oceana, Princess, Costa, P&O, Aida, Regent Seven Seas, and Crystal Cruises) bring their ships to Charleston as a port of call. The cruise business has an estimated \$37 million annual impact on the Charleston market. Carnival Cruise has added five more departures for the Carnival Sunshine. The Sunshine will offer cruises of between two and ten days between Charleston and ports in the Bahamas, St. Thomas, Antigua, Martinique, St. Kitts, and San Juan. In addition, Carnival will add Bermuda as a cruise destination next year.

Military - The military and the local military supply chain makes a significant annual economic impact to the region. There are 22,000 active-duty reserve personnel, civilians and civilian contractors employed in the region by the area's defense facilities. In total, the military provides an annual economic impact on the Charleston region estimated at \$6.4 billion.

The Air Force portion of Joint Base Charleston is one of three military transport service aerial ports on the Atlantic seaboard. It provides airlift support for military installations in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and South America. The base is home to the 437th Airlift Wing and its squadron of over 50 C-17 transport planes that are currently serving a vital supply role to military personnel in the Middle East. The Naval Consolidated Brig which houses prisoners from all branches of the armed services is located on the Joint Base Charleston campus. The brig has 479 cells and can house 272 military prisoners.

SPAWAR, the Nuclear Power Training Command, the Nuclear Power Training Unit, and the Army's Combat Equipment Group Afloat and Surface Deployment Distribution Commands remain strong contributors to Charleston's defense industry.

Higher Education – There are 26 colleges and universities offering a range of two-year, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs in Charleston. The five largest are: Trident Technical College, with 15,043 students; the College of Charleston with 11,531 students; Charleston Southern University with an enrollment of 3,621; The Citadel with 3,506 students; and the Medical University of South Carolina with 2,992 students.

Trident Technical College's Aeronautical Studies division has made outstanding strides in preparing students for the aviation industry. Students choose one of three tracks; aircraft assembly, aircraft maintenance, or avionics. Construction of a 215,000 sq ft, \$79 million aeronautical training facility is scheduled to start in 2016 with completion in 2018. Primary funding for the project comes from the State and Charleston County.

Currently under construction, The Zucker Family Graduate Education Center will serve as the academic anchor of the Clemson University Restoration Institute (CURI). The center will offer graduate-level engineering courses and advanced degrees to engineers interested in new opportunities in the job market. The CURI campus is also home to the newest and most advanced wind-turbine drive train testing facility. The center is capable of full-scale highly accelerated mechanical and electrical testing of advanced drivetrain systems for wind turbines with a 7.5 MW and a 15 MW test bays, positioning Charleston as an energy innovation leader.

Meanwhile, the Lowcountry Graduate Center, a partnership of five universities across the state and located right off I-526 in North Charleston, opened the doors of their new facility to serve working professionals, enabling them “to grow their career right here in the greater Charleston area.” (source:lowcountrygraduatecenter.com)

Manufacturing – In July of 2016, Mercedes-Benz Vans broke ground on an expansion project on their Sprinter Van facility at the North Charleston location. This \$500 million project will create 1,200 new manufacturing jobs. The U.S. is the second largest market for the Sprinter van.

MAJOR COUNTY INITIATIVES



Charleston County's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) has joined the White House's Data Driven Justice initiative to implement reforms to safely reduce the jail population and create a more effective local criminal justice system. This national initiative is a bipartisan coalition of 67 communities, the only one in South Carolina, who have committed to using data-driven strategies to provide alternatives to jail for low-level offenders with mental health and substance use disorders and to enhance the pretrial process. The CJCC's initiatives in jail reform were launched earlier when the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded the group \$2.25 million to implement reforms. Charleston County is one of 11 jurisdictions in the country that was chosen to receive funding and access to expert technical assistance to implement a plan for reform. The CJCC's goal is to reduce the jail population by 25 percent in the next three years.

With the support of the **Sheriff's Department**, the Turning Leaf Project began as a response to the lack of services for current and former inmates in Charleston, SC. Its intent is to change participant's attitudes, thinking, and behavior – moving them from antisocial to prosocial patterns. Twenty-seven men participated in the Turning Leaf Project this past year in lieu of prison. All 27 male participants were released from jail with employment, which supports them throughout the class time. Turning Leaf has earned public accolades, gained wide acceptance by the criminal justice system and demonstrated an impact on changing criminal patterns of behavior in program graduates.

Highlighting the theme, *Public Works Always There*, sponsored by the American Public Works Association, the **Public Works Department** conducted outreach activities to grow awareness and educate the general public about the value, necessity and careers of public works in our daily lives. Outreach efforts included:

- Book donations of *Chipper's Adventures in Public Works* to the 16 Charleston County Public Libraries.
- Presentations to Charleston County School District students and after-school program participants of Charleston County Libraries about the work Public Works performs including roads, drainage and water quality.

- Representatives sharing a story time reading of *Chippers Adventures in Public Works* with kindergarten and first grade students.
- Interactive activities with Stormwater and Mosquito Control for grades 2 through 5.

The **Zoning and Planning Department** was awarded a federal Historic Preservation grant from the National Park Service (administered by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History) to fund an update to the Charleston County Historical and Architectural Survey. Citizens were invited to a workshop for input to help identify potential properties for inclusion on the Historical and Architectural Survey. Economic development programs rely on survey information to attract investors to communities and to promote heritage tourism. Survey information provides educators, civic organizations, and interested citizens with a basis for learning about the history of their community and making decisions about the care of historic properties.

The **Community Development Department** sought input from citizens to identify community needs that were eligible for funding from the County's Urban Entitlement program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Data gathered from the survey assists County staff in ranking the needs eligible for funding, which will range from community infrastructure projects and rehabilitation of substandard housing to homeless shelter operations and affordable housing development.

The **Environmental Management Department** was awarded the *Snail Award* for raising awareness about the availability to compost restaurant food scraps. Area farmers purchase compost to apply to their soil and chefs purchase produce from local farmers, which closes the composting loop. Ultimately, organic waste is diverted from disposal in the landfill and is used to make Charleston County compost. The compost facility occupies 28 acres, employs 18 people and processes 100 percent of the yard waste generated and accepted at the landfill. Additionally, the County was the first in the state to initiate food waste composting.

The **Board of Elections and Voter Registration** partnered with the Charleston Charter School of Math and Science as part of a pilot program highlighting the *Vote in Honor of a Veteran* initiative. The 16 week program was embedded into the curriculum and included:



- A visit from a veteran who shared his experiences serving in the military and conveyed the importance of democracy and voting.
- An assignment for students based on that visit.
- A visit by a Board of Elections and Voter Registration representative who taught a lesson on voting procedures and gave students the opportunity to register to vote and sign up to be poll workers.
- A final veteran visit to the classroom along with a mock election for students.

The **Consolidated 9-1-1 Center** was recognized as the Communications Center of the Year for South Carolina by the South Carolina chapters of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO). The annual award is presented to the center that has exemplified outstanding professionalism, leadership and innovation to the community and has contributed to the advances of Public Safety Communications through the use of technology, management and training of staff.

The Charleston County **Greenbelt Program**, funded by the Transportation Sales Tax approved in a county-wide referendum on November 2, 2004, has protected more than 20,000 acres of rural and urban land. Other important facts and figures:

- Total acres protected to date: 20,535 (16,736 in rural areas and 790 in the urban areas)
- Total funds awarded to date: \$94 million (\$67 million for rural projects and \$27 million for urban projects)
- \$76 million (81 percent of funds) was awarded to purchase 5,700 acres of public parks and green spaces.

Charleston County had the rare privilege of being selected as one of 20 communities across the nation to compete for the National Civic League's All-America City Award, and was the only County selected this year. Every year the Civic League selects the best communities across the nation to go to Denver, Colorado and be a part of a competition to select 10 All-America communities.



Awards and Acknowledgements:

Charleston County Government's offices, departments and employees have been honored with numerous awards and recognitions in FY 2016. These awards reflect Charleston County employees' dedication to providing the best services to our citizens.

- The **Human Resources Department** developed and implemented a series of Professional Development Programs open to all employees interested in improving their professional effectiveness. Additional events included on-site Lunch and Learns sessions with topics included Financial Wellness, Health, Nutrition, and Stress Reduction.
- The Charleston County Consolidated 9-1-1 Center was named the 2015 Communication Center of the Year for South Carolina by the South Carolina chapters of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO). The Center also earned reaccreditation by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED) for its Emergency Fire Dispatch and Emergency Medical Dispatch.
- The Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) awarded its **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** for the 28th consecutive year to Charleston County for its Fiscal Year 2015 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting given to governments that demonstrate a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to communicate clearly the County's financial story. In order to be awarded a Certificate of Achievement, a government must publish an easily readable and efficiently organized comprehensive annual financial report. This report must satisfy both generally accepted accounting principles and applicable legal requirements. A Certificate of Achievement is valid for a period of one year. We believe that Charleston County's current report continues to conform to the Certificate of Achievement Program requirements, and we are submitting it to GFOA to determine its eligibility for another certificate.
- Charleston County also received its 27th consecutive **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** for its Fiscal Year 2016 budget from GFOA. According to the GFOA, the award reflects the commitment of Charleston County Government and its staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting. The award was given based not only on how well the County budgets its funds, but also on how well it communicates to the public how the money is spent. The Fiscal Year 2017 budget was submitted to the GFOA and we believe it will receive the award.
- Charleston County maintained its AAA bond rating with Standard & Poor's Ratings Services, Moody's Investors Service, and Fitch Ratings.

The preparation of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report was made possible by the dedicated service of the entire staff of the Charleston County's Finance Department. Special thanks go to the team headed by Carla Ritter, who with the assistance of Laurie Hagberg, Chrisanne Porter, and Barbara Ford of the Finance Department produced the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, and coordinated the audit with the external auditors. Substantial contributions were also made by several financial staffs throughout the County: Mack Gile, and Catherine Ksenzak from the Budget Office; Andrew Smith and Julie Riley-Hollar from the Treasurer's Office; Lisa Murray from the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services; Jean Sullivan from Grants Administration; Jackie Proveaux from the Public Works Department; and Reggie Fuller of the Economic Development Office. Substantial assistance also came from the staff members of the County Administrator and Deputy Administrator for Finance. Thanks are also extended to the staff of Scott and Company LLC, the external auditors, for their efforts in assisting the County produce this Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

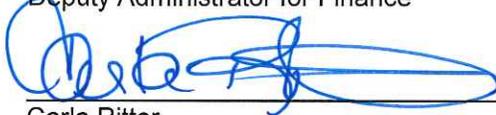
In addition, Charleston County staff would like to acknowledge the leadership and support of Charleston County Council in making this report possible.



Keith Bustran
County Administrator



Corine Altenhein
Deputy Administrator for Finance



Carla Ritter
Finance Director