



# *Town of Bethany Beach* **2023 Comprehensive Plan**

*Adopted on August 18, 2023  
Certified by the Governor on January 16, 2024*

Prepared by the  
Institute for Public Administration  
[www.ipa.udel.edu](http://www.ipa.udel.edu)



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC  
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION

TOWN OF  
**BETHANY BEACH**  
*2023 Comprehensive Plan*

Sussex County, Delaware

Adopted by the Mayor and Council on August 18, 2023; Resolution Number 2023-3

Certified by the Governor on January 16, 2024

Prepared by

Institute for Public Administration

Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy & Administration

University of Delaware



UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE  
**BIDEN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC  
POLICY & ADMINISTRATION**

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**The 2023 Town of Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan**

**Town of Bethany Beach, Sussex County, Delaware**

**Resolution Number 2023-3**

**BY THE MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL OF BETHANY BEACH**

**APPROVING AND ADOPTING BY RESOLUTION**

**THE 2023 TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

WHEREAS, Title 22, Section 702 of the Delaware Code authorizes Delaware municipalities to prepare a Comprehensive Plan, for the purpose of encouraging the most appropriate uses of the physical and fiscal resources of the municipality and coordinating municipal growth, development and infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties and the State;

WHEREAS, the Charter of the Town of Bethany Beach authorizes the Town Council to exercise its powers in the interest of good government and the safety, health, and public welfare of the Town, its inhabitants and affairs, including but not limited to the power to provide for and preserve the health, peace, safety, cleanliness, ornament, good order and public welfare;

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethany Beach's comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2017 and requires revisions to account for physical changes and expansion which have since occurred in both the built and natural environments of the community;

WHEREAS, The Town of Bethany Beach Planning and Zoning Commission has prepared and approved, in consultation with the public, interested parties, and government agencies, a 2023 Comprehensive Plan for the Bethany Beach Area, including the Town of Bethany Beach and adjacent areas, which articulates an overall vision for the community's future, including goals, objectives, policies and recommendations for achieving that vision and has conducted a duly advertised public hearing for public review and comment, and recommends approval and adoption of the 2023 Town of Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan by Resolution of the Mayor and Town Council of Bethany Beach;

WHEREAS, The 2023 Town of Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan will be the foundation for revision or improvement of the Town's zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, housing codes, potential annexation plans and other implementation tools; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Town Council of the Town of Bethany Beach, Sussex County, Delaware:

To serve as a guide for the purpose contained in Title 22, Section 701 of the Delaware Code and the Charter of the Town of Bethany Beach, specified above, The 2023 Town of Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan is hereby approved and adopted and made effective as the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Bethany Beach, superseding all previous Plans, pending certification by the Governor, on this 18 day of August, 2023.

TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH

Rosemary Hardiman Rosemary Hardiman

Lew Killmer Lew Killmer

Jerry Morris Jerry Morris

Patrick Sheplee Patrick E. Sheplee

Scott Edmonston Scott Edmonston

Ron Calef Ron Calef

Mickey Hinman Mickey Hinman

Attest Molly Dasey



STATE OF DELAWARE  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

TATNALL BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR

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January 18, 2024

The Honorable Rosemary Hardiman  
Mayor, Bethany Beach  
214 Garfield Pkwy.  
Bethany Beach, DE 19930

RE: Certification of 2023 Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan

Dear Mayor Hardiman,

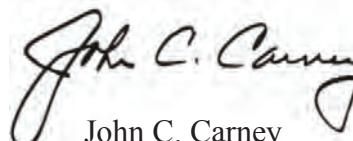
I am pleased to inform that the Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Bethany Beach, adopted August 18, 2023, is hereby certified.

The certification signifies that:

- (1) The submitted Comprehensive Plan complies with the requirements of Title 22, Section 702 of the [Delaware Code](#).
- (2) The Office of State Planning Coordination has applied all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan review process, evaluated the components of the plan, and provided a recommendation regarding the status of the plan.
- (3) In accordance with Title 22 Section 702 (c), should the Town of Bethany Beach exercise its authority to establish municipal zoning regulations pursuant to Chapter 3 of Title 22, [Delaware Code](#), it shall, within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development or revision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the uses of land provided for in the comprehensive development plan.
- (4) The Town of Bethany Beach has worked with the State to incorporate comments before adopting the Comprehensive Plan and will not enact any significant or substantive changes to the Comprehensive Plan adopted August 18, 2023.

Thank you for working with the State to complete this process and for the Town's diligence to ensure the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Carney".

John C. Carney  
Governor, State of Delaware

# INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This plan was prepared by members of the Town of Bethany Beach's Planning and Zoning Commission and Town Council with assistance from the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), a unit within the Joseph R. Biden, Jr. School of Public Policy & Administration at the University of Delaware. IPA links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management and information needs of local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. IPA assists agencies and local governments through direct staff assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums.

Comprehensive plans produced by IPA are a true team effort. IPA Associate Director Troy Mix manages IPA's planning efforts. William DeCoursey served as project manager for the Town of Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan Project. Mapping and geo-spatial analysis was performed by Nicole Minni.

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# TOWN, COUNTY, AND STATE OFFICIALS

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Vice Mayor	Lew Killmer
Secretary/Treasurer	Jerry Morris
Councilperson	Patrick Sheplee
Councilperson	Scott Edmonston
Councilperson	Ron Calef
Councilperson	Mickey Hinman

## TOWN OF BETHANY BEACH PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

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Council Representative	Scott Edmonston
Member	Diane Boyle Fogash
Member	John Gaughan
Member	Kathy Shorter
Member	Mark Bauernhuber
Building Inspector	Susan Frederick

## SUSSEX COUNTY

County Administrator	Todd F. Lawson
Planning & Zoning Office Director	Jamie Whitehouse

## STATE OF DELAWARE

Governor	John C. Carney, Jr.
Senate	Gerald W. Hocker, Senator 20th District
House of Representatives	Ronald E. Gray, Representative 38th District
Office of State Planning Coordination	David Edgell, AICP, Director

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# CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND

## 1-1. AUTHORITY TO PLAN

According to the provisions of Title 22, Chapter 7 and Title 29, Chapter 92 of the Delaware Code, a Comprehensive Plan is a document prepared and adopted by a Town, coordinated with its County, and reviewed and certified by the State of Delaware. A Comprehensive Plan contains a long-term community vision; goals and objectives; and policies and projects for the physical growth, revitalization, conservation, preservation, and development of the community. The Plan respects tradition and upholds individual property rights. The plan is by nature of general interest. It is based on community participation and open communication. It contains text, data analysis, maps, and graphics. A Plan defines a municipal development strategy, setting forth the jurisdiction's position on population and housing growth within the municipality. It also details existing and future land use, often making general recommendations on potential zoning and regulatory approaches. Community economic development; community design; expansion of boundaries through potential annexation; development in adjacent areas; redevelopment of existing deteriorated and blighted areas; existing and enhanced community character; community facilities; public utilities; historic preservation; town center revitalization; conservation of natural resources; hydrology; open space; transportation; and critical community development and infrastructure issues are also commonly addressed.

The comprehensive planning process must demonstrate consideration of and coordination with adjacent areas, with the county of jurisdiction and with the State of Delaware. The Plan is subject to the state review and certification process set forth in §9103 of Title 29 of the Delaware Code. All annexations by the municipality must be consistent with its most recently adopted and certified Comprehensive Plan meeting the requirements of Title 22, Chapter 7 of the Delaware Code. An area being considered for annexation must be depicted as an area for potential annexation in the adopted and certified plan. The Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed every 5 years and updated every 10 years. Comprehensive Plans are prepared and updated under the direction of the municipal Planning Commission, if there is one, adopted by Ordinance of the Town Council after public hearing, and certified by the State of Delaware. The Comprehensive Plan guides the Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, other codes and ordinances as applicable, annexation policy and procedure, planning and zoning review fees, development impact fees, and capital improvements projects for the municipality.

## 1-2. PLANNING PROCESS

Delaware law requires that municipalities engage in comprehensive planning activities for the purpose of encouraging "the most appropriate uses of the physical and fiscal resources of the municipality and the coordination of municipal growth, development, and infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties and the State..." This Plan was written to fulfill the requirements of a municipal development strategy as described in the Delaware Code for towns with a population of 2,000 or fewer persons.

The municipal development strategy for a community such as the Town of Bethany Beach is to be a "development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction's position on population and housing growth within the jurisdiction, expansion of its boundaries, development of adjacent areas, redevelopment potential, community character, and the general uses of land within the community, and critical community development and infrastructure issues." In addition, the town's comprehensive planning process must demonstrate coordination with other municipalities, Sussex County, and the State of Delaware during plan preparation (22 Del. C. 1953, § 702; 49 Del. Laws, c. 415, § 1).

The Town of Bethany Beach's Planning and Zoning Commission (the Commission), with regular input and participation from members of Town Council, and a subset of volunteers from each, served as the guiding agency for the preparation of this Comprehensive Plan. This collaboration has been invaluable. The Comprehensive Plan project has enabled the Commission to work closely with Council and to engage the citizenry in a united fashion.

## 1-2a. Reason for Plan Update

The most recent update to the 2012 Comprehensive Plan for Bethany Beach was adopted in 2017. An updated 10-year plan is now required. This document is intended to fulfill that requirement through 2032. Though there has not been significant growth or development pressures within the municipality, external development pressures as well as growing effects of environmental changes significantly affect the Town. Bethany Beach remains steadfastly committed to the vitality and sustainability of the beach and the community. Flooding, beach replenishment, stormwater management, sustainability, resiliency, and increasing seasonal vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic remain important concerns the Town continues to prioritize.

## 1-2b. Comprehensive Planning Approach

Planning is a continuous process. It involves establishing goals for the future of a municipal government, analyzing current and projected conditions, and laying out steps that may help a municipality reach its goals. Bethany Beach staff and volunteers thoroughly reviewed the existing comprehensive plan, updated critical information and policy statements, and contracted for professional planning and design assistance in completing the drafting, public participation, and intergovernmental coordination steps.

## 1-3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Bethany Beach strives for transparency, public participation, and consideration of public comments in the planning process. Aside from numerous open Planning and Zoning Commission meetings held since November 2020, the Commission conducted an open public meeting on Saturday, July 16, 2022, for orientation purposes. From August 2022 through April 2023, the plan was listed on the agenda and discussed at the Town's regularly scheduled Commission meetings, generally held on the third Saturday of each month. In addition, the Town Council met twice (November and December 2022) in public workshops to review the plan. Two joint workshops with the Planning and Zoning Commission were held in February and March of 2023. The Comprehensive Plan is available for view on the Town's website. The Town held a pre-PLUS public hearing/workshop on Friday, May 26, 2023.

The plan went through the PLUS review on June 28, 2023 and the Town received a written summary in late July. The reviewers requested more specificity on some of the Town's position

statements, elaboration on the public participation section, and documentation on Bethany Beach's coordination with nearby towns and Sussex County. Over the summer of 2023, Bethany Beach sent draft plans to Sussex County, Ocean View, Millville, and South Bethany. Each responded indicating they had reviewed the draft, and none noted any concerns. Copies of this correspondence are included in the Town's official final plan at the end of the appendix. After addressing the certification concerns, as well as other recommendations, Bethany Beach Town Council reviewed the draft and voted to adopt it, pending certification, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

## 1-4. OVERALL COMMUNITY VISION AND GOALS

### Community Character Statement

*A thriving year-round residential community that seeks to preserve its family-friendly, small-town character and beauty while maintaining its roots as a quiet and safe beach resort for all.*

### Position on Housing Growth

*Bethany Beach welcomes ongoing investment in, and care and renovation of its existing residential properties, as well as conscientious redevelopment consistent with the Town's Code and community character.*

### Position on Population Growth

*Bethany Beach is in the somewhat unique position where the full-time residential population does not correspond closely to the number of homes. The population is far less than would be expected, given the number of homes. However, more property owners are moving to Bethany Beach as full-time residents. The Town cherishes its identity as a quiet, family-friendly beach community, is open to year-round population increases, and welcomes all who would consider making this wonderful community their home.*

### Position on Commercial Growth

*Bethany Beach welcomes ongoing investment in, and care and renovation of its existing commercial properties, as well as conscientious redevelopment consistent with the Town's Code and the community character.*

## Position on Development of Adjacent Areas

*Bethany Beach's surrounds are either already developed or permanently preserved. The lone possible exception is the National Guard Center north of the Town. If this facility were to close, be sold, or significantly change function, the Town would appreciate the opportunity to explore its acquisition.*

## Position on Redevelopment Potential

*There is very limited redevelopment potential in Bethany Beach. Given the value of property, the vast majority are very well maintained and make full use of their respective lots. This is largely due to the ongoing trend of older, smaller cottages being replaced by larger, more contemporary ones. The Town is generally supportive of this process.*

## Key Infrastructure Issues

*Stormwater management, beach replenishment, the transportation network, and water treatment rank as the Town's key infrastructure issues, as well as more mundane concerns. Of particular interest at the time of this document's development is the potential for a mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond.*

## Position on Critical Development Issues

*Infrastructure concerns to one side, Bethany Beach's most critical development issue lies in finding the right balance between serving as a family-friendly resort destination and offering its residents the safety, services, and amenities they deserve and require. This is a moving target, as the Town seemingly, incrementally, becomes more and more of a year-round town.*

### 1-4a. Community Character, Design, and Sense of Community Goals and Recommendations

#### **Goal**

- While Bethany Beach incrementally transitions into a year-round family-friendly destination, it strives to preserve the Town's existing community character and ambiance while continuing to build a sense of community for all.

## Recommendations

- **Encourage development and redevelopment compatible with the existing community fabric.** Bethany Beach has taken regulatory steps in its R-1 and R-1B Zoning Districts to encourage development of residential homes that are consistent with the historic character of Bethany Beach as a family-friendly beach resort and that are compatible with the residential homes in the surrounding neighborhood without blocking light and air flow to adjacent homes. The Town should track and analyze building permit applications to determine if its efforts are having the desired effect, if they need adjustment, and if there is any need to propose a similar approach for the R-2 District. The Town will monitor developments in the R-2 District to determine if a similar approach is needed.
- **Preserve and enhance the Town's historic and cultural assets.** The Town should continue to maintain an active Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee; play a direct role in historic/cultural asset preservation; and maintain the Dinker-Irvin Museum, now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, and the museum in Town Hall to preserve and pass on the Town's history.
- **Promote engagement with the Cultural and Historic Resources Survey.** Having completed a comprehensive survey in 2017, the Town's Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee should consider the next step of activating further public interest and developing potential further preservation strategies.

## Goal

- People are Bethany Beach's greatest asset. The Town's goal is to provide high quality-of-life experiences and opportunities to residents, property and business owners, and visitors.

## Recommendation

- **Continue to provide, sponsor, or approve appropriate civic, arts, entertainment and other events that contribute to a sense of community, engagement, and economic vitality as the Town determines to be appropriate, safe, and affordable.** Such events may include holiday celebrations, patriotic programs and parades, music events, arts and craft shows, recreation and fitness activities, and educational and cultural programs.

## 1-4b. Community Profile Goals and Recommendations

- People are Bethany Beach's greatest asset. The Town's goal is to better understand the Town's population and to provide high quality-of-life experiences and opportunities to residents, property and business owners, and visitors.

## Recommendation

- **Explore local data sources to better understand the seasonal population.** Continue to use data such as construction permits and water demand to gain a fuller understanding of the Town's population. The U.S. Census figures reliably collect persons claiming the Town as their full-time residence. However, this number does not appear to correlate to the number of people in Town.

## 1-4c. Government and Community Services Goals and Recommendations

### Intergovernmental Coordination Goal

- Work collaboratively to address local and regional challenges that impact the future of the Town and other Delaware coastal communities.

### Recommendations

- **Continue intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.** The Town should continue to work regionally to address common challenges, particularly as related to beach communities, to include, for example, continuing to be an active participant in the Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT), the Delaware League of Local Governments (DLLG), the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT), the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA), as well as informal workgroups and formal training and networking opportunities, such as those provided by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware. In addition, the Town should continue its close relationship and ongoing communications with local, state, and federal representatives, officials, and agencies.
- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany Beach's beach and dune structure cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property, and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished and maintained, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal representatives, agencies, and officials, as well as participation in Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

### Public Safety Services Goal

- As a priority, responsibility and goal, continue to provide for necessary police, fire, and rescue, emergency medical response, and other protective services for the community.

### Recommendations

- **Continue to provide a high level of professional law enforcement services.** The Bethany Beach Police Department (BBPD), which has consistently met and exceeded the strict professional standards of the Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) as one of the smallest departments in the United States and the smallest in Delaware accredited by CALEA, serves and protects the Town year-round. The permanent full-time officers in the Department are augmented by well-trained seasonal officers during the tourist season from Memorial Day to Labor Day and other designated days. In order to continue to provide this high level of professional law enforcement services, the Town should consider incentives to attract qualified candidates to

maintain an appropriate level of staffing and training for both full-time and seasonal positions to meet law enforcement needs in the community.

- **Continue to support the Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company (BBVFC) and its Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division.** The BBVFC and EMS are not part of the Town government. The BBVFC provides fire protection and rescue services for an approximate 17-square-mile area that includes the Town of Bethany Beach. The Town provides financial support to the BBVFC, in addition to what it and the EMS receive from the state, county, and other sources. The EMS receives funding from Bethany Beach, South Bethany, Fenwick Island, Sea Colony Recreational Association, and homeowner associations within the Bethany Beach Fire District under terms of an agreement to provide EMS services. The current agreement expires in December 2023, and the Town and other parties to the agreement should review and negotiate a new agreement with the BBVFC EMS to ensure continued professional EMS services for Bethany Beach residents and visitors.
- **Continue to maintain the necessary level of staffing and training for Bethany Beach Patrol Lifeguards.** The Bethany Beach Patrol has a well-established record of providing the highest level of performance in protecting beachgoers, to include monitoring beach and ocean conditions, educating the public, maintaining safe conditions on the beach, and saving lives. To continue to provide this high level of protection for beachgoers, consideration should be given to providing incentives to attract qualified candidates to maintain the necessary level of staffing and training for Patrol lifeguards.
- **Continue to explore and pursue grants and low-interest loans for the Town.** As a faithful steward of taxpayer dollars, the Town government routinely seeks state and federal grants and loans applicable to infrastructure, Town services, the beach, and a host of other areas.

## Recommendations

- **Continue to provide accessible, seamless, secure “Electronic Government” services by continually updating and securing the proper technology and equipment required to carry out governmental responsibilities efficiently and effectively.** The Town provides a wide range of services with few employees. Due to the uncertainty of the future labor market, and as the number of visitors and residents inside and outside the Town increase in the coming years, advanced technologies will become vital to enable Town staff to focus on mission-critical services and activities. New, advanced technologies may also help in improving the quality of life and public safety.
- **Continue to explore ways to provide seamless government services in the event of emergencies and natural disasters.** To continue to provide government services seamlessly in the event of such emergencies, in 2016, the Town purchased approximately seven acres of land outside the flood plain in Frankford. Since then, the Town has created alternative emergency administrative offices and police and public works facilities on the property. In addition, enclosed storage buildings provide security for stored vehicles and equipment. The Town

should continue to explore means to sustain services and assist property owners during an emergency.

- **Continue to explore and pursue grants and low-interest loans for the Town.** As a faithful steward of taxpayer dollars, the Town government routinely seeks state and federal grants and loans applicable to infrastructure, town services, the beach, and a host of other areas.
- **Ensure sufficient drinking water supply and storage.** Continue to use data such as construction permits and water demand to anticipate and prepare for increases in demand. The Town's recent construction of a half-million-gallon water tower is an excellent example of this proactive approach, as is the installation of conductivity transducers to provide for real-time monitoring of Town wells to detect saltwater intrusion in the aquifers from which the Town's water supply is drawn. The Town will continue to embrace the use of science, data, and technology to ensure adequate and safe water to meet its current and future needs while maintaining compliance with all applicable regulations. Future needs may include an additional water treatment clarifier to provide redundancy, abandonment of older water lines and meter replacement.
- **Maintain water system plans and replacement/repair policies.** The Town has as-built technical schematics for its water system. It is imperative that these plans are maintained and kept up to date. The Town would like to ensure that maps and schematics for the water system continue to be maintained by investing in Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping and plan digitization. Further, the Town is satisfied with its existing policy on transmission line failure and replacement.
- **Continue intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.** Wastewater collection and treatment services are performed by Sussex County through an agreement with the Town of Bethany Beach. The Town is in the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District, which feeds into the Sussex County Regional Wastewater Facility near Ocean View. The Town has an agreement with Sussex County for the treatment of up to 3 million gallons per day (mgd). Considering that the Town's current maximum finished water-delivery capacity is 2.3 mgd, this arrangement fits well with the current and future needs of the Town. The Town should continue to work with Sussex County to ensure adequate and uninterrupted services.
- **Continue to meet or exceed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) stormwater regulations.** The Town has a detailed stormwater management improvements strategy and regularly performs necessary upgrades and repairs. Significant updates to the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Code (Chapter 453 of the Town Code) have been modified to meet or exceed State and Federal standards. Further code adjustments could be required if State or Federal standards are amended.
- **Continue to explore infrastructure and policy approaches to ameliorate flooding and drainage problems.** The Town's storm resilience fund (Storm Emergency Relief Fund), study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond, the existence of an active committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project

to identify ways for residents to minimize stormwater impacts, are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has taken to address flooding. The Town is actively participating in the United States Army Corps of Engineers Back Bay Study and the DelDOT State Route 1 Coastal Corridor Resiliency Study. The Town may also consider policies developed by other coastal communities, such as Lewes' recent sea-level rise initiative. The "Green Bethany" initiative and this subject are addressed further in the sustainability and adaptability section of this Comprehensive Plan.

- **Maintain National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Class 8 (or better) rating.** Flood insurance is a significant cost for property owners in Bethany Beach. Because of this, the Town participates in NFIP's voluntary CRS incentive program, which recognizes community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum program requirements. As a result of the Town's actions, FEMA has approved a 10 percent rate reduction for eligible properties in Special Hazard Flood areas. The Town should continue to adhere and adapt to NFIP requirements to retain the current discount.

## 1-4d. Housing Goals and Recommendations

### Goal

- Support local, affordable housing initiatives by working with surrounding communities and the Sussex County government, as well as limiting, wherever possible, insurance costs to resident families.

### Recommendations

- **Support local affordable housing initiatives.** Continue to explore avenues of encouraging or supporting affordable housing within, or in proximity to Bethany Beach, particularly for the vital workforce needed as the Town evolves into a year-round destination.
- **Maintain National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Class 8 (or better) rating.** Flood insurance is a significant cost for property owners in Bethany Beach. Because of this, the Town participates in NFIP's voluntary CRS incentive program, which recognizes community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum program requirements. As a result of the Town's actions, FEMA has approved a 10 percent rate reduction for eligible properties in Special Hazard Flood Areas. The Town should continue to adhere and adapt to NFIP requirements to retain the current discount.
- **Consider potential code revisions.** During the requisite follow up to this plan document (evaluation of the municipal zoning and subdivision ordinance), consider the feasibility of ADU allowances and the possibility of allowing residential opportunities above existing (or planned) commercial uses.

## Goal

- While Bethany Beach incrementally transitions into a year-round family-friendly destination, it strives to preserve the Town's existing community character and ambiance while continuing to build a sense of community for all.

## Recommendation

- **Encourage development and redevelopment compatible with the existing community fabric.** Bethany Beach has taken regulatory steps in its R-1 and R-1B Zoning Districts to encourage development of residential homes that are consistent with the historic character of Bethany Beach as a family-friendly beach resort and that are compatible with the residential homes in the surrounding neighborhood without blocking light and air flow to adjacent homes. The Town should track and analyze building permit applications to determine if its efforts are having the desired effect, if they need adjustment, and if there is any need to propose a similar approach for the R-2 District. The Town will monitor developments in the R-2 District to determine if a similar approach is needed.

## 1-4e. Transportation Goals and Recommendations

### Goal

- Improve the flow of multi-modal transportation throughout the Town.

### Recommendations

- **Continue to coordinate with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to improve traffic safety.** The Garfield Parkway Streetscape project is one example of local coordination with DelDOT to promote traffic safety. Other examples include the installation of overhead lights in the median and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at several intersections on Route 1. The Town should also continue working with DelDOT on a plan to build a pedestrian pathway along the west side of Kent Avenue, connecting the Town's planned pedestrian and bicycle pathway along the south side of Collins Street with another pathway along the south side of the 300 block of Wellington Parkway with another RRFB on Kent Avenue at the Library. The Town should continue this partnership by coordinating with DelDOT's designated planner for Sussex County. The Town values its relationship with DelDOT and has consulted with DelDOT during the development of this plan.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle safety program.** Continue the well-regarded programs offered by the Bethany Beach Police Department providing safety equipment and advice for cyclists and pedestrians.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.** Continue to study conditions and implement safety improvements such as those developed and recommended by the Bethany Beach Police Department and the Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee. These have included educational videos and safety campaigns. In addition, a comprehensive traffic and bike/pedestrian safety study and analysis for the Town is expected to develop alternative roadway improvements to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety while maintaining vehicular traffic flow. The

study may also evolve into the development of an action plan for the purpose of applying for a Federal SS4A (Safe Streets and Roads for All) Implementation Grant.

- **Local roadway safety.** The Town should continue to work with South Bethany, Sea Colony, Middlesex, and DelDOT on a study of traffic on Route 1 with a goal of lowering the speed limit through those communities to 30 mph from 35 mph and another study of traffic on Route 26 to determine if the data justify the lowering of the speed limit on that road as well. The Town should also continue to work with DelDOT on its goal of lowering the speed limit on municipal streets from 25 mph to 20 mph. The Town should continue to work with other municipalities through the DLLG to effect a legislative change that would enable local jurisdictions to set a speed limit of 20 mph on its own streets without an engineering and traffic investigation so long as the jurisdiction has developed procedures for doing so based on a revised Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- **Enforcement.** Continue effective enforcement of speed and crosswalk regulations, as well as addressing citizen concerns about traffic calming measures, mostly seasonal but sometimes year round.
- **Intergovernmental coordination.** Funding for local roadway maintenance and improvement (most notably through the Municipal Street Aid Fund and the Community Transportation Fund), are critical to towns like Bethany Beach. In addition to working closely with DelDOT, the Town should continue to pursue political avenues, including working with elected state representatives and the DLLG to secure adequate funding.
- **Support local transit.** The Town's trolley service, a beloved part of the Town's character, reduces vehicular traffic in Town. The trolleys transport over 30,000 passengers annually during the summer season. Though this alone does not prevent congestion, it is well worth continuing or possibly expanding, depending on circumstances. The Town continues to pursue opportunities for increasing ridership. In order to encourage ridership of the trolley, the Town eliminated the ridership fee for 2023.
- **Parking management.** Continue to effectively manage the Town's parking inventory and provide for any needed policy or Town Code revision, as well as continuing to support local transit which includes coordinating permits and monitoring private shuttle usage from adjacent communities into and out of Town at designated and controlled locations.

## 1-4f. Economic Development and Redevelopment Goals and Recommendations

### Goal

- Encourage a vibrant business community in the Town's Business Districts, consistent with the Town's overall vision and applicable provisions of the Town Code.

## Recommendations

- **Maintain the Town's active business districts.** The Town has two distinct and thriving business districts: the Central Commercial District (C-1) east of Route 1 and the Neighborhood Commercial District (C-2) on Route 26 west of Route 1. There is also a Commercial Lodging District (CL-1) adjacent to the C-1 District. The Garfield Parkway and Atlantic Avenue projects have, and will, continue to bolster the Town's businesses. Business placement and development have also been favorable for the past several years. The Town should continue to meet with and consider the needs and interests of the business community in all decisions related to those districts and ensure that its land use and development regulations enable the type and character of businesses it desires now and in the future.
- **Continue to provide, sponsor, or approve appropriate civic, arts, entertainment and other events that contribute to a sense of community, engagement, and economic vitality as the Town determines to be appropriate, safe, and affordable.** Such events may include holiday celebrations, patriotic programs and parades, music events, arts and craft shows, recreation and fitness activities, and educational and cultural programs.
- **Continue to provide opportunities for and encourage community input for future projects.** The Town should continue its policy of soliciting public input via surveys, public meetings, workshops, and notices, as appropriate, for upcoming projects. This approach has proven effective in developing plans for the Town Park and other projects.
- **Continue to examine and explore ways to mitigate nuisance and high tide flooding in the C-1 commercial district.** The Town is actively pursuing the study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond and has retained a consultant to produce a 30 percent preliminary design and cost estimate. If the results of the 30 percent study are positive, then securing funding for this investment will become a high priority to the Town. The Town's storm resilience fund, the existence of an active Town committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways to minimize stormwater impacts are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has, and will, take to address flooding.

### 1-4g. Environmental and Sustainability Goals and Recommendations

#### Goal

- To conserve, sustain, and enhance natural areas and resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations and to encourage, promote, and educate citizens and visitors in achieving a "Green Bethany."

## Recommendations

- **Continue to explore the acquisition of properties of unique environmental value.** The Town has invested in the acquisition of historical and environmentally valuable and sensitive properties for Town stewardship and to protect them from residential development. The 2019 and 2021 purchases and preservation of approximately 15 acres of undeveloped property, which include non-tidal wetlands, is one example.
- **Continue regional cooperation regarding Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL).** A TMDL is the maximum level of pollution allowed for a given pollutant, below which a target water body can assimilate and still meet water-quality standards necessary to support activities such as swimming, fishing, providing drinking water, and shellfish harvesting. The Town continues to comply with TMDL standards and requirements as delineated by the State of Delaware and Sussex County. The Town should continue to engage with DNREC when a revision to the relevant pollution control strategy is developed and continue coordination with the relevant tributary action team.
- **Continue to maintain and improve the Town's stormwater drainage system.** Efficient and effective stormwater drainage remains a high priority for the Town. Drainage systems throughout the Town include swales, ditches, and closed pipes. Open swales and ditches are considered best management practices (BMP) for stormwater management and are strongly encouraged. Vegetative swales and ditches help filter out pollutants from runoff and reduce TMDL levels. Phosphorous and nitrogen have been identified as two of the major polluters of our Inland Bays. Most of the stormwater in the Town drains either directly or indirectly into the Loop Canal, with a lesser amount into the Assawoman Canal. The Town should continue to maintain and improve the stormwater drainage infrastructure throughout the Town and educate property owners to the importance of keeping swales and culverts on their property free from debris.
- **Expand efforts to educate property owners living in the excellent groundwater recharge area.** The Town should consider additional and ongoing actions to educate property owners living in the groundwater recharge area. These efforts should alert owners to the sensitive nature of their land and how their use of it may impact water quality in the area. In addition, the Town could consider providing incentives for avoiding additional impervious surfaces or planting additional trees.
- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany Beach's beach and dune structure cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property, and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal representatives, agencies, and officials, and participation in the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

## Goal

- Continue to assess the Town's vulnerability to sea level rise and explore ways to adapt and mitigate risks.

## Recommendations

- **Continue exploring infrastructure and policy approaches to ameliorate flooding and drainage problems.** The Town's storm resilience fund (Storm Emergency Relief Fund), study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond, the existence of an active Town committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways for residents to minimize stormwater impacts are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has and will continue to take to address flooding. The Town is actively participating in the United States Army Corps of Engineers Back Bay Study and the DelDOT State Route 1 Coastal Corridor Resiliency Study. The Town may also consider policies developed by other coastal communities, such as Lewes' recent sea-level rise initiative. This subject is addressed further in the sustainability and adaptability section of the Comprehensive Development Plan.
- **Continue and expand "Green Bethany" initiatives.** As evidence of its ongoing commitment to sustainability, the Town has taken steps to create a more environmentally friendly community, including providing a trash recycling service, converting to solar power at some Town facilities, providing charging stations for electric vehicles, and creating more green space. The Town should continue to explore opportunities to be more sustainable and resilient. Examples include stormwater management, tree preservation, green building, renewable energy, the use of non-chemical fertilizers and weed/insect control, and green vehicles. Such initiatives not only contribute to a more healthy, sustainable environment, but may serve as positive examples for other Delaware municipalities. Moreover, as evidence of the Town's environmental stewardship, they would also lend support to any future Town request for federal or state funding for environmental projects.
- **Increase the tree canopy coverage to 45 percent by 2032.** Continue to recognize and promote the benefits of trees within the community by increasing our tree canopy from 40 percent to at least 45 percent by 2032. The Town is committed to improving air quality and participates in the Tree City USA program. Additionally, the Town recently adopted a new ground coverage ordinance—it limits the amount of pervious surface.

## 1-4h. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Goals and Recommendations

### Goal

- Provide areas and opportunities for outdoor relaxation and recreation.

## Recommendations

- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany Beach's beach and dune structure cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property, and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal representatives, agencies, and officials, as well as participation in the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).
- **Continue to conserve, sustain, and enhance natural areas and resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.** The Town should also encourage, promote, and educate citizens and visitors in achieving a "Green Bethany" by offering educational programs at its nature center and adopting best management practices as appropriate.
- **Evaluate Off-Season Recreational Opportunities.** During the peak and "shoulder" seasons, the Town provides spaces and permits numerous outdoor recreation opportunities. However, many businesses are seasonal, as is the attraction of the beach. Consideration should be given to surveying year-round residents to determine their interests and suggestions regarding off-season recreation opportunities.
- **Examine and investigate ways to make Bethany's parks, public beach and boardwalk more accessible, convenient and available to all.** The Town should investigate ways to encourage and promote inclusiveness for citizens and visitors of all capabilities so that these assets can be enjoyed by everyone.

### 1-4i. Future Land Use and Annexation Goals and Recommendations

#### Goal

- Preserve and enhance the established character of the Town, continue effective land use policies, and remain engaged in addressing development in the surrounding area that may affect the Town.

#### Recommendations

- **Maintain effective land-use ordinances and provide for appropriate development.** The Town should continue to consider regulatory efforts to incentivize appropriate development and redevelopment of homes and properties consistent with the community character. The Town zoning map and related ordinances should be updated, as needed, to reflect the future land use changes.
- **Continue to base any requests for annexation on the best interests of the Town and its property owners.** The Town is satisfied with its established municipal boundaries and there are no current areas of annexation under

consideration. As in the past, any request for annexation by communities outside the corporate limits of Bethany Beach will be based on an informed assessment of the best interests of the Town, its residents, and property-owners.

## **1-5. INTERPRETING PLAN GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Because of the importance of the Comprehensive Plan as a planning guide, and because of the sometimes-challenging task of interpreting and harmonizing the various goals and recommendations, the document has been carefully crafted to identify those provisions in the Plan that the Town is legally required to pursue because of the Plan's force of law. All other provisions not specifically directing affirmative and mandatory action by the Town are expressly intended to be optional and aspirational.

## CHAPTER 2. COMMUNITY CHARACTER

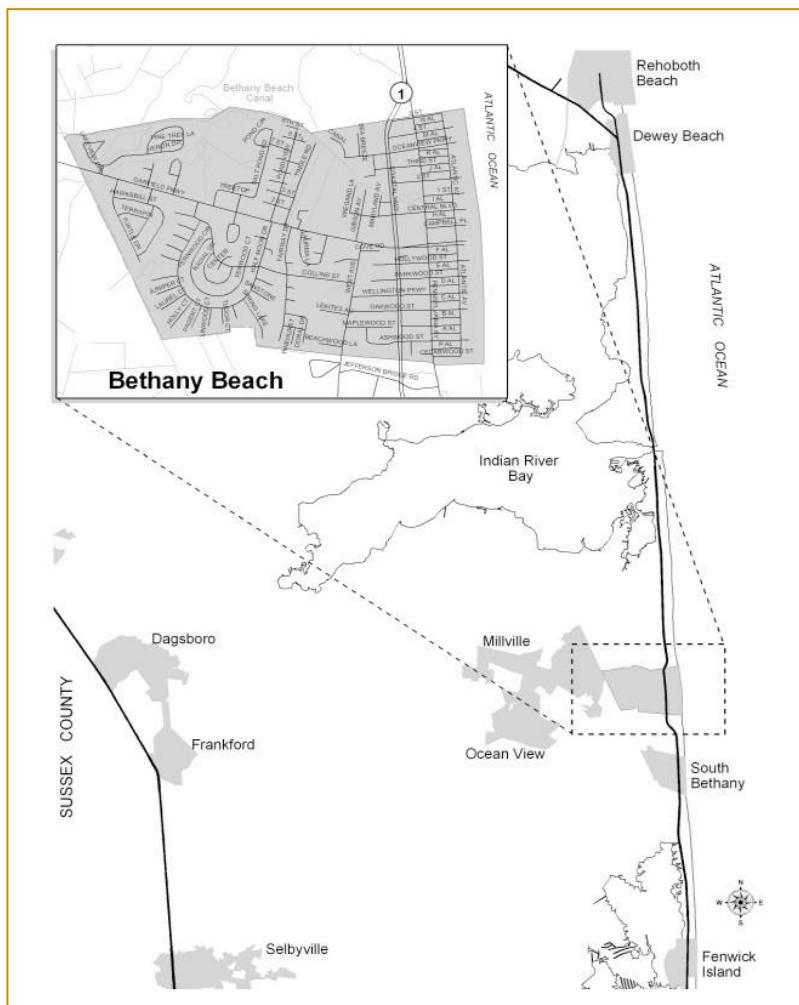
## Community Character Statement

*A thriving year-round residential community that seeks to preserve its family-friendly, small-town character and beauty while maintaining its roots as a quiet and safe beach resort for all.*

## 2-1. LOCATION

The Town of Bethany Beach is an incorporated town in Sussex County, Delaware. It is part of the shoreline classified by geologists as a baymouth barrier complex. It is located approximately six miles north of the Maryland state line and approximately four miles south of the Indian River Inlet. The Town is bordered on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by the Town of Ocean View. It encompasses an area of approximately one square-mile. The Town is bisected by state Route 1 and state Route 26 (Garfield Parkway).

*Figure 1. Bethany Beach Location*



## 2-2. HISTORY AND HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The community of Bethany Beach was founded in 1901 through the joint efforts of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ of Maryland, Delaware, and Washington D.C., and the newly formed Bethany Beach Improvement Company. The Disciples, with the approval of the Christian Missionary Society, had founded the site in 1894 as a summer camp retreat during the popular Chautauqua Movement.

By 1902, the Improvement Company fell into difficulties and was subsequently bought out by a group of six Pittsburgh-area businessmen, now along with the Disciples of Christ, credited as the Town founders. Through their efforts, successful development of new housing, a boardwalk, and other improvements were created. In 1909, the Town was incorporated, and in 1910, the Loop Canal was dug permitting travel to Bethany Beach on a single boat ride from Rehoboth.

The original Improvement Company appointed a mayor and six commissioners in 1901 on the formal founding of the Town. Now elected by popular vote of the Town property owners, the Town Council comprises seven members. Each year these elected officials choose from among themselves the mayor, vice-mayor, and secretary-treasurer. Over the years, efforts of the Town councils and property owners have continued to keep Bethany a family-oriented resort community.

Since its founding, several nearby large urban areas have brought visitors and new property owners that have influenced the growth of Bethany Beach. The automobile in the early 1900s and eventually the opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in 1952 made travel to the area faster and more desirable. The current Bethany Beach fulltime population of just under 1,000 grows to approximately 21,000 during the summer season each year.

Bethany Beach has a continuous involvement with government installations. A U.S. Coast Guard station was manned in the area from 1907 until 1947. A naval radio-compass station operated for years from Bethany Beach. Coastal Defense troops were quartered in the Town during World War II, and the Delaware National Guard training installation, still active in Bethany Beach, was used as a POW camp during the war years.

The Town of Bethany Beach is waging a continual struggle with the natural forces of wind and water, which have threatened the Town throughout its history. The Town's boardwalk has been rebuilt six times since 1903, and many of the Town's homes and businesses have fallen victim to the fury of a storm. The famous coastal storm of 1962 ravaged the Town. Waves estimated to be 20 to 30 feet high hammered the boardwalk area, and a tidal storm surge destroyed over 30 homes. Despite these intermittent storms, the Town of Bethany Beach continues to make history as one of Delaware's finest coastal communities.

### 2-2a. Historic Structures

The Delaware State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) completed a historic and cultural resources inventory in the Town of Bethany Beach. SHPO staff members surveyed structures, monuments, parks, and other cultural resources in the Town to identify those with remarkable historic significance and integrity. Experts found that the Town itself has a rich history, but few resources remain with the integrity required by the National Register of Historic Places.

Due to the growing popularity of Delaware's coastal communities, the physical integrity of many of the local historic resources has been compromised over the years by multiple additions, significant renovations, and demolition. However, SHPO was able to identify several significant historic resources in Bethany Beach that have been well preserved. Of the 141 total properties surveyed, SHPO identified 12 that could be considered "eligible resources" for preservation under federal National Historic Preservation Act guidelines. In addition, the Town of Bethany Beach Planning and Zoning Commission identified additional resources that were not identified by SHPO but are considered significant to the Bethany Beach community.

### **104 Second Street (John M. Addy House)**



During the summer of 1901, six Pittsburgh-area businessmen and their families began to build cottages in Bethany Beach. Built between 1901 and 1905, six of the original cottages still survive. Three Addy, one Dinker, one Errett, and one Latimer cottages remain. John M. Addy, who was one of the original "Pittsburgh Six," built this folk Victorian cottage in 1901. Later the house became the Williams' Inn, renting rooms. Currently the house is a private residence.

### **109 First Street (Errett Cottage)**



Nearly identical to the John M. Addy House is this symmetrical, one-and-a-half-story folk Victorian cottage, built by W.R. Errett, one of the original "Pittsburgh Six." The house is still owned by members of his family.

### **48 North Atlantic Avenue (Latimer House)**



Standing at the northeast corner of Atlantic Avenue and Second Street is the house built by R.S. Latimer, who was the last surviving member of the original "Pittsburgh Six." It is a cross-gable, three-bay house with a side hall entrance and a wrap-around porch.

## 101 Parkwood Street (Journey's End)



This large beach cottage, known as "Journey's End," was a popular guesthouse that dates to 1927. During the Second World War, the house was used to board troops and was known as Fort Maggie after the owner, Margaret Hughes. Appearing to be two, two-and-a-half-story houses connected by a common roof, Journey's End maintains much of its historic integrity. The ownership of the house remains with the original family.

## 99 Campbell Place (Drexler House)



Built in 1905, the Drexler House stands at the northeast corner of Campbell Place and Atlantic Avenue and was the home of former state senator Louis Drexler. Moved two times in its lifetime, the house has now been reoriented to allow easy access to the beach from its front entrance.

## 9 South Pennsylvania Avenue



This small folk Victorian house at the northwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Hollywood Street was built around 1902 and is a surviving example of the Town's historic architecture.

## Loop Canal

The Bethany Beach Improvement Company dug the Bethany Beach Loop Canal, located at the foot of First Street, in 1910. The mile-long canal connected the Town with the Assawoman Canal, which was dug in 1890 to connect the Indian River Bay and Little Assawoman Bay. The waterway eliminated very difficult over land travel to the Town and ended in a loop to give access to the *Allie May*, a steamship designed to travel in shallow waters. Since it could not reverse, a loop was needed in the canal. On the 8th of July 2010, the Town celebrated the 100th year anniversary of the Loop Canal by having a celebration that was attended by members of the current and former Bethany Beach Town Council, State Senator George Bunting, State Representative Gerald Hocker, and members of the Bethany Beach community. At the ceremony the newly reconstructed Loop-Canal dock was unveiled.

## The Addy Sea

Currently operating as a popular bed and breakfast establishment, the Addy Sea attracts many hundreds of visitors to the Delaware seashore's "Quiet Resort" each year.

The proprietor proudly describes it as a late Victorian exterior, clothed in the classic cedar shingles the Town's early houses wore and trimmed with lacy gingerbread, recalling a bygone era in which visitors came to the beach by steamer and horse drawn buggy.



John M. Addy, one of Bethany's original settlers, built the Addy Sea for his family as a summer retreat from Pittsburgh in 1901. Since he was a plumber, the Addy Sea was the first in the area to have indoor plumbing and gas lights. Many of the original fixtures such as the tin ceilings and fireplaces have been restored to their original luster.

The 2nd generation began utilizing the house for room and board at the beginning of the depression.

In 1974 the 3rd generation Addy's sold the property to the Gravatte family who have welcomed guests to the historic inn for over 40 years. The Addy Sea has 12 guestrooms and accommodates 26 guests comfortably.

## Addy 3

The small beach cottage was built circa 1902–1903 and was originally located on the northeast corner of Atlantic Avenue and Ocean View Parkway. In 1927, the structure was moved to the south side of Ocean View Parkway and the beach. In 2003, the structure was again moved to the former Natter property on Route 26 and now serves as the educational center for the Bethany Beach Nature Center and Conservation Area.



## **310 Garfield Parkway (First Dinker-Irvin Cottage, now the Dinker-Irvin Town Museum)**



The Dinker cottage was built between 1902–1903 on First Street, along with five other beach cottages that were all virtually identical in design. In 1911, the cottage was moved to Garfield Parkway extended, west of state Route 1. From 1922 to 1925, it served as the post office for the Town of Bethany Beach and then was sold by William Short to Ida May Irvin in 1925. In 2016, the Edgar family donated the Dinker Cottage to the Town. The Town moved the cottage approximately 150–200 feet west onto Town property. The cottage, now the Dinker-Irvin Museum, presents the history of the house as well as early Bethany Beach history.

The Bethany Beach Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee succeeded in its efforts to have the cottage included on the National Registry of Historic Places.

### **“The Clubhouse”**



The structure was built in 1905 by D. C. France of Philadelphia, as a recreation center for members of the Christian Church. The building was originally located on Maplewood Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Delaware Avenue (Route 1). The structure was moved to the south side of Garfield Parkway, between Pennsylvania and Atlantic Avenues where during the 1930s and 1940s it was operated as the Townsend Hotel and later became a private residence. In 1981, Mr. and Mrs. J.P. Connor purchased the building and donated it to the Christian Church and moved it onto the church grounds.

### **21 Kent Avenue (Evans Homestead)**



The “Evans Homestead,” built circa 1908, was the home of the Evans family patriarch Alonzo Evans, founder of the Evans Clan. The building today is named “Tranquil” with a new owner.

## 98 Parkwood Street (Townsend/Rogers/Ewing/Bowden House)



This large Dutch-Colonial style house was built on the southeast corner of Parkwood Avenue and the beach by Priney Townsend of Ocean View in the 1920s. In the 1950s, the house was purchased by the Rogers family of Washington, D.C. and was turned 180 degrees so that the house would now face the ocean.

## 99 Parkwood Street (Scott/Spargo House)



In 1928, the Scott sisters of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, built the house on the northeast corner of Parkwood and Atlantic Avenues. Originally named the "Sco-Hi-Tay" house after Ann Scott, Belle Scott, and Maize Scott Taylor. A later owner was their daughter/niece, Mary Lou Hieber.

## 2-2b. Historic and Cultural Resource Inventory

The Town has a standing Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee (CHAC). The purpose of the committee includes overseeing the Bethany Beach Town Museum in Town Hall and the Dinker-Irvin Museum located on Route 26, as well as initiating projects that are related to historical and cultural resources of the Town.

A historic district or area does not exist in the Town. Most of the early Bethany Beach cottages have long been gone and replaced with larger and modern year-round homes. Those that remain and have been identified are few and are located throughout the Town. Owners of these homes expressed that they would be opposed to any attempt to infringe on their property rights. They wanted themselves and their heirs to be fully able to alter or even remove their homes and rebuild should that be their desire for any reason.

Therefore, the committee concluded that an alternative to actual preservation might be a better choice for Bethany Beach. A commemorative bronze plaque is placed at the site of each original structure dating back to 1930 or before. The plaque displays when the house was built as well as some historical facts relating to the home. Current homeowners gave written permission and approved the wording that would appear on the plaque. A "Walking Tour" map displaying the locations was also made available in the Town Hall Lobby Museum.

Bronze plaques have been placed throughout the Town identifying places of historic significance, including four on the boardwalk depicting locations of "gone but not forgotten." Locations currently displaying bronze plaques are as follows:

- Addy 1
- Addy 3
- Addy Sea
- The Bowling Alley
- First Dinker Cottage
- Drexler House
- Everett Cottage
- Evans Homestead
- Ringler Theatre
- Journey's End
- Scott/Spargo House
- Seaside Inn
- Sloan Cottage
- Townsend/Rogers/Ewing/Bowden House
- Warren Restaurant and Holiday House Restaurant (same location for both restaurants, but only one historic marker)

In July 2010, the 100th Anniversary of the completion of the Loop Canal was recognized and a dock was constructed depicting where early travelers to Bethany Beach boarded the steamer that brought them to and from the Town.

The Christian Church is a valuable historic resource of the Town. The Church is located in the central part of the Town, and is bordered by Route 1, Garfield Parkway, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Central Avenue. It is the location of the original "tabernacle" where the founders and early property owners regularly gathered for both worship and recreation. An almost exact replica has replaced the original tabernacle and the Church is still attended by residents of both Bethany Beach and the surrounding area.

Although the Church maintains individual ownership of this property, it continues to be viewed as an important monument to the beginnings of the Town. Being the largest space available, accommodations are made for several Town events to make use of the property and a portion of the land is provided for a Town playground that is well utilized and much appreciated by residents and visitors alike.

## 2-2c. The Town's Forever Lost but Not Forgotten Heritage

Over the course of Bethany Beach's relatively short history a significant number of important and memorable locations and structures have been lost by a combination of natural and man-made forces. Some of the more memorable structures and places of the Town's past are the following.

### **Tabernacle**

Built in 1901 on the Disciples of Christ assembly ground, the uniquely eight-sided shaped building was used for holding summer religious retreats. It was torn down in 1964, and a new

"Tabernacle" was erected on the Disciples of Christ assembly ground in 2001. The location of the Tabernacle was on the property bounded by Garfield Parkway, Pennsylvania Avenue, Central Boulevard, and Route 1.

### **Cedar Grove School**

Probably built in the early 1900s, the Cedar Grove School was located on Kent Avenue near Wellington Parkway across from the present day South Coastal Library. It was Bethany Beach's one room schoolhouse for grades one through six. It remained in operation probably through the 1920s.

### **Log Cabin**

An elegant house that was formerly located on the southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Garfield Parkway. The house was built over a log cabin that was constructed by D.C. France of Philadelphia in the early 1900s. It was lost in a fire in the 1920s, and it is the present site of the PNC Bank.

### **Life-Saving Station**

The Life Saving Station was built on the beach in 1907 and was located just north of the Pilot House, which is now in the community of Sussex Shores. The Station was commanded by Captain Washington A. Vickers and officially became a U.S. Coast Guard Station in 1909. The structure was demolished in 1960.

### **Addy Boathouse**

The Boathouse was built in the early 1900s on the southwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Second Street. It rented boats to crabbers and fishermen.

### **Seaside Inn**

The Seaside Inn was located off the north end of the boardwalk (Second Street and the Beach). R.R. Bulgin, who was a Disciples of Christ preacher, built the hotel in the early 1900s, and at that time it was known as the Bellevue-Atlantic Hotel. In the 1920s, the hotel was purchased by Cal and Alice Jagger and was renamed the Seaside Inn. The Jaggers rented rooms and served three meals a day. The Inn was totally destroyed in the 1962 storm and has been replaced by the Seaside Village.

### **Ringler's Theatre**

The theatre was built in 1923 by Raymond Ringler and was located at the southeast corner of Garfield Parkway and the boardwalk. The theatre was destroyed by a storm in 1944. Currently at that location is the Blue Surf Condominiums and Shops.

### **The Bowling Alley**

The bowling alley was located on the boardwalk between First and Second Streets. Thomas Granville and Minnie Ann Walston built the bowling alley in 1930. The bowling alley was later owned and operated by their daughter and her husband, Zada and Bill Wilgus and family. The bowling alley was the social center for the younger generation in the Town and was destroyed by the storm of 1962.

## **Warren's Restaurant**

The restaurant was built in 1933 and was located at the northwest corner of Garfield Parkway and the boardwalk and is the present location of Mango's Restaurant. It was the first restaurant on the boardwalk and was destroyed by a fire in 1953.

## **Holiday House Restaurant**

The Holiday House was the first "upscale" restaurant in Bethany Beach. It was originally located on the north side of Hollywood Street between Pennsylvania and state Route 1 in the home of Karl Klais and James Popham who both owned and operated the restaurant. In 1953, the business was relocated to the northwest corner of Garfield Parkway and the boardwalk. The restaurant was destroyed in the 1962 storm, but the same owners immediately rebuilt the restaurant. In 1982 under a new owner, Arnold Brown, it was the first Bethany Beach establishment to obtain a liquor license. In 1998, the Holiday House Restaurant was torn down and replaced by Mango's Restaurant and a shopping complex.

## **99 First Street (Dinker House)**

This house, situated on the ocean side of Atlantic Avenue, was the second home built by W.A. Dinker and another of the "Pittsburgh Six." This hip-roofed, two-and-a-half-story cottage was originally called "The Oriole" because of its orange and black paint.

## **98 Central Avenue (Drexler West)**

This two-and-a-half-story folk Victorian cottage known as Drexler West is another early example of the Town's historic architecture. Around 2005, the original house was demolished, and a larger house was constructed on the property with an almost exact replication of the original house.

## **Campbell Hall, Disciples of Christ Assembly**

Located on the Disciples of Christ Assembly grounds, Campbell Hall was built in 1938 and became the conference center for the Capital Area Disciples of Christ. During the Second World War, the building was leased by the War Department, which controlled the property through the fall of 1944. Following the end of the war, the conference grounds reopened and resumed hosting conferences and camps for the Capital Area Disciples of Christ. In 2015 Campbell Hall was torn down and was replaced by a modern state-of-the-art conference facility at the same location.

## **2-3. COMMUNITY DESIGN**

Bethany Beach is a classic example of the prevalent development pattern in many beach towns. Bisected by state Route 1 and Garfield Parkway (state Route 26), the beach side (east) of Town comprises beach homes in a grid pattern on modestly sized lots. Historical and ongoing renovations have gradually changed the overall character from "small summer cottages" to "beach homes." The western half of the Town is decidedly more suburban in layout, featuring a curvilinear street pattern and relatively larger lots.

## 2-4. COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DESIGN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Community Vision

*A thriving year-round residential community that seeks to preserve its family-friendly, small-town character and beauty while maintaining its roots as a quiet and safe beach resort for all.*

#### Goal

- While Bethany Beach incrementally transitions into a year-round family-friendly destination, it strives to preserve the Town's existing community character and ambiance while continuing to build a sense of community for all.

#### Recommendations

- **Encourage development and redevelopment compatible with the existing community fabric.** Bethany Beach has taken regulatory steps in its R-1 and R-1B Zoning Districts to encourage development of residential homes that are consistent with the historic character of Bethany Beach as a family-friendly beach resort and that are compatible with the residential homes in the surrounding neighborhood without blocking light and air flow to adjacent homes. The Town should track and analyze building permit applications to determine if its efforts are having the desired effect, if they are in need of adjustment, and if there is any need to propose a similar approach for the R-2 District. The Town will monitor developments in the R-2 District to determine if a similar approach is needed.
- **Preserve and enhance the Town's historic and cultural assets.** The Town should continue to maintain an active Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee (CHAC); play a direct role in historical and cultural asset preservation; and maintain the Dinker-Irvin Museum, now listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, and the museum in Town Hall to preserve and pass on the Town's history.
- **Promote engagement with the Cultural and Historic Resources Survey.** Having completed a comprehensive survey in 2017, the Town's CHAC should consider the next step of activating further public interest and developing potential further preservation strategies.

#### Goal

- People are Bethany's greatest asset. The Town's goal is to provide high quality-of-life experiences and opportunities to residents, property and business owners, and visitors.

#### Recommendation

- **Continue to provide, sponsor, or approve appropriate civic, arts, entertainment and other events that contribute to a sense of community, engagement, and economic vitality as the Town determines to be appropriate, safe, and affordable.** Such events may include holiday celebrations, patriotic programs and parades, music events, arts and craft shows, recreation and fitness activities, and educational and cultural programs.

# CHAPTER 3. COMMUNITY PROFILE

## 3-1. POPULATION TRENDS

Table 1 summarizes the Town's population and housing units between 1960 and 2020, alongside those of Sussex County and Delaware as a whole.

*Table 1. Population and Housing Units, 1960–2020*

Year	Population			Housing Units		
	Bethany Beach	Sussex County	Delaware	Bethany Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
1960	170	73,195	446,292			143,725
1970	189	80,356	548,104		34,287	180,233
1980	330	98,004	594,338		54,694	238,611
1990	326	113,847	666,168	2,063	74,253	289,919
2000	903	157,430	783,600	2,371	93,070	343,072
2010	1060	197,145	897,934	2,356	123,036	405,885
2020	957	237,378	989,948	2,784	141,123	448,735

Source: 1960 through 2020 Decennial Censuses and 2010 & 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates

Bethany Beach has grown considerably, transitioning from the “quiet beach” of decades ago into a modestly sized, year-round Town. The largest growth can easily be seen between 1990 and 2000, when the year-round population nearly tripled. Sussex’s growth has also routinely outpaced the state. Note that Bethany Beach’s growth appears to have plateaued and shows no strong correlation to the available housing stock.

According to the Town’s Planning and Zoning Commission and staff, there is considerable skepticism that the 2020 U.S. Census figures accurately reflect the true number of people inhabiting the Town for the majority of the year. This difficulty likely stems from the preponderance of seasonal homes and the reporting ambiguities encountered when a respondent is compelled to choose one location as “home.”

### 3-1a. Population Projections

For the purposes of this demographic section, population projections will rely upon the established methodology used by the Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) and estimates derived from the U.S. Census. Table 2, below, shows the projected population for Bethany Beach by year 2050.

*Table 2. Bethany Beach Growth Projections*

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Population	330	326	903	1,060	957			
40-year Annual Rate = 4.84%						1,522	2,421	3,851
20-year Annual Rate = .3%						986	1,016	1,047
Paces Sussex County* = .99%						1,056	1,164	1,284
DPC Projection						1,422	1,549	1,655

Notes: \*“Paces Sussex County” represents the county’s annual growth rate since 1990.

Source: Delaware Population Consortium 2021 Estimates and U.S. Census 2020

Population projections for small communities like Bethany Beach are difficult. With limited data points to draw from, even small errors in projected growth rates can equal wild swings in potential population levels over 20 or 30 years. Moreover, recent history has shown that growth and population are indeed often influenced by political events, market forces, or other factors beyond the purview of traditional demography. Compounding this difficulty is the “full-time resident” factor. All Census data is derived from the respondent’s choice of permanent address. With an ample available housing supply, the Town’s future population will likely be much more a function of how many people choose to call it their primary residence.

This analysis calculated the Town’s 20- and 40-year average annual growth rates and, in turn, projected each over a 30-year span. The third option was to mirror the proposed average annual growth rate for Sussex, derived from the DPC 2021 estimates for Sussex County, and assume Bethany Beach would grow at the same annual rate.

The 40- and 20-year projections produced considerably varied results. This is due to the 40-year projection including the boom in full-time residents recorded between 1990 and 2000. Framed simply, the 40-year projection may be considered the “high.” Should the Town experience another wave of part-time residents opting for year-round status, akin to the surge of the 1990s, this scenario is not that far-fetched, particularly when one considers that there are already 2,800 housing units that could easily house 3,851 residents and leave significant rental opportunities available. The 20-year projection serves as the “low.” The assumption here is that since the construction of state Route 1, Bethany Beach has settled into a relative equilibrium of very modest growth. Tracking projected growth in Sussex County yields a slightly higher figure by 2050. The official DPC projections, which account for migration, births, deaths, and retirements, envision a fair bit of growth, even in the near-term.

## Position on Population Growth

*Bethany Beach is in a somewhat unique position where the full-time residential population does not correspond closely to the number of homes. The population is far less than would be expected, given the number of homes. However, more property owners are moving to Bethany Beach as full-time residents. The Town cherishes its identity as a quiet, family-friendly beach community, is open for such year-round population increases, and welcomes all who would consider making this wonderful community their home.*

## 3-2. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The U.S. Census Bureau has changed the method by which it now collects and disseminates much of its information. The Bureau no longer distributes the old long-form survey that historically provided data on a number of demographic factors that were published as “Summary Files 3 & 4.” These included indicators on social statistics such as education, poverty, income, and commuting patterns. These summary files were replaced by the American Community Survey (ACS) data, available in one-, three-, and five-year estimates.

The difference in the ACS (survey) and the old long-form (count) data is analogous to polls versus elections. A poll extrapolates likely data based on a sampling of respondents. Whereas a full-on counting of all respondents is akin to tallying votes. Obviously, a full count is much

more accurate, but is also more costly. Surveys can be conducted more often. Unfortunately, in the case of municipalities or geographic areas below a threshold population of 50,000, the margin of error for the survey data can be very significant.

## Household and Families

Table 3 summarizes household and family characteristics for Bethany Beach, Sussex County, and the State of Delaware. A household is any occupied housing unit comprising all of those people living in the unit. A family is a household with a householder and at least one other related person, whether it is by marriage, birth, or adoption. Families are also households, but households can sometimes consist of unrelated persons.

Bethany Beach's average family and household sizes were both somewhat smaller than those of the state and Sussex County. Of all households in Bethany Beach, 72.8 percent are families. For Sussex County, that figure is 68.5 percent; for the State, 65.5 percent.

*Table 3. Bethany Beach's Household and Family Characteristics, 2020*

Population Characteristics	Bethany Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
Total Population	957	237,378	989,948
Total Households	574	94,223	370,953
Total Families	418	64,499	243,012
Average Household Size	2.00	2.41	2.54
Average Family Size	2.28	2.86	3.11

Source: 2020 ACS 5-year estimates

## Racial Composition, Hispanic or Latino Origin

Table 4 summarizes racial composition in Bethany Beach, Sussex County, and the State in 2020.

*Table 4. Racial Composition in Bethany Beach, Sussex County, and State, 2020*

Race	Bethany Beach		Sussex County		Delaware	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
White	896	93.92%	175,847	74.08%	597,763	59.84%
Black	3	0.31%	25,357	10.68%	218,899	21.91%
Other	7	0.73%	14,137	5.96%	48,509	4.86%
Asian	14	1.47%	3,070	1.29%	42,699	4.27%
Multiple Race	31	3.25%	17,012	7.17%	76,518	7.66%
Totals	954	100%	237,378	100%	998,948	100%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census, P1-Race

As would be expected, Bethany Beach's racial diversity has increased over the past thirty years. Also, note that the "two or more races" convention now used by the ACS was not in use in 1990. Such respondents were likely included in "other" or chose one of the existing categories. Table 5 summarizes the changes in racial composition in Bethany Beach between 1990 and 2020.

*Table 5. Bethany Beach Racial Composition Change, 1990–2020*

Race	1990	2020
White	99%	93.92%
Black	<1%	0.31%
Other	<1%	0.73%
Multiple Race	no data	3.25%
Asian	<1%	1.47%

Source: 2020 and 1990 U.S. Census; P1: Race, 2005 Bethany Beach Comp Plan.

Table 6 summarizes the changes in Bethany Beach's population reporting Hispanic or Latino origin between 2000 and 2020.

*Table 6. Bethany Beach's Population Reporting Hispanic or Latino Origin, 2000–2020*

	2000		2020	
	#	%	#	%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	11	1.2%	20	2.1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	892	98.8%	934	97.9%
Total Population	903	100%	954	100%

Source: 2000 and 2020 U.S. Census

According to the ACS, Bethany Beach's population of all races identifying as Hispanic has roughly doubled in the past twenty years, but still accounts for a small fraction of the total population.

Table 7 shows the age distribution of Bethany Beach's population.

*Table 7. Bethany Beach's Age Distribution, 2020*

Age	Bethany Beach		Sussex County		Delaware	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Under 5	11	1.0%	11,613	5.0%	54,774	5.7%
5 to 19	62	5.4%	34,997	15.2%	174,553	18.0%
20 to 24	52	4.5%	10,365	4.5%	58,482	6.0%
25 to 64	344	29.9%	109,034	47.4%	497,846	51.4%
65 to 79	529	46.0%	51,999	22.6%	142,908	14.8%
80+	152	13.2%	12,241	5.3%	39,116	4.0%
Total	1,150		230,249		967,679	
Median	66.8		50.3		41.0	

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Note: ACS Populations not equal to full count data but are used to determine percentages.

Unsurprisingly, the Bethany Beach area, extremely popular amongst retirees, skews more mature than the State overall, or even Sussex County. School-aged children account for only five percent of the population, roughly a third of the comparable figure for the County and State. College-aged adults are comparable across all geographies. Prime working-aged adults

account for less than a third of Bethany Beach's population, compared to 47.4 percent and 51.4 percent for Sussex County and the State, respectively. Nearly half of the Town's population falls into the 65- to 79-year-old age category.

Table 8 shows which age cohorts grew fastest in Bethany Beach from 2000 to 2020.

*Table 8. Bethany Beach's Age Distribution Change, 2000–2020*

Age	2000		2020	
	#	%	#	%
Under 5 Years	14	1.6%	11	1.0%
5 to 19 Years	86	9.5%	62	5.4%
20 to 24	24	2.7%	52	4.5%
25 to 64	425	47.1%	344	29.9%
65 to 79	291	32.2%	529	46.0%
80+	63	7.0%	152	13.2%
Totals	903		1,150	
Median		58.9	66.8	

Source: 2000 and 2020 U.S. Census

Note: ACS Populations not equal to full count data but are used to determine percentages.

According to the U.S. Census, the median age was 58.9 years in 2000. As of 2020, the median age sat at 66.8. The change was apparent across all age classifications. Bethany Beach has fewer young children and fewer school-aged children than it had 20 years ago. It also has fewer prime working aged residents and considerably higher percentages of recent retirees and those over 80.

## **Education**

Table 9 compares Bethany Beach's educational attainment for the population age 25 years or more with that of Sussex County and the State. As the table shows, Bethany Beach compares favorably against the County and State. As reported by the 2020 ACS, Bethany has a much lower percentage of individuals reporting not having completed high school or having not gone on for further education afterward. The Town also easily outpaces the State and County in regard to four-year degrees and beyond. The comparison is especially stark when one factors in the median age in Bethany Beach, nearly 67 years old. The "median" citizen graduated high school in the late 70s or early 80s, a time when pursuing a bachelor's (or advanced) degree was by no means considered essential.

**Table 9. Bethany Beach's Educational Attainment, 2020**

<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Bethany Beach</b>		<b>Sussex County</b>		<b>Delaware</b>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Not HS Graduates	19	1.9%	19034	11.00%	63843	7.40%
Graduated HS, No Degree	188	18.3%	53,368	30.8%	210,998	31.0%
Some College	136	13.3%	33,487	19.3%	128,397	18.9%
Associate Degree	87	8.5%	16,484	9.5%	54,589	8.0%
Bachelor's Degree	363	35.4%	29,406	17.0%	129,092	19.0%
Graduate or Prof. Degree	232	22.6%	21,495	12.4%	92,951	13.7%
Total 25 and above	1,025		173,274		679,870	

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate

## Economic Characteristics

Tables 10 summarizes the 2020 ACS income data for Bethany Beach, Sussex County, the State, and the nation. ACS data show that Bethany Beach compares favorably on all accounts.

**Table 10. Household and Family Annual Income, 2020**

<b>Income</b>	<b>Bethany Beach</b>	<b>Sussex County</b>	<b>Delaware</b>	<b>United States</b>
Median Household Income	\$96,700	\$64,905	\$69,110	\$64,994
Median Family Income	\$123,750	\$77,499	\$84,825	\$80,069

Source: 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Table 11 summarizes the 2020 ACS on income distribution and poverty data comparing Bethany Beach, Sussex County, Delaware, and the United States. The ACS data suggest poverty is less of an issue in Bethany Beach than in the county, state, or nation. Only one percent of the Town's families reported incomes designated as below the poverty line. Additionally, racial, ethnic, or educational, and demographic factors (age) were not readily apparent. The only sub-group reporting a significant (57%) poverty rate was single mother families with multiple children. As with all sub-classifications of small populations, these survey results are subject to significant margins for error.

**Table 11. Selected Poverty Data for Families**

	<b>Bethany Beach</b>		<b>Sussex County</b>		<b>Delaware</b>		<b>United States</b>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
All Family	418	1.0%	64,499	7.6%	243,012	7.7%	79,849,830	9.1%
With kids aged 18 and below	45	8.9%	22,315	15.9%	102,327	13.5%	37,082,652	14.3%
Black	0	0%	6,164	16.7%	47,429	15.0%	9,040,538	18.3%
Hispanic	0	0%	4,164	20.4%	18,730	15.0%	12,303,195	15.9%
65 +	284	0%	24,641	3.1%	64,291	3.8%	17,366,084	5.2%
No High School Diploma	40	0%	6,028	24.8%	17,796	21.1%	7,701,409	24.0%

Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimate

### 3-3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

From a demographic point of view, Bethany Beach is somewhat unique. Yes, it has a more mature population than most other communities in the State or County. However, the citizens' relative affluence gives less cause for concern regarding the elderly "aging in place." Still, as an aspiring year-round community, the Town will likely want to attract more working-aged adults. Even its own working-aged cohort leans heavily toward the semi-retired side of the spectrum.

The accuracy and utility of national-level data to a small, resort-style community is likely the biggest demographic issue facing Bethany Beach. As mentioned previously, volunteer and paid Town officials were skeptical of the population data because of the U.S. Census' inherent need to determine the location of a respondent's primary residence. There is a strong likelihood that the U.S. Census and ACS data are most successful in gathering data from the subset of respondents who have chosen to live, invest, and semi-retire in properties in Bethany Beach. In this scenario, their age is not a red flag, but instead is simply an indication that this generation is yet to fully retire and sell off, or pass on, their assets to the subsequent generation.

Those who live and work in the Town can see with their own eyes the vibrancy and diversity present, certainly throughout the summer, but also during much of the shoulder seasons. Some have recommended tracking seasonal water usage to gain a fuller understanding of the likely population in Bethany, but perhaps not claiming it as their home, at various points of the year. A fuller picture of the demography of semi-residents would likely require a sustained survey effort.

#### Goal

- People are Bethany Beach's greatest asset. The Town's goal is to better understand the Town's population and to provide high quality-of-life experiences and opportunities to residents, property and business owners, and visitors.

#### Recommendation

- **Explore local data sources to better understand the seasonal population.** Continue to use data such as construction permits and water demand to gain a fuller understanding of the Town's population. The U.S. Census figures reliably collect persons claiming the Town as their full-time residence. However, this number does not appear to correlate to the number of people in Town.

# CHAPTER 4. GOVERNMENT, COMMUNITY SERVICES, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

This section of the Comprehensive Plan provides data and information regarding the facilities and services that are available to the residents and property owners of Bethany Beach. This chapter is meant to identify existing and/or potential gaps in levels of service, community needs met, and the content and the quality of the facilities and services.

## 4-1. GOVERNMENT AND SERVICES

The Town of Bethany Beach operates as an incorporated municipal government, chartered by the State of Delaware. It is structured as a council-manager form of government. A mayor and town council share equal legislative powers. The Town Council meets on the third Friday of every month, and annual elections are held on the first Saturday after Labor Day. Three of the seven Town council members are permitted to be non-full time resident property owners, a unique trait of the coastal municipalities in Delaware.

The Town's Planning and Zoning Commission is appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. The Chairperson is elected annually from among its members. Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission are also permitted to be non-resident property owners. Public management of the Town is headed by a Town Manager, who employs a Town Clerk, Chief of Police, Finance Manager, Building Inspector, Public Works Director, and a number of other key Town employees.

The Town employs a year-round staff of approximately 42 persons, including 12 full-time police officers and staff. During the summer months the Town hires approximately 90 additional part-time employees, which includes seasonal police officers. The Town also operates an Alderman Court with one alderman, located in Town Hall, and a summertime beach patrol that employs a captain and seasonal staff. Information regarding all Town services and departments is available via the Internet on the Town's official government website ([www.townofbethanybeach.com](http://www.townofbethanybeach.com)). The Town's website among other information also provides local entertainment schedules, a business directory, public announcements, local weather information, live cameras of the beach and boardwalk and an online payment option for payment of taxes, fees, and fines.

### 4-1a. Bethany Beach Public Works

The Town owns and operates a comprehensive Public Works Facility located approximately a quarter mile north of its northern border on the western side of state Route 1. The facility is fully staffed and provides a number of key operational services, including facilities maintenance, water-system maintenance and repair, refuse recyclable and yard waste collection and removal, drainage-system maintenance and repair, Town-vehicle maintenance and other miscellaneous services.

In 2016, the Town purchased a 7+ acre parcel of land on Blackwater Road in nearby Frankford, Delaware, which supplements the existing smaller Public Works Facility on state Route 1. Since then, the Town has constructed a large metal building to store vehicles as well as space, which has been fully equipped to serve as offices in the event of an emergency. It

also serves as an inland location to relocate all Town vehicles and services during major storm events such as hurricanes and Nor'easters.

#### **4-1b. Water and Wastewater**

The Town of Bethany Beach operates a Municipal Water-Supply System, which includes four wells that can provide a combined water supply of approximately 2,680 gallons per minute. In addition, the Town maintains two municipal water towers with a capacity of approximately 1,500,000 gallons. In 2015, the Town completed the construction of a 500,000-gallon elevated water storage facility and pump house that are both located next to the existing water tower. Together the two water storage facilities both meet current and future drinkable water needs for Bethany Beach. Future needs may include a replacement water treatment clarifier, abandonment of older water lines and meter replacement.

Agreements with the Sussex Shores Water Company to the north and Tidewater to the south have been made to provide additional water supply in times of emergency and periodic maintenance of the system. Wastewater services for the Town are provided by Sussex County. The details of water and wastewater services can be found in the infrastructure section of this chapter.

#### **4-1c. Police**

The Bethany Beach Police Department (BBPD) is a full-time police agency that provides year-round public safety to the residents and visitors of Bethany Beach.

The Bethany Beach Police Department has twelve uniformed officers and one civilian staff member. The BBPD became fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) on July 26, 2008. The Town's Police Department has been re-accredited by CALEA several times and most recently in 2020.

The BBPD met all 356 CALEA standards as part of the accreditation process. The BBPD was the first small department in Delaware (less than 50 officers) and one of a very few nationally to first become CALEA accredited in 2008. As a testimony to the quality of officers that the Department hires and trains, the BBPD has seen eight of its officers in the last several years leave BBPD and go to the Delaware State Police, which only hires highly qualified candidates.

The agency continues to provide a high level of professional law enforcement services to Bethany Beach that includes the hiring of additional seasonal officers to assist in the demand for police services. Each member of the Bethany Beach Police Department has a college degree. The tenure of police officers within the department ranges from Patrol Officers with less than one full year of service to the Chief of Police who is a 34-year veteran.

#### **4-1d. Fire and Rescue**

The Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company (BBVFC), Station 70, which is not directly affiliated with the Town, provides fire and rescue protection services for the Town of Bethany Beach. The service area of this station includes the greater Bethany Beach area, comprising approximately seventeen square miles. The company is well equipped and can provide extensive fire and rescue services, including firefighting, hazardous-material response, emergency medical response, vehicle extraction, and search and rescue. The BBVFC currently has approximately forty volunteer members. Of those members approximately fifteen are air

pack qualified volunteers, five are live-in members, and the rest are a mix of duty crew, service, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) members.

The BBVFC's equipment consists of two engines, two Quint ladder trucks, one tower ladder/rescue truck, one brush truck, three utility vehicles, one traffic control vehicle, one water rescue boat, three surf rescue jet skis, one special operations trailer, three ambulances, two EMS UTVs, one command vehicle and a five-ton high water vehicle.

The BBVFC also has three full-time employees. Two of the employees are Firefighter/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). They work a 4-days-on 4-days-off schedule from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. They are fully integrated into the operations of their staff that are funded by collaboration of the Towns of Bethany Beach, South Bethany, Fenwick Island, and the Sea Colony Recreation Association, "The Big Four" that is more fully described in the EMS Service section. The third employee is a full-time administrative assistant who supports day-to-day administrative duties.

#### **4-1e. EMS**

The BBVFC EMS Division is an unprecedented collaboration between the fire company and the property owners within the Towns of Bethany Beach, South Bethany, Fenwick Island, the Sea Colony Recreation Association, and several private community homeowners' associations. The financial commitment of these sponsors and others allowed for the EMS to begin providing service on December 31, 2008. The primary ambulance is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by a team of seven career Firefighter/EMTs and an EMS Chief. The second and third ambulances are staffed by part-time employees and volunteers between May and October, which is their peak season.

BBFC EMTs are certified by the State of Delaware and provide basic life support services. Sussex County EMS-Paramedics provide advanced life support services. Dispatch services are provided by the Sussex County Emergency Operations Center.

#### **4-1f. Beach Patrol**

The Town provides beach patrol services between Memorial Day and Labor Day as well as weekends through September for the approximately one-mile strand of beach owned and managed by the Town. The beach patrol is headed by a captain and employs a number of seasonal beach-patrol staff members who operate fourteen lifeguard stands along the beach.

#### **4-1g. Education and Libraries**

The Town of Bethany Beach hosts no public or private educational institutions, but students attend the various public, charter, religious, or private institutions in surrounding communities.

Bethany Beach is served by the Indian River School District. The elementary school, Lord Baltimore Elementary, is in nearby Ocean View. Selbyville Middle School serves grades six through eight. Indian River High School in Dagsboro provides secondary public-education services. The Southern Delaware School for the Arts in Selbyville is an option for students up to eighth grade. The Sussex Technical High School, in Georgetown, is also an option.

The Sussex County South Coastal Library is in the Town of Bethany Beach on Kent Avenue. The facility is operated by the Sussex County Library system and provides library services to the greater Bethany Beach area. The library houses over 50,000 items (books, audio

materials, video materials, and subscriptions). Library cardholders have free access to multiple databases through the State Library System; over 2,000 magazine titles, newspapers, and encyclopedias; meeting rooms available to organizations; public access computers; exhibit space; and other resources.

The library also offers free wi-fi and several community-based services, lectures, programs, such as story times, homework help, faxing, scanning, and photocopying.

#### **4-1h. Health Care**

The closest major hospital facility to Bethany Beach is Beebe Medical Center, located approximately 20 miles away in Lewes, Delaware. Beebe Medical Center also operates a year-round walk-in emergency center located approximately three miles away in Millville, Delaware. A helicopter-landing area is located on church property on the northside of Garfield Parkway across from the Town Hall, allowing for quick transport to regional medical facilities in the case of emergency medical or rescue situations. Beebe also recently opened the Beebe Healthcare's South Coast Emergency Department in Frankford, Delaware, approximately 6 miles from Bethany Beach. Atlantic General Hospital, approximately 15 miles away on U.S. Route 113 in Berlin, Maryland, is also an option.

#### **4-1i. State Services Center**

The State of Delaware operates the Edward W. Pyle State Services Center in Frankford, which provides several public services to residents in the region that includes Bethany Beach. The Division of State Service Centers provides services at this facility that include DART bus-ticket sales, emergency shelter services, and utility assistance. The Division of Social Services provides services at this facility that include food stamps and Medicaid. The Division of Public Health also offers services at this location, including child immunizations and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutrition program.

### **4-2. WATER, WASTEWATER, AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

#### **4-2a. Hydrology**

The water-table aquifer system servicing the Bethany Beach area is composed of sediments of the Pleistocene Age and sub-cropping of the deeper Manokin and Pocomoke aquifers of the Miocene Age. The depth to fresh water below land surface in the water-table aquifer is approximately 5–8 feet in the Bethany Beach area. The depths and dimensions of the three aquifers vary considerably.

The Pleistocene sand aquifer is an unconfined aquifer that is considered shallow, located at depths of less than 100 feet, which covers an area comprising most of Sussex County. The Pleistocene aquifer is approximately 130-feet-thick and receives extensive amounts of recharge from precipitation. The Manokin aquifer, located at depths of at least 175 feet, is a large aquifer of approximately 200 square miles. The Manokin aquifer ranges in thickness from 90 to 200 feet, with a yield potential estimated at 20–30 million gallons per day (mgd). The Pocomoke aquifer, located at depths of at least 125 feet is also a large aquifer. Approximately 90 square miles of the Pocomoke aquifer interfaces with the overlapping Pleistocene aquifer, and the Pocomoke aquifer holds an estimated 65 billion gallons of water. These aquifers are defined by a layer of earth material of lower permeability (such as clay) that confines the

water in the aquifer under pressure greater than that of the atmosphere. The artesian head also protects against external contamination. Salt-water contamination of the shallow Pleistocene aquifer could happen in periods of excessive drawdown (pumping) or seawater flooding accompanying storm surges.

It has been noted that there are high iron concentrations in the aquifers within Bethany Beach. This is caused by iron dissolved from practically all rocks and soils. Iron is also derived from pipes, pumps, and other water-system equipment. Treatment processes to remove dissolved iron are managed by Town personnel at the water treatment plant.

## 4-2b. Public Water Supply

The Bethany Beach water system provides public water service to the entire Town and to the outlying subdivisions of Salt Pond and Savannah's Landing. Ocean Way Estates also receives limited water service from the Town. The existing water plant on Collins Street is operating well under the maximum daily capacity. The Town of Bethany Beach is currently operating four production wells. Production well 5 draws from the Manokin aquifer, while the other three wells draw from the Pocomoke/Ocean City aquifer system. Table 12, below, details the wells' year of construction as well as their DNREC permitted capacity.

*Table 12. Water Well Data, Bethany Beach*

Well #	Year Constructed	Well Capacity	Aquifer
2	1967	380 gpm	Pocomoke
4	1980	800 gpm	Pocomoke
5	1990	500 gpm	Manokin
6	2010	1000 gpm	Pocomoke

Source: DNREC, Town of Bethany Beach (gpm = gallons-per-minute)

*Figure 2. Atlantic Coastal Plain Aquifer System*



## Water Usage and Capacity

The Town's capacity to serve residents with water exceeds the average use rates for both the entire year and the summer season. The Town's water-treatment plant has a daily production capacity of 1.75 mgd, with some capacity earmarked for the Salt Pond Development to the north of the Town, the Savannah's Landing Development to the west of the Town within the boundaries of the Town of Ocean View, and Ocean Way Estates to the west of the Town just across the Little Assawoman Canal.

Agreements between the Town and the operators of the water-supply systems for Sussex Shores and Tidewater Utilities provide for additional, or alternate, water supply in times of emergency and periodic maintenance of the Town's system. The Bethany Beach Water Treatment Plant continues to operate with a process train of flocculation, sedimentation, disinfection, filtration, pH adjustment, fluoridation, aeration.

The existing Bethany Beach distribution system is composed of a raw-water system and a treated-water system. The raw-water system connects wells 2, 4, 5 and 6 with the treatment plant. The distribution system is connected to the adjacent water systems of Sussex Shores to the north and Tidewater Utilities to the south. The current available volume in elevated and ground level storage is 1.60 million gallons. The elevated-storage facilities are centrally located and provide an even pressure distribution throughout the Town.

## Completed and Planned System Upgrades

Bethany has replaced over 1,000 feet of old water lines with the newer C900 along North Commercial Alley and Cedarwood Avenue, and South Atlantic Avenue. The water plant generator was replaced. The faulty aerator was removed at the Water Treatment Plant. The antiquated antennas and radios at the well building and water treatment plant were upgraded, and the inlet pipe on the 1-million-gallon standpipe was raised and modified. The Town also enhanced its saltwater intrusion monitoring efforts with the addition of new telemetry and transducers at monitoring wells along state Route 26 and Parkwood Ave. Future needs may include a replacement water treatment clarifier, abandonment of older water lines and meter replacement.

### 4-2c. Wastewater

Wastewater collection and treatment services are performed by Sussex County through an agreement with the Town of Bethany Beach. The Town is in the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District, which feeds into the Sussex County Regional Wastewater Facility near Ocean View. The Town has an agreement with Sussex County for the treatment of up to 3 million gallons per day (mgd). Considering that the Town's current maximum finished water-delivery capacity is 2.3 mgd, this arrangement fits well with the current and future needs of the Town.

### 4-2d. Stormwater Management

Stormwater management and flooding are significant issues in Bethany Beach, topping the Town's list of priorities alongside beach replenishment. Because of its relatively low elevation and frequent high tide events, the Town is extremely vulnerable to flooding. Though tidal inundation is possible during catastrophic weather events, most commonly (typically several times a year), flooding is caused by heavy precipitation coupled with a high tide that impedes

drainage. This is particularly problematic north of state Route 26. Tide levels appear far less involved in areas of Town south of state Route 26; however, heavy rains can and do still cause flooding.

The Town has worked diligently to upgrade and vigorously maintain its stormwater system. It also fully complies with Sussex Conservation District regulations, possesses a well-developed town-wide drainage plan, thoroughly reviews proposals for development or redevelopment, and has seeded a resiliency fund.

However, several factors beyond the Town's immediate control play a major role in the frequency and severity of flood events. For one, Bethany Beach is almost entirely built-out. Regardless of how thoughtful the Town's stormwater standards may be, there simply aren't very many opportunities to apply them. Other factors may include elevation, climatic processes, the character of existing structures and streets, and development in the surrounding county potentially increasing runoff.

Because of these wide-ranging issues, the Town has opted to explore the problem on a grander, even regional, scale. Most notably, it has developed a feasibility study for a mechanically actuated dam and a tidal flap gate to blunt tide effects in the Loop Canal that confound proper drainage from the existing system. As the issues of large-scale infrastructure, resiliency, sustainability, policies, and continued vitality clearly go well beyond the Town's stormwater management ditches, this document deals with them holistically in the "Environmental Sustainability" chapter. Below are the existing system details.

## **Stormwater System Description**

Stormwater Drainage Systems throughout the Town consist of both open swales and ditches as well as closed pipes. Open swales and ditches are considered best management practices (BMP) for stormwater management and are strongly encouraged. Vegetative swales and ditches help filter out these pollutants from runoff and reduce Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) levels. Phosphorus and Nitrogen have been identified as two of the major polluters of our Inland Bays.

## **Drainage Outfalls**

Most of the stormwater within the Town of Bethany Beach drains either directly or indirectly into the Bethany Beach Loop Canal. Water enters the Loop Canal from Pennsylvania Avenue from both direct outfall at Centennial Park and from the state Route 1 ditch system. Outfalls at Gibson Avenue drain directly into the Loop Canal. Large drainage ditches located at Hudson Avenue, Tingle Avenue, and Evans Avenue receive stormwater from the surrounding streets as well as a large drainage area south of state Route 26, including Fairway Drive, Collins Street (400 block), Lekites Street, and a large drainage area north of Collins Street between the Collins Street and Half Moon Drive intersections.

The drainage area south of Collins Street in the Half Moon Drive area, including Fenwood Circle, Radial Drive, and the outlying courts drains into a large ditch that runs parallel to Bethany West and outfalls into the Assawoman Canal. Lake Bethany, Bethany Glen, and the Westwood Development drain via a large ditch running west to east from state Route 26 to the marsh.

## System Maintenance

Drainage system maintenance remains a priority for the Town. The Public Works Department has developed a 172-item checklist for drainage system maintenance. This list includes all main ditches, basins, and outfall locations within the Town of Bethany Beach. All items are checked periodically, and corrective measures are performed when necessary. Known problem areas are checked and cleared prior to and after large rain/storm events. Main outfall ditches are cleared of debris and sediment annually as time permits. An outside contractor is hired annually to jet and vacuum clogged drainage pipes throughout Town. The Public Works Department identifies these clogged drainage pipes throughout the year. It is noted that property owners are required by the Town Code to keep all drainage ditches adjacent to their properties clear and free flowing.

## System Improvements

The Town continues to improve the existing stormwater drainage infrastructure. Large drainage projects requiring outside contractors are completed as funding becomes available. The Public Works Department continues to re-excavate ditches and replace driveway culverts as time allows. Culvert pipes crossing roadways that are failing or have failed are replaced as necessary by the Public Works Department.

### 4-2e. Government and Community Services Goals and Recommendations

#### Intergovernmental Coordination Goal

- Work collaboratively to address local and regional challenges that impact the future of the Town and other Delaware coastal communities.

#### Recommendations

- **Continue intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.** The Town should continue to work regionally to address common challenges, particularly as related to beach communities to include, for example, continuing to be an active participant in the Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT), the Delaware League of Local Governments (DLLG), the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT), the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA), and informal workgroups and formal training and networking opportunities, such as those provided by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware. In addition, the Town should continue its close relationship and ongoing communications with local, state, and federal representatives, officials, and agencies.
- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany beaches and dune structure to the Town cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished and maintained, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal

representatives, agencies and officials, as well as participation in Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

## Public Safety Services Goal

- As a priority responsibility and goal, continue to provide for necessary police, fire and rescue, emergency medical response and other protective services for the community.

## Recommendation

- **Continue to provide a high level of professional law enforcement services.** The Bethany Beach Police Department (BBPD), which has consistently met and exceeded the strict professional standards of the Commission on the Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) as one of the smallest departments in the United States and the smallest in Delaware accredited by CALEA, serves and protects the Town year-round. The permanent full-time officers in the Department are augmented by well-trained seasonal officers during the tourist season from Memorial Day to Labor Day and other designated days. In order to continue to provide this high level of professional law enforcement services, the Town should consider incentives to attract qualified candidates to maintain an appropriate level of staffing and training for both full-time and seasonal positions to meet law enforcement needs in the community.
- **Continue to support the Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company and its Emergency Medical Services Division.** The BBVFC and EMS are not part of the Town government. The BBVFC provides fire protection and rescue services for an approximate 17-square mile area that includes the Town of Bethany Beach. The Town provides financial support to the BBVFC, in addition to what it and the EMS receive from the State, County and other sources. The EMS receives funding from Bethany Beach, South Bethany, Fenwick Island, Sea Colony Recreational Association, and homeowner associations within the Bethany Beach Fire District under terms of an agreement to provide EMS services. The current agreement expires in December 2023, and the Town and other parties to the agreement should review and negotiate a new agreement with the BBVFC EMS to ensure continued professional EMS services for Bethany Beach residents and visitors.
- **Continue to maintain necessary level of staffing and training for Bethany Beach Patrol Lifeguards.** The Bethany Beach Patrol has a well-established record of providing the highest level of performance in protecting beachgoers, to include monitoring beach and ocean conditions, educating the public, maintaining safe conditions on the beach, and saving lives. To continue to provide this high level of protection for beachgoers, consideration should be given to providing incentives to attract qualified candidates to maintain the necessary level of staffing and training for Patrol lifeguards.
- **Continue to explore and pursue grants and low-interest loans for the Town.** As a faithful steward of taxpayer dollars, the Town government routinely seeks state and federal grants and loans. At various times, these have been applicable to infrastructure, town services, the beach, and a host of other areas.

## Additional Services Goal

- Continue to update and improve the Town's technology to provide convenient, reliable, secure communications and services needed by residents, businesses, and visitors to sustain the Town and its future growth.

## Recommendations

- **Continue to provide accessible, seamless, secure "Electronic Government" services by continually updating and securing the proper technology and equipment required to carry out governmental responsibilities efficiently and effectively.** The Town provides a wide range of services with few employees. Due to the uncertainty of the future labor market, and as the number of visitors and residents inside and outside the Town increase in the coming years, advanced technologies will become vital to enable Town staff to focus on mission-critical services and activities. New, advanced technologies may also help in improving the quality of life and public safety.
- **Continue to explore ways to provide seamless government services in the event of emergencies and natural disasters.** To continue to provide government services seamlessly in the event of such emergencies, in 2016, the Town purchased approximately seven acres of land outside the flood plain in Frankford. Since then, the Town has created alternative emergency administrative offices and police and public works facilities on the property. In addition, enclosed storage buildings provide security for stored vehicles and equipment. The Town should continue to explore means to sustain services and assist property owners during an emergency.
- **Continue to explore and pursue grants and low-interest loans for the Town.** As a faithful steward of taxpayer dollars, the Town government routinely seeks state and federal grants and loans applicable to infrastructure, Town services, the beach, and a host of other areas.
- **Ensure sufficient drinking water supply and storage.** Continue to use data such as construction permits and water demand to anticipate and prepare for increases in demand. The Town's recent construction of a half million-gallon water tower is an excellent example of this proactive approach, as is the installation of conductivity transducers to provide for real-time monitoring of Town wells to detect saltwater intrusion in the aquifers from which the Town's water supply is drawn. The Town will continue to embrace the use of science, data, and technology to ensure adequate and safe water to meet its current and future needs while maintaining compliance with all applicable regulations. Future needs may include an additional water treatment clarifier to provide redundancy, abandonment of older water lines and meter replacement.
- **Maintain water system plans and replacement/repair policies.** The Town has as-built technical schematics for its water system. It is imperative that these plans are maintained and kept up to date. The Town would like to ensure that maps and schematics for the water system continue to be maintained by investing in Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping and plan digitization. Further, the Town is satisfied with its existing policy on transmission line failure and replacement.

- **Continue intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.** Wastewater collection and treatment services are performed by Sussex County through an agreement with the Town of Bethany Beach. The Town is in the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District, which feeds into the Sussex County Regional Wastewater Facility near Ocean View. The Town has an agreement with Sussex County for the treatment of up to 3 million gallons per day (mgd). Considering that the Town's current maximum finished water-delivery capacity is 2.3 mgd, this arrangement fits well with the current and future needs of the Town. The Town should continue to work with Sussex County to ensure adequate and uninterrupted services.
- **Continue to meet or exceed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) stormwater regulations.** The Town has a detailed stormwater management improvements strategy and regularly performs necessary upgrades and repairs. Significant updates to the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Code (Chapter 453 of the Town Code) have been modified to meet or exceed State and Federal standards. Further code adjustments could be required if State or Federal standards are amended.
- **Continue to explore infrastructure and policy approaches to ameliorate flooding and drainage problems.** The Town's storm resilience fund (Storm Emergency Relief Fund), study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond, the existence of an active committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways for residents to minimize stormwater impacts are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has, and will, take to address flooding. The Town is actively participating in the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Back Bay Study and the DelDOT State Route 1 Coastal Corridor Resiliency Study. The Town may also consider policies developed by other coastal communities, such as Lewes' recent sea-level rise initiative. The "Green Bethany" initiative and this subject are addressed further in the sustainability and adaptability section of this Comprehensive Plan.
- **Maintain National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Class 8 (or better) rating.** Flood insurance is a significant cost for property owners in Bethany Beach. Because of this, the Town participates in NFIP's voluntary CRS incentive program, which recognizes community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum program requirements. As a result of the Town's actions, FEMA has approved a 10 percent rate reduction for eligible properties in Special Hazard Flood Areas. The Town should continue to adhere and adapt to NFIP requirements to retain the current discount.

# CHAPTER 5. HOUSING

This section of the Plan addresses the current and future housing needs of Bethany Beach, including a detailed analysis of the Town's housing stock and a plan for future housing based on the most recent U.S. Census data and Town records.

## 5-1. OVERVIEW

Housing is an important issue in Bethany Beach. Like many resort towns, housing is, in fact, one of the major revenue-producing assets in the beach economy. Issues such as flood insurance rates and sustainability are critical, not only to the Town's environment and natural features, but to its economic well-being.

Also, the number of homes in Town and Bethany Beach's full-time population do not appear to strongly impact each other. Put simply, there are far more homes than people who consider themselves year-round residents. In Bethany Beach, discussions regarding growth center around attracting more full-time residents, not on building homes or developments to accommodate new arrivals. Affordability, also, is a significant concern.

### Position on Housing Growth

*Bethany Beach welcomes ongoing investment in, and care and renovation of its existing residential properties, as well as conscientious redevelopment consistent with the Town's Code and community character.*

### Community Vision

*A thriving year-round residential community that seeks to preserve its family-friendly, small-town character and beauty while maintaining its roots as a quiet and safe beach resort for all.*

## 5-2. HOUSING STOCK

Table 13 shows data on the various housing types in Bethany Beach as of 2020. Single-family housing is the most prevalent (72.7%) followed by single-family attached (24.4%). Taken together, 97 percent of the community's housing stock is single-family. Both figures are considerably higher than figures for the State or Sussex County.

## 5-2a. Housing Stock Composition

Table 13. Housing Stock

Housing Type	Bethany Beach		Sussex County		Delaware	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Single Family, Detached	1,909	72.7%	91,660	65.1%	260,290	58.5%
Single Family, Attached	642	24.4%	14,040	10.0%	70,982	15.9%
2 to 4 Units	52	2.0%	3,723	2.7%	17,093	3.8%
5 to 9 Units	11	0.4%	4,742	3.4%	18,020	4.0%
10 to 19 Units	4	0.2%	3,032	3.2%	23,365	5.2%
20+ Units	0	0%	3,423	2.4%	22,376	5.0%
Mobile home	9	0.3%	19,973	14.2%	32,655	7.3%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0	0%	138	0.1%	323	0.1%
Total	2,627		140,731		445,104	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Communities Survey (ACS), DP04 5-year estimate

## 5-2b. Age of Housing Stock

Table 14. Year Structure Built

Year	Bethany Beach		Sussex County		Delaware	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Built 2014 or later	125	4.5%	13,398	9.5%	23,761	5.4%
Built 2010 to 2013	61	2.2%	8,978	6.4%	17,846	4.1%
Built 2000 to 2009	395	14.2%	38,304	27.1%	81,865	18.7%
Built 1990 to 1999	501	18.0%	23,801	16.9%	66,102	15.1%
Built 1980 to 1989	911	32.7%	19,419	13.8%	55,293	12.6%
Built 1970 to 1979	487	17.5%	14,216	10.1%	50,127	11.4%
Built 1960 to 1969	202	7.3%	6,753	4.8%	44,048	10.0%
Built 1950 to 1959	47	1.7%	6,573	4.7%	43,606	9.9%
Built 1940 to 1949	19	0.7%	3,072	2.2%	19,918	4.5%
Built 1939 or earlier	36	1.3%	6,609	4.7%	35,872	8.2%
Total housing units	2,784		141,123		438,438	

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 ACS, DP04

Despite consistent growth in recent years, the 1980s still represent the building boom for Bethany Beach. The Town has comparatively fewer “old” structures (built before 1959) than either Sussex County or the State. Development since 2000, as a percentage of total housing stock, has also trailed the County and the State. Sussex County, in particular, has seen sustained growth of newer homes.

## 5-2c. Housing Value

Homes in Bethany Beach continue to command a significant price. According to the 2020 American Communities Survey (ACS), the median home value for an owner-occupied unit in

Bethany Beach was \$557,000, roughly twice the comparable figures for the State (\$258,300) and Sussex County (\$269,700).

However, data on values over time are not as clear cut. According to the same ACS dataset from 2010, homes in the State and Sussex County have increased somewhat from 2010 figures of \$242,300 and \$243,700, respectively, to their present levels. Bethany Beach's 2010 figure was \$596,000, somewhat higher than the 2020 value. Drawing conclusions from small sample-size surveys can be problematic. Anecdotally, home prices in Bethany Beach seem robust. Data releases from the U.S. Census in the coming years may provide a more accurate representation of the housing values in the Town.

Re-assessments are also underway in Bethany Beach, and throughout Sussex County, for the first time since the 1970s. The process is expected to continue at least through the spring of 2023. Though the assessments and subsequent rate adjustments are intended to be revenue neutral overall, this does not mean they will necessarily have a uniform effect in Bethany Beach. As Table 15 shows, nearly half of the Town's homes were built between 1970 and 1989.

## 5-2d. Ownership and Vacancy

The Town's vacancy rate (82.4%) is much higher than that of Sussex County (36.6%) and the State of Delaware (16.9%), according to the 2020 ACS. The primary reason for the Town's high vacancy rate is that the U.S. Census includes seasonal, occasional, and summer rental properties under the vacant classification.

## 5-3. HOUSING PIPELINE

*Table 15. Home Construction*

<b>Housing Type</b>	<b>2016</b>		<b>2022</b>	
	#	%	#	%
Single Family, Detached	1,995	74.5	2,066	74.99
Single Family, Attached	457	17.1	463	16.81
Multi-Family	226	8.4	226	8.2
Total	2,678	100	2,755	100

Source: Bethany Beach Building Inspector documents, reviewed January 2023

Single-family attached and detached homes accounted for all new construction over the course of the past planning period. From 2016 to 2020, the Town added, roughly, eight homes per year. According to the Town, this picked up some in 2021, when 29 new permits were issued, including one permit for a duplex. Nine permits were issued the same year for demolition. Data for 2022 showed 29 permits for construction and 15 for demolition.

## 5-4. HOUSING NEEDS

As discussed previously, Bethany Beach is not in need of housing, per-se. Though local experience and casual observation do tend to give the picture that the Town is more active in the off-season than official data points suggest, the fact remains that, officially, the Town has more homes than it does full-time residents. No new homes would be required for the municipality to gain significant population, consistent with its stated desire to accommodate an increasing percentage of year-round residents and families. Any discussion of housing must recognize that, to Bethany Beach, housing is more of an economic issue than it is the

provision of an adequate supply. The Town is comfortable with the observed trends in housing development and redevelopment, as they are entirely consistent with its stated position on housing growth and its description of its preferred community character.

Still, affordability and seasonality are important considerations. While renting in Bethany Beach is often far more affordable in the winter months, this does little to offset the considerable costs associated with living year-round in the Town, particularly for working families or the many young people who work in the beach's tourism industry in the height of summer. The Town fully recognizes the importance of the availability of affordable housing to working families, but it believes that the historic and prevailing development and housing trends make it difficult to find a feasible solution within the Town. The Town recognizes this is an issue and is open to working with Sussex County and surrounding communities to search for solutions. Sussex County recently updated its Sussex County Rental Program (SCRP) ordinance, which promotes the creation of affordably priced workforce housing units within market-rate rental projects, using a variety of incentives such as expedited reviews, density bonuses, and design criteria. Bethany Beach is eager to discuss regional affordable housing opportunities with the County or other interested municipalities. In February 2023, representatives from the Town met specifically with the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) on this very issue. DSHA suggested the Town consider allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs), either within existing residential structures, or, potentially, accessory structures on the same lot. Another potential strategy that was considered was allowing limited residential rental opportunities above existing commercial uses.

## 5-5. BETHANY BEACH'S NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOMES

The "communities" map in the appendix illustrates the varied neighborhoods that, together, comprise the Town of Bethany Beach. The downtown and boardwalk areas feature a grid-style street pattern and some of the community's most concentrated development. West of state Route 1, the homes and street pattern reflect a slightly more suburban feel, as does the nature of the commercial offerings.

The Town's neighborhoods and varied housing types, including single-family homes, duplexes, and multi-family residential units are one of its key assets, as is its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. The diversity of housing and neighborhood types has proven attractive to buyers including retirees and those seeking a second home.

## 5-6. GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Goal**

- Support local, affordable housing initiatives by working with surrounding communities and the Sussex County government, as well as limiting, wherever possible, flood and homeowners' insurance costs to resident families.

## Recommendations

- **Support local affordable housing initiatives.** Continue to explore avenues of encouraging or supporting affordable housing within, or in proximity to Bethany Beach, particularly for the vital workforce needed as the Town evolves into a year-round destination.
- **Consider potential code revisions.** During the requisite follow up to this plan document (evaluation of the municipal zoning and subdivision ordinance), consider the feasibility of ADU allowances and the possibility of allowing residential opportunities above existing (or planned) commercial uses.
- **Maintain National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Class 8 (or better) rating.** Flood insurance is a significant cost for property owners in Bethany Beach. Because of this, the Town participates in NFIP's voluntary CRS incentive program, which recognizes community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum program requirements. As a result of the Town's actions, FEMA has approved a 10 percent rate reduction for eligible properties in Special Hazard Flood areas. The Town should continue to adhere and adapt to NFIP requirements to retain the current discount.

## Goal

- While Bethany Beach incrementally transitions into a year-round family-friendly destination, it strives to preserve the Town's existing community character and ambiance while continuing to build a sense of community for all.

## Recommendation

- **Encourage development and redevelopment compatible with the existing community fabric.** Bethany Beach has taken regulatory steps in its R-1 and R-1B Zoning Districts to encourage development of residential homes that are consistent with the historic character of Bethany Beach as a family-friendly beach resort and that are compatible with the residential homes in the surrounding neighborhood without blocking light and air flow to adjacent homes. The Town should track and analyze building permit applications to determine if its efforts are having the desired effect, if they need adjustment, and if there is any need to propose a similar approach for the R-2 District. The Town will monitor developments in the R-2 District to determine if a similar approach is needed.

# CHAPTER 6. TRANSPORTATION

This chapter provides an inventory of the transportation system in Bethany Beach and identifies issues that may need to be addressed. It details planned transportation improvements and makes recommendations to foster maximum mobility, via all modes, for residents and visitors using the Town's transportation network.

The Roads and Boundaries Map in the appendix shows Bethany Beach's transportation network. It includes streets, roads, sidewalks, trails, pathways, and bicycle routes.

## 6-1. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

Motor vehicle projects are, and likely will continue to be, the largest recipient of infrastructure funds. However, Delaware has increasingly focused on non-motorized transportation modes, namely walking and cycling, in many of its planning and policy initiatives. The State of Delaware has made significant investments in a series of trails and paths within major population and employment centers. Moreover, updated planning and engineering procedures have been enacted with the goal of ensuring bicycle and pedestrian improvements are incrementally built into the State's transportation network as regularly scheduled maintenance and construction is carried out.

In 2011, the State of Delaware established dedicated funding with the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 13, to explore and plan how "to create contiguous systems or networks of walkways and bikeways within and between cities and towns in Delaware in order to provide travelers with the opportunity for safe, convenient, cost-effective, and healthy transportation via walking and bicycling." Later that year, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) was initiated to implement the resolution. A number of projects have been completed, are underway, or are being planned. Over 75 miles of trails and pathways have reportedly been installed since 2011 alone, according to DNREC and the most recent Statewide Outdoor Comprehensive Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Operationally, DelDOT has been making a concerted effort to connect directly and electronically with its customers. In addition to traditional tools like variable message signs, traffic hotlines, and traffic radio, the State of Delaware has deployed an interactive website and, more recently, the DelDOT App, a smartphone traffic application. The department has also developed a considerable social media presence, which it leverages to provide real-time updates.

The Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC), commonly known as DART, has a bus tracker tool on its app. The tool allows transit users to see when their bus will arrive and also to track their bus in real time. DelDOT also shares this data with Google, benefitting both services. DART's app also facilitates fare payment via smartphone.

In May 2016, Senate Bill 130 was signed into law, creating the framework for Complete Community Enterprise Districts. These districts would encourage master planning, development supportive of transit, and an interior transportation network conducive to the first- and last-mile pedestrian and cycling trips that are so often the weakest link in fixed-route transit. Creation of said districts would require one or several jurisdictions to enter into an MOU with DelDOT. No initiatives were yet underway at the time of this plan's completion.

Another planning step of note is the availability of Transportation Improvement Districts (TIDs) as an alternative to numerous traffic impact studies (TISs) that are traditionally required in the approval process of developments of significant scale. The regulations and procedures required for a TID are laid out in DelDOT's 2016 Development Coordination Manual.<sup>1</sup>

According to the manual, TIDs are "a geographic area defined for the purpose of securing desired improvements to transportation facilities in the area." Instead of required improvements being identified piecemeal, as development comes online, a municipal master plan may identify, in partnership with DelDOT, all the improvements that an area will need to achieve build-out. These may then be addressed systematically.

Finally, DelDOT has created a team of circuit-rider planners (one for each county). These planners engage directly with municipalities and act as a point of contact for all DelDOT-related inquiries a town might have. Crucially, one of their primary responsibilities is to engage with municipalities early in any relevant planning projects, whether they be major subdivisions, comprehensive plan updates, master plans, or roadway or sidewalk studies. Given that the State maintains the vast majority of lane miles in Delaware, and within most municipalities, early input from DelDOT should prove invaluable in allowing towns to develop an implementable transportation and development plan. This planning document is an example of the above approach.

## 6-2. BETHANY BEACH OVERVIEW

The future of the Town of Bethany Beach will be impacted by the quality of its transportation facilities and the successful integration of land use and transportation decisions. The recent and ongoing surge in growth and development in Sussex County, particularly in and around its coastal areas, will continue to challenge the Town's transportation infrastructure. An extremely popular destination in its own right, the Town of Bethany Beach sits squarely along the route to larger resort towns to the north and south, most notably, Rehoboth Beach to the north and Ocean City, Maryland, to the south. State Route 1, the State's major regional transportation corridor, bisects the Town north-to-south, while state Route 26 is the major east-to-west arterial route. The seasonal nature of Delaware's coastal area and its recreational population creates unique challenges to transportation planning and management. During most of the year, use of the existing infrastructure is limited to the small, but growing, year-round population.

During the summer months, this infrastructure is highly utilized and stressed due to local and regional recreational traffic. Considering the growing permanent population and the sheer size of the growing recreational summer population it is not only sensible, but also crucial, to plan for the needs of the summer population.

This approach will allow for the provision of necessary capacity and facilities during peak months and provide for the increasing number of year-round residents into the foreseeable future. The capacity to preserve and/or enhance these routes to ensure adequate and convenient mobility for the Town's year-round populace and seasonal residents is critical to maintaining the Town's charm and the quality of life of its inhabitants. This concept is applied in the sections below, which include research and discussion regarding the Town's major

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<sup>1</sup> Report available online at:  
[https://deldot.gov/Business/subdivisions/pdfs/changes/Development\\_Coordination\\_Manual-Chapter\\_2.pdf?041116](https://deldot.gov/Business/subdivisions/pdfs/changes/Development_Coordination_Manual-Chapter_2.pdf?041116)

roadways, municipal streets, public transportation services, pedestrians and bicycle infrastructure, and other related issues.

Several unique issues exist regarding state Routes 1 and 26, including access, regional traffic, local traffic, and vehicle speed. In addition, a significant level of need exists regarding pedestrian access in Town, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and local vehicle speed. The following sections discuss each of these issues in detail, providing specific data where needed to allow a comprehensive analysis of all transportation-related issues.

## 6-3. ROADS AND TRAFFIC

The transportation system in Bethany Beach consists of roadways, sidewalks, pathways, and rideable shoulders. This section of the transportation chapter provides a brief overview of the major modes of transportation in Town.

### 6-3a. Roadways

The Town of Bethany Beach sits squarely along the route to larger resort towns to the north and south, most notably, Rehoboth Beach to the north and Ocean City, Maryland, to the south. State Route 1, the State's major regional transportation corridor, bisects the Town north-to-south, while state Route 26 is the major east-to-west arterial route. Kent Avenue and North Pennsylvania Avenue (town-owned roadway) provide local connectivity to points North and South.

The multi-year state Route 26, Atlantic Avenue from Clarksville to the Assawoman Canal construction project was completed in 2016. The existing roadway was widened to provide one eleven-foot travel lane in each direction with the addition of five-foot wide bike lanes on the shoulders of the roadway in each direction. A twelve-foot shared center left turn lane was also added along the entire length of the project. Separate right turn lanes and left turn lanes were included at each intersection. Sidewalks and drainage systems were also constructed for most of the roadway segments through Ocean View and Millville.

Kent Avenue (state Route Alternative 54) is a two-lane highway that extends to and from Route 26 to the Town limits. It is approximately one-half mile in length and is a well-traveled vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian thoroughfare. DelDOT has reduced the speed limit from 35 to 25 miles per hour as requested by the Town.

### Municipal Streets

As of late 2022, Bethany Beach was responsible for nearly 20 (19.93) miles of roadway maintenance. The list of street names is too extensive to list or illustrate in the body of the plan, but it is included in the appendix. On the other hand, the State is responsible for 4.08 miles of roadway. Citizens interested in a high-definition view of state versus municipally maintained streets may visit <https://deldot.gov/Programs/gate/index.shtml> and choose "Road Maintenance Responsibility."

Two issues are readily noted regarding municipal streets. First, drainage and flooding along streets north of Route 26 and Garfield Parkway have been indicated as an area of major concern for many residents. One third of the Town is subject to flooding approximately 10 percent of the year. This is basically every street north of Garfield Parkway and Route 26. The periodic flooding of these streets prevents local mobility and creates safety hazards for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The issue of drainage and flooding is addressed in more

detail in the natural resources and sustainability chapter. Second, the issue of the speed of traffic along some local streets has been cited as an issue. Residents cited Collins Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Atlantic Avenue as the most critical areas. An aggressive and visible enforcement posture serves to slow traffic. However, the Town feels strongly that the critical issue is not enforcement, but an unsafe posted speed limit of 25 mph. Bethany Beach would much prefer a speed limit of no more than 20 mph for these areas.

Vehicle speeds have a significant impact on the number and severity of vehicle-pedestrian accidents that occur, and reduced vehicle speeds have been connected to increases in community health and welfare, especially for the elderly and children. The Town will continue to work with legislators to pass legislation enabling municipalities to set reasonable, safe, and enforceable speed limits on their streets. Speed enforcement is not the issue. The inability of the Town to set a reasonable and safe enforceable speed is the issue.

*Table 16. Traffic Counts – Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)*

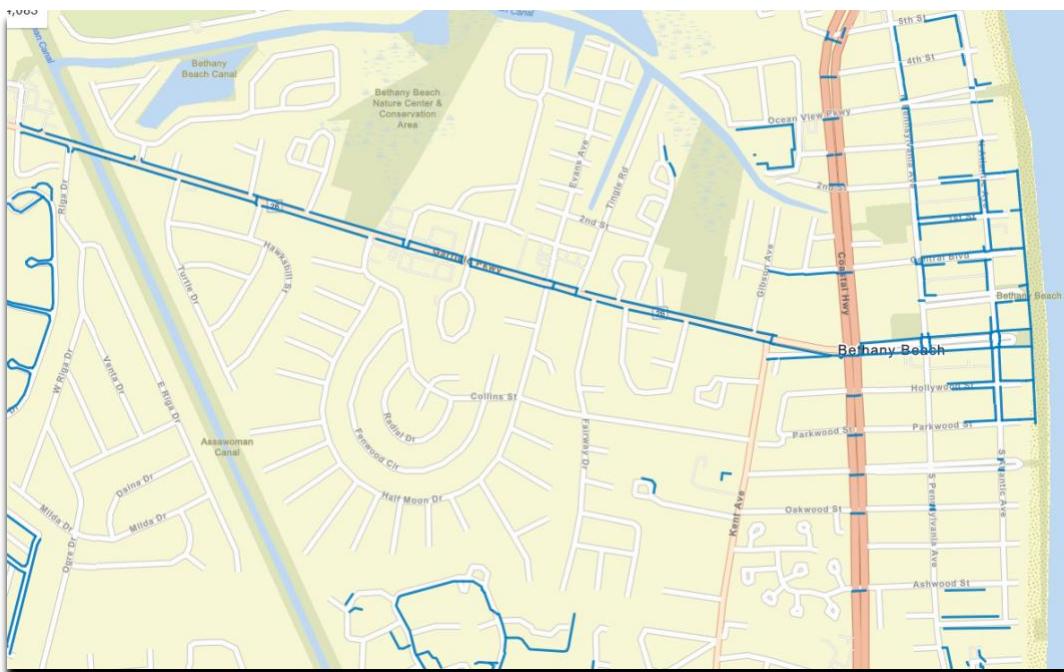
	<b>State Route 1 Coastal Highway</b>		<b>State Route 26 Garfield Parkway</b>	
Year	Count	% +/-	Count	% +/-
2021	33,420	22.31%	12,937	22.31%
2020	27,324	-20.50%	10,577	-20.50%
2019	34,370	3.43%	13,305	3.43%
2018	33,231	-1.22%	12,864	-3.78%
2017	33,642	2.35%	13,370	16.53%
2016	32,871	1.58%	11,473	1.58%
2015	32,360	4.20%	11,295	4.03%
2014	31,056	1.10%	10,857	-6.90%
2013	30,718	1.60%	11,662	-0.77%
2012	30,234		11,752	

Source: DelDOT, 2022

Traffic on state Routes 1 and 26 have increased modestly over the past ten years with dips and rebounds associated with Covid restrictions clearly seen in the data in Table 16. In both cases, slow and relatively steady increases are seen with traffic volumes on each road segment for which the State gathers data almost precisely ten percent higher than a decade ago.

### 6-3b. Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

As Figure 3 shows, sidewalk coverage is not uniform in Town. This leads to the concern of pedestrians and cyclists interacting, competing, and potentially conflicting with vehicular traffic and each other. In 2017, the Town completed a traffic calming study that concluded as much. It is recommended the Town provide additional bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within the study area where none exists in a prioritized fashion. Specific recommendations ranged from enhancing crosswalks and adding speed bumps to the more extensive enhancements, such as widening the paved areas and edge striping for pedestrians, or the outright construction of sidewalks and pathways.

**Figure 3. Bethany Beach Sidewalk Network**

Source: FirstMap 2022

Note: Sidewalks shown in blue

The study itself is somewhat dated, with some recommendations having already been carried out. As recently as July 2022, the Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee recommended a new, comprehensive traffic study for the Town. It is recommended the study incorporate more than technical reviews of the infrastructure within Bethany Beach. Homeowners, business owners, and relevant trade or civic associations should be fully engaged to arrive at a broad consensus on the desirability of sidewalks and pathways, bike lanes, and similar infrastructure throughout the Town.

Separate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians are important, but are not always unanimously popular, particularly with property owners potentially impacted by easements, construction, or disturbances to landscaping. Others may prefer not to be responsible for routine maintenance. A deliberative public process, as well as grant monies and municipal acceptance of maintenance responsibility, may go a long way toward creating a unified vision for the municipality. Once accomplished, this vision is more easily phased into a capital improvements plan.

### 6-3c. Level of Traffic Stress

According to DelDOT data, from a technical point of view, the Town's streets appear quite favorable for cycling. Recently, DelDOT has implemented a "Level of Traffic Stress" system that ranks roadways as to their bikeability. Very generally speaking, the streets are classified one through four based on a variety of factors such as traffic volume, speed, width of shoulder, intersections, etc. Level one is generally suitable for novice cyclists (children, renters), and level two is for the casual cyclist riding for recreation or the odd errand. Levels three and four are reserved for the dedicated, even fearless, variety who routinely commute

or competitively ride. According to DelDOT's analysis, virtually all of Bethany Beach's local and collector streets are level one. However, the Town does not believe this methodology is always accurate in illustrating bikeability in and around Bethany Beach. Many narrow residential streets, both east and west of state Route 1, carry an incredible number of cars, pedestrians, and cyclists during the ever-expanding summer season and provide low levels of safety for those pedestrians and cyclists. And, despite having both sidewalks and designated bike lanes, many residents do not believe that state Route 26 is particularly safe, and a significant percentage of cyclists choose to utilize the sidewalks. The Town understands that the Level of Traffic Stress methodology is a broad brush. The Town has currently contracted with The Traffic Group to conduct an overarching Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Study to attempt to address these issues and many other safety concerns in coordination with DelDOT where appropriate.

### 6-3d. Public Transportation

Year-round public transportation is unavailable in Bethany Beach. While several taxi companies and other Internet connected car services operate from neighboring resort towns to provide some transportation service, residents are largely limited to private automobiles, bicycles, or walking.

During the summer season, the Town operates a trolley service that provides local transportation to residents and visitors. The Town's shuttle service route and schedule can be viewed at <http://www.townofbethanybeach.com/268/Trolley>.

*Table 17. Bethany Beach Trolley Stops*

<b>Trolley Stops</b>	
1	Atlantic Avenue & Garfield Parkway
2	Atlantic Avenue & First Street
3	Atlantic Avenue & Ocean View Parkway
4	Armory Training Center
5	Canal Development & Ocean View Parkway
6	Town Park & Central Boulevard
7	Second Street & Tingle Avenue
8	Villas of Bethany West at Pool
9	Nature Center & Tree Top Lane
10	Turtle Walk, Turtle Drive
11	Turtle Walk, Leatherback Lane
12	Bethany West, Half Moon Drive at Tennis Court
13	Bethany West, Half Moon Drive & Tudor Court
14	Collins Street
15	Bethany Proper & Pool
16	Atlantic Avenue & Ashwood Street
17	Atlantic Avenue & Wellington Parkway

Source: Town of Bethany Beach

A public survey indicated that most residents were very satisfied with the Town's trolley service. The Town may wish to consider expansion of the existing successful service to accommodate growing demand in the coming years. DelDOT provides DART bus service to and through Bethany Beach during the summer and early fall. Private shuttles from surrounding communities are also permitted to pick up and drop off passengers at designated locations between certain hours in compliance with the Town's Code.

While DART and private shuttle services provide an alternative to driving and walking, they also facilitate a significant influx of beachgoers to the Town's already crowded beachfront.

DART stops in or near Town are spread out along state Route 1 and Pennsylvania Avenue. To the North, near the Salt Pond, there are a pair of stops at Fred Hudson Road. Another pair are situated at the intersection of Garfield Parkway and Pennsylvania Avenue. Several blocks to the South, there are another pair on either side of Pennsylvania Avenue at Maplewood Street. There are also stops on Pennsylvania Avenue at Sea Colony.

According to DelDOT, all the stops are simple concrete pads without shelters or benches. All are served by DART Route 208. This route, the "Blue Line," runs between the Rehoboth Park and Ride and Ocean City, Maryland. Service begins shortly before 8 a.m. and ceases in the early morning hours, as of Summer 2022.

Ridership on the Bethany Beach Trolley had been robust and generally increasing over the past ten years but did see a significant decline during the Covid restrictions, see Table 18.

*Table 18. Trolley Ridership*

Fiscal Year Ending	Memorial Day	Labor Day	Total Riders	Change from prior year
2022	5/30/2022	9/5/2022	34,084	10%
2021	5/31/2021	9/6/2021	31,030	-30% <i>note Covid</i>
2020	5/25/2020	9/7/2020	NA	NA
2019	5/27/2019	9/2/2019	44,597	9%
2018	5/28/2018	9/3/2018	40,757	0.50%
2017	5/29/2017	9/4/2017	40,501	-1%
2016	5/30/2016	9/5/2016	40,889	1%
2015	5/25/2015	9/7/2015	40,295	1%
2014	5/26/2014	9/1/2014	39,821	5%
2013	5/27/2013	9/2/2013	37,813	13%
2012	5/28/2012	9/3/2012	32,993	

Source: Town of Bethany Beach, 2022

Trolley routes and schedules continue to be monitored for safety and convenience, with appropriate modifications made accordingly. During the 2017 summer season the Town began using a GPS based Internet application that can be used by residents and summer visitors for locating Town trolleys. In addition to the routine trolley service, the Town also arranges transportation on special occasions, such as Sussex County's Return Day, Christmas caroling, VIP visits, field trips, parades, and other special events as requested by Town Council and the Town Manager.

## 6-4. PLANNED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS AND STUDIES

### 6-4a. Studies

In mid-2022, the Town contracted with The Traffic Group to perform a comprehensive Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety study. Older pedestrian and cyclist safety studies were completed in 2005 (funded by DelDOT) and in 2017. However, vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist traffic continue to increase yearly at an incredible rate, and the issue of pedestrian and bicycle safety continues to be a major concern to residents and visitors of Bethany Beach. The new study will focus on and investigate how pedestrians and cyclists interact with traffic, with the goal of providing a more detailed list of recommendations which are more relevant to current conditions.

### 6-4b. Planned Improvements

A DelDOT review of planned capital improvements for DelDOT-owned roadways in Bethany Beach showed no significant new projects planned or anticipated for the next five years. Suggestions on possible improvements on Town-owned and controlled roadways will come from the 2022 The Traffic Group Study, noted above. At that time, the town will endeavor to build community consensus on projects or recommendations where needed and explore feasibility and funding options, in partnership with DelDOT when appropriate.

## 6-5. TRANSPORTATION GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Goal

- Improve the flow of multi-modal transportation throughout the Town.

### Recommendations

- **Continue to Coordinate with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to improve traffic safety.** The Garfield Parkway Streetscape project is one example of local coordination with DelDOT to promote traffic safety. Other examples include the installation of overhead lights in the median and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at several intersections on state Route 1. The Town should also continue working with DelDOT on a plan to build a pedestrian pathway along the west side of Kent Avenue, connecting the Town's planned pedestrian and bicycle pathway along the south side of Collins Street with another pathway along the south side of the 300 block of Wellington Parkway with another RRFB on Kent Avenue at the Library. The Town should continue this partnership by coordinating with DelDOT's designated planner for Sussex County. The Town values its relationship with DelDOT and has consulted with DelDOT during the development of this plan.
- **Pedestrian and bicycle safety program.** Continue the well-regarded programs offered by the Bethany Beach Police Department providing safety equipment and advice for cyclists and pedestrians.

- **Pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.** Continue to study conditions and implement safety improvements such as those developed and recommended by the Bethany Beach Police Department and the Town's Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee. These have included educational videos and safety campaigns. In addition, a comprehensive traffic and bike and pedestrian safety study and analysis for the Town is expected to develop alternative roadway improvements to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety while maintaining vehicular traffic flow. The study may also evolve into the development of an action plan for the purpose of applying for a Federal SS4A (Safe Streets and Roads for All) Implementation Grant.
- **Local roadway safety.** The Town should continue to work with South Bethany, Sea Colony, Middlesex, and DelDOT on a study of traffic on state Route 1 with a goal of lowering the speed limit through those communities to 30 mph from 35 mph and another study of traffic on state Route 26 to determine if the data justify the lowering of the speed limit on that road as well. The Town should also continue to work with DelDOT on its goal of lowering the speed limit on municipal streets from 25 mph to 20 mph. The Town should continue to work with other municipalities through the DLLG to effect a legislative change that would enable local jurisdictions to set a speed limit of 20 mph on its own streets without an engineering and traffic investigation so long as the jurisdiction has developed procedures for doing so based on a revised Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- **Enforcement.** Continue effective enforcement of speed and crosswalk regulations, as well as addressing citizen concerns about traffic calming measures mostly seasonal but sometimes year-round.
- **Intergovernmental coordination.** Funding for local roadway maintenance and improvement, most notably through the Municipal Street Aid Fund and the Community Transportation Fund, are critical to towns like Bethany Beach. In addition to working closely with DelDOT, the Town should continue to pursue political avenues, including working with elected State representatives and the DLLG, to secure adequate funding.
- **Support local transit.** The Town's trolley service, a beloved part of the Town's character, reduces vehicular traffic in Town. The trolleys transport over 30,000 passengers annually during the summer season. Though this alone does not prevent congestion, it is well worth continuing or possibly expanding, depending on circumstances. The Town continues to pursue opportunities for increasing ridership. In an effort to do this, the Town began offering "free" ridership during the summer of 2023.
- **Parking management.** Continue to effectively manage the Town's parking inventory and provide for any needed policy or Town Code revision, as well as continuing to support local transit which includes coordinating permits and monitoring private shuttle usage from adjacent communities into and out of Town at designated and controlled locations.

# CHAPTER 7. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT

This section of the Plan presents a profile of the Town's economic and community resources, including man-made structures, places and objects, and natural resources and community capacities. This section will also provide details regarding some current community-development projects being undertaken by the Town.

## 7-1. ECONOMIC PROFILE

### 7-1a. Labor Pool

Although U.S. Census survey data has limitations in a seasonal community like Bethany Beach, the trend does point to modestly increasing jobs. Trends are less apparent in a category-by-category reading. Clearly, retail, finance, and professional services make up the bulk of the Town's employment. The observed volatility is most likely due to polling limitations and do not indicate massive, rapid shifts.

*Table 19. Occupation by Industry*

Industry	2009 Jobs (% of total)	2015 Jobs (% of total)	2020 Jobs (% of total)
Agriculture	(<.01%)	0(0%)	0 (0%)
Construction	42 (12.3%)	6 (2%)	5 (1.3%)
Manufacturing	18 (5.3%)	14(4.7%)	10 (2.6%)
Wholesale Trade	5 (1.5%)	12(4.1%)	12 (3.1%)
Retail Trade	66 (19.4%)	28 (9.5%)	96 (24.6%)
Transportation	-(<0.1%)	0(0%)	5 (1.3%)
Information	9 (2.6%)	11 (3.7%)	3 (0.8%)
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	35 (10.2%)	20(6.8%)	61 (15.6%)
Professional Services	23 (6.7%)	60(20.3%)	57 (14.6%)
Education	60 (17.5%)	48(16.2%)	39 (8.7%)
Arts and Entertainment	37 (10.8%)	42(14.2%)	28 (7.2%)
Other Services	26 (7.6%)	46(15.5%)	41 (10.5%)
Public Administration	21 (6.1%)	9(3%)	34 (8.7%)
Total	342 (100.0%)	296 (100.0%)	391 (100%)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2015, & 2020 American Community Survey (ACS)

## 7-1b. Unemployment and Labor Force Participation

*Table 20. Unemployment and Labor Force Participation*

	Bethany Beach	Sussex County	Delaware	United States
Unemployed (20–64 year olds)	6.20%	4.50%	5.40%	5.00%
Labor Force Participation Rate	61.40%	75.60%	78.30%	77.90%
Labor Force (20–64 year olds)	396	119,399	556,328	192,294,395

Source: 2020 U.S. Census ACS, S2301

Bethany Beach's unemployment figures fell in line with figures for the State, County, and Nation, particularly given the significant margin for error (3.5%) indicated in the municipal-level American Communities Survey (ACS) survey. A comparatively smaller percentage of those who identify as full-time residents appear to be active in the labor force. This is not uncommon in a resort-style community.

## 7-1c. Travel to Work

Commute times for Bethany Beach residents were nearly identical to those for residents of Sussex County and the State of Delaware. The median time reported by the 2020 ACS for each was approximately 27 minutes.

Bethany Beach workers were over twice as likely as their counterparts in the county or state to work from home (nearly 20%). Another outlier was the percentage of respondents (8.5%) that indicated "other means." Perhaps this could be walking or bicycling. These aside, Bethany Beach residents mirrored the larger populations surveyed in that "drove alone," was the most common means of travel.

## 7-2. ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Including all categories of commercial enterprise, the Town of Bethany Beach hosts more than 100 businesses in a fairly diverse local economy. Businesses in the Town operate in a wide range of categories, including retail, service, food, hospitality, recreation, and banking. Collectively, the Town's economic sector employs hundreds of permanent, full-time workers and seasonal personnel. Bethany Beach has begun to see a trend in all sectors of an extended business season. Some businesses now operate year-round and provide services to full-time residents and visitors. The sections below detail the number and type of businesses that operate in the Town for each category, as defined by the Bethany-Fenwick Chamber of Commerce.

### 7-2a. Accommodations

The Town of Bethany Beach boasts many single-family homes and townhouses that are rented periodically during the summer months, as well as an upscale hotel and a quaint bed and breakfast. In 2015, a 112-room Marriott Residence Inn (Bethany Beach Ocean Suites) opened at the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Hollywood Street.

With the increasing number of permanent residents in the Town and the subsequent expected decrease in available rental homes, the market demand for such formal

accommodations may increase substantially. However, the maintenance of the existing accommodations in the Town coupled with the decreasing availability of rental houses may contribute significantly to the Town's overall goal of establishing a family-oriented, quiet, residential community.

## 7-2b. Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation

Bethany Beach has seen an increase in a variety of programs being offered locally through the Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee (CHAC) in Bethany Beach, including films and lectures. The Town offers bandstand performances from April through October and partners with the local chamber of commerce to host holiday programs and winter events, such as Fire and Ice. The South Coastal Library hosts plays, Arm-Chair Traveler, lectures, and poetry at the beach, and the Nature Center Museum also offers lectures year-round.

There are other venues available, including Dickens Parlour Theatre, Milton Theater, Rehoboth Theatre of the Arts, plays presented by Clear Space Productions, the Ocean City Convention Center and Freeman Stage in Selbyville. However, in many cases it requires Bethany Beach residents to travel to other communities to attend. The Town's objective is to create an atmosphere that will attract residents of the Town, visitors, and members from nearby communities to enjoy and shop in Bethany Beach on a more year-round basis. This objective is being fulfilled by providing a variety of successful events in the shoulder seasons (April–May and September–December). It is important for the business community to be convinced that it is cost effective to remain open year-round. This could also be helped if working families feel they could live in Bethany Beach and work remotely or find other vocational opportunities.

Recreationally, the Town provides several public parks: the Loop Canal Park, Central Park, a much larger public park located at the northwest corner of state Routes 1 and 26, a pocket park located adjacent to Town Hall, and a public playground area at the northwest corner of Garfield Parkway and Pennsylvania Avenue (land leased from the Disciples of Christ Church). There is also, of course, the public beach and boardwalk along the Town's eastern border. At the center of the Town's boardwalk is a public bandstand and plaza area. One of the Town-owned wetlands areas, the 27-acre Natter Property, has been developed by the Town as a nature center and park and is seasonally staffed to provide educational eco-tours.

Bethany Beach is also near other recreational opportunities including kayaking, golfing, tennis, nature trails, biking and walking trails and athletic fields. Nearby Ocean View provides John West Park, Millville provides Evans Park and just north of Bethany Beach sits Fresh Pond Trailhead. Also north, the Bayshore Campsites and Holts Landing State Park are a 15–20-minute drive. Additionally, the James Farm Preserve and Delaware Seashore State Park can be found to Bethany Beach's north. A few miles south, the Assawoman Recreation Area and the Fenwick Island State Park are within easy reach. The Pyle Center Softball/Little League fields are 20-minutes west in Frankford. Ocean City, Maryland, hosts the nearest indoor general purpose recreation facility, featuring pickleball and basketball, with the Ocean City Tennis Center just a few minutes further south on state Route 1.

## 7-2c. Restaurants and Eateries

The Town of Bethany Beach hosts more than 30 restaurants and eateries, offering a range of options from fast food to elegant dining. In addition, approximately a third of these

establishments remain open all year, providing year-round Town residents with a substantive selection of dining experiences throughout the year.

The variety of cuisine offered by the Town's restaurants is impressive, including Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, vegetarian, seafood, pizza, deli and subs, steakhouse grill, and many others. During the summer season, Town eateries offer a wide range of snack foods, frozen novelties, and specialty candies in addition to many more restaurant options. In all, the Town of Bethany Beach features many dining options that provide year-round services for seasonal residents and visitors as well as permanent residents.

### **7-2d. Professional Services**

The Town hosts relatively few establishments that offer professional services, which may be due to the seasonal nature of the Town and the high cost of renting space in the downtown commercial district. More than a dozen real estate brokers operate in Town (many in home offices). Banking, repair and maintenance, clothing cleaning and tailoring, and design services are available but very limited due to Bethany Beach's small size. Most of these services are provided in the surrounding communities. An extensive list of professional services that are currently available in Bethany Beach and in the surrounding communities can be found at the Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce website, at [thequietresorts.com](http://thequietresorts.com).

### **7-2e. Retail Stores**

Bethany Beach boasts more than 60 retail stores that offer a diverse mix of products and services. While this may seem to be a good number for the small community of Bethany Beach, most of these retail establishments are specialty stores that are open only a few months during the year. Bethany Beach is beginning to see a trend of businesses remaining open beyond the summer months. While some essential retail shops such as convenience stores and grocery stores in nearby communities remain open all year, most of the specialty clothing and gift shops that provide diversity and richness to the retail business sector in Bethany Beach cater specifically to the summer crowds. The Town works with the Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce and the Bethany Beach businesses to continue to create ongoing shoulder and off-season events to help develop Bethany Beach's business district as a year-round shopping and dining destination.

## **7-3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

### **7-3a. Recent Accomplishments**

#### **Garfield Avenue Streetscaping**

Bethany Beach has worked hard to attract and direct public and private investment. In 2015, the Town and the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) completed a major streetscaping project along Garfield Avenue, improving sidewalks, burying utilities, enhancing access to those with disabilities, adding bicycle amenities, and adding traffic calming.

#### **Bethany Beach Central Park**

In 2019, the Town broke ground on Bethany Beach Central Park. It was completed in 2020. Bethany Beach Central Park is a 6.8-acre site located at the northwest corner of state

Routes 1 and 26 in Bethany Beach. It is the largest public passive park in the area and serves as the prime gateway into the Town. Through much public outreach, the Town turned empty fields into a walkable, community-centered park.

The Park includes a pavilion and large open lawn for special events, benches, and a community garden. There are approximately .75 miles of walking paths in the park. The park utilizes rain gardens as a means of stormwater management.

### **South Atlantic Avenue Project**

In 2018, the Town completed large-scale reconstruction of South Atlantic Avenue and Cedarwood Street. This construction addressed drainage issues by replacing impervious pavement with pervious pavement. The project also addressed bicycle and pedestrian safety, ADA compliance, and crosswalk markings.

### **Comcast Franchise Agreement**

In November 2020, the Town Council signed a ten-year franchise agreement with Comcast for cable television services. In 2022, Comcast finished installation throughout the community and is now offering cable, internet, and phone services to all of Bethany Beach. The Bethany Beach community now has two options for cable and telecommunication service. It is hopeful that this accomplishment will help toward the goal of becoming a thriving year-round residential community.

### **Mediacom Franchise Agreement**

In 2021, The Town also renewed its existing cable franchise agreement with Mediacom for four years. The Town was able to work with Mediacom during these negotiations to obtain improvements to Mediacom's existing infrastructure, equipment, rates, network, and service throughout Bethany Beach. Mediacom also offers cable, internet, and phone services to the Bethany Beach and surrounding areas.

### **The Dinker-Irvin Museum**

In April 2022, the Town dedicated the Dinker-Irvin Museum. The Town moved the Dinker cottage from its original location approximately 150–200 feet west onto Town property. The cottage, now the Dinker-Irvin Museum, presents the history of the house as well as early Bethany Beach history. The Bethany Beach Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee succeeded in its efforts to have the cottage included on the National Registry of Historic Places.

### **7-3b. Planned Investments**

The Town invests considerable time and effort into developing and promoting a full slate of year-round cultural, historic, civic, and outdoor activities designed to stimulate economic activity during the off months. This work, much of it by the Cultural and Historical Affairs Committee, is ongoing.

The Town is developing pedestrian and bicycle safety upgrades throughout. A major scoping effort is underway for the development of a mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and a tidal gate at Fresh Pond. This is discussed fully in the natural resource sustainability chapter.

### 7-3c. Overriding Issues

Bethany Beach's most obvious avenue for economic growth, undoubtedly, lies in extending its peak season of economic activity (beach season). This fits well with the Town's stated aim to incrementally transition into a year-round community. During the busy season, the Town's businesses and services operate at or near capacity.

The Town's location, beach, and amenities make up the core of its economic draw. Maintaining the beach strand and combatting persistent flooding and sustainability issues will be paramount in securing Bethany Beach's long-term economic appeal. These issues are discussed in detail in the natural resources and sustainability chapter.

### 7-3d. Economic Development and Redevelopment Goals and Recommendations

#### Goal

- Encourage a vibrant business community in the Town's business districts, consistent with the Town's overall vision and applicable provisions of the Town Code.

#### Recommendations

- **Maintain the Town's active business districts.** The Town has two distinct and thriving business districts: the Central Commercial District (C-1) east of state Route 1 and the Neighborhood Commercial District (C-2) on state Route 26 west of state Route 1. There is also a Commercial Lodging District (CL-1) adjacent to the C-1 District. The Garfield Parkway and Atlantic Avenue projects have, and will, continue to bolster the Town's businesses. Business placement and development have also been favorable for the past several years. The Town should continue to meet with and consider the needs and interests of the business community in all decisions related to those districts and ensure that its land use and development regulations enable the type and character of businesses it desires now and in the future.
- **Continue to provide, sponsor, or approve appropriate civic, arts, entertainment, and other events that contribute to a sense of community, engagement, and economic vitality as the Town determines to be appropriate, safe, and affordable.** Such events may include holiday celebrations, patriotic programs and parades, music events, arts and craft shows, recreation and fitness activities, and educational and cultural programs.
- **Continue to provide opportunities for and encourage community input for future projects.** The Town should continue its policy of soliciting public input via surveys, public meetings, workshops, and notices, as appropriate, for upcoming projects. This approach was proven effective in developing plans for the Town Park and other projects.
- **Continue to examine and explore ways to mitigate nuisance and high tide flooding in the C-1 commercial district.** The Town is actively pursuing the study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond and has retained a consultant to produce a 30 percent

preliminary design and cost estimate. If the results of the 30 percent study are positive, then securing funding for this investment will become a high priority to the Town. The Town's storm resilience fund, the existence of an active Town committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways to minimize stormwater impacts are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has, and will, take to address flooding.

# CHAPTER 8. NATURAL RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY

This section of the Comprehensive Plan addresses environmental concerns in the Town of Bethany Beach, including water supply and quality, soil typology and quality, the condition and maintenance of the beach strand, critical natural-areas identification and protection, and special projects being undertaken by the Town. Beyond detailing environmental characteristics, the chapter also explores policy and infrastructure options to mitigate chronic flooding events.

## 8-1. PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

### 8-1a. Soils

There are a variety of soil types found in Bethany Beach. The area east of state Route 1 consists of predominantly coastal beach and dune land, running the entire length of the community parallel to Atlantic Avenue. Coastal beach and dune land are areas of non-coherent, loose sand that have been continually worked and reworked by waves, tides, and wind action. Fill land extends from the northeast boundary of the community south to Garfield Parkway. Fill land consists of at least two feet or more of soil or other geological material that has been imported and deposited into the area.

Fill-land quality fluctuates, and suitability and limitations vary by area. In addition, a peat bog exists under the Town and coastal area.

To the south of Garfield Parkway, extending to the southwest boundary, the soils are deep, moderately well-drained to somewhat poorly-drained soils on uplands. These soils are formed in loamy sediments that contain a considerable amount of sand. The seasonal wetness of this soil severely limits its use. The area to the west of state Route 1 consists of a conglomeration of soils dominated by deep, very poorly drained soils on upland flats. These soils are formed in sandy sediments mantled by loamy material that contains a considerable amount of sand. The water table is seasonally at or near the surface and remains there unless drained. There are some salty tidal marshes in the northwest section of the community. Tidal marsh is predominantly low land saturated with water that is totally unsuitable for community use. The presence of hardpan has been noted in various locations throughout the community. Hardpan is a hardened or cemented-soil layer. The soil material is sand or clay and is cemented by iron oxide, silica, calcium carbonate, or some other substance. Conditions relating to hardpan presence, concentration, and density are variable and hardpan location is not easily predictable.

### 8-1b. Tree Cover

Preserving the character of the Bethany Beach community includes the protection of its natural resources as well as the built environment. Large foliage, such as trees and ornamental shrubs, contribute vastly to the visual appeal and healthy environment that exists in Bethany Beach, particularly when this vegetation is native to the area. According to the Statewide Urban Tree Canopy Estimates, Bethany Beach has approximately 280 acres of urban tree canopy or 40 percent of its total acreage (Source: FirstMap, Last Updated June 2021).

The Delaware Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program provides funding each year for tree planting, tree care, and tree-management projects on publicly owned lands. Bethany Beach has received two Urban and Community Forestry grants that benefit the excellent recharge area, including at Bethany Beach Central Park.

In addition, Bethany Beach participates in the Tree City USA program. This program offered through the National Arbor Day Foundation provides additional funding for tree protection, education, and public awareness projects. Participation in the program requires that the Town have a tree board or department, a tree-care ordinance, a community forestry program with a budget of at least \$2 per capita, and an Arbor Day observance or proclamation. Chapter 507 of the Town of Bethany Beach Municipal Code currently provides some protection for vegetation on public property, as well as tree replacement standards for new development on unimproved lots.

## 8-2. WATER RESOURCES

The quality and quantity of water available to Bethany Beach is key to the health and well-being of its residents and to ensuring the long-term viability of the Town and the larger community. This section discusses water-quality issues and actions the Town can take to minimize negative impacts on water quality within Bethany Beach and the surrounding watershed.

### 8-2a. Watersheds and Total Maximum Daily Loads

A watershed is all the land that water moves across or under while flowing to a specific body of water and includes the plants, animals, and humans who live within it. Bethany Beach is a part of the Inland Bays Sub-Basin. The basin is divided into four watersheds; Bethany Beach is in both the Indian River Bay Watershed and the Inland Bays Watershed. Figure 4 shows the Town of Bethany Beach and the surrounding watershed areas.

Under Section 303(d) of the 1972 Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), states are required to identify all impaired waters and establish TMDLs to restore their beneficial uses (e.g., swimming, fishing, and drinking water). A TMDL defines the amount of a given pollutant that may be discharged to a water body from point, nonpoint, and natural background sources and still allows attainment of maintenance of the applicable narrative and numerical water quality standards. A TMDL is the sum of the individual Waste Load Allocations (WLAs) for point sources and Load Allocations (LAs) for nonpoint sources and natural background sources of pollution. A TMDL may include a reasonable margin of safety (MOS) to account for uncertainties regarding the relationship between mass loading and resulting water quality. In simplistic terms, a TMDL matches the strength, location, and timing of pollution sources within a watershed with the inherent ability of the receiving water to assimilate the pollutant without adverse impact. A Pollution Control Strategy (PCS) specifies actions necessary to systematically achieve pollutant load reductions specified by a TMDL for a given water body and must reduce pollutants to levels specified by state Water Quality Standards.

TMDL 7407, within Title 7 of the Delaware Code, lays out the prescribed limits in eight articles for the Indian River Bay. Article 1 calls for the systematic elimination of any remaining point source discharges to the Indian River, Indian River Bay, Rehoboth Bay, and tributaries. Article 2 calls for an 85 percent reduction (from 1988–90 baseline) for nonpoint source nitrogen from the upper Indian River tributaries. Article 3 calls for a 65 percent reduction (from 1988–90 baseline) in nonpoint source phosphorous loads from tributaries in the upper

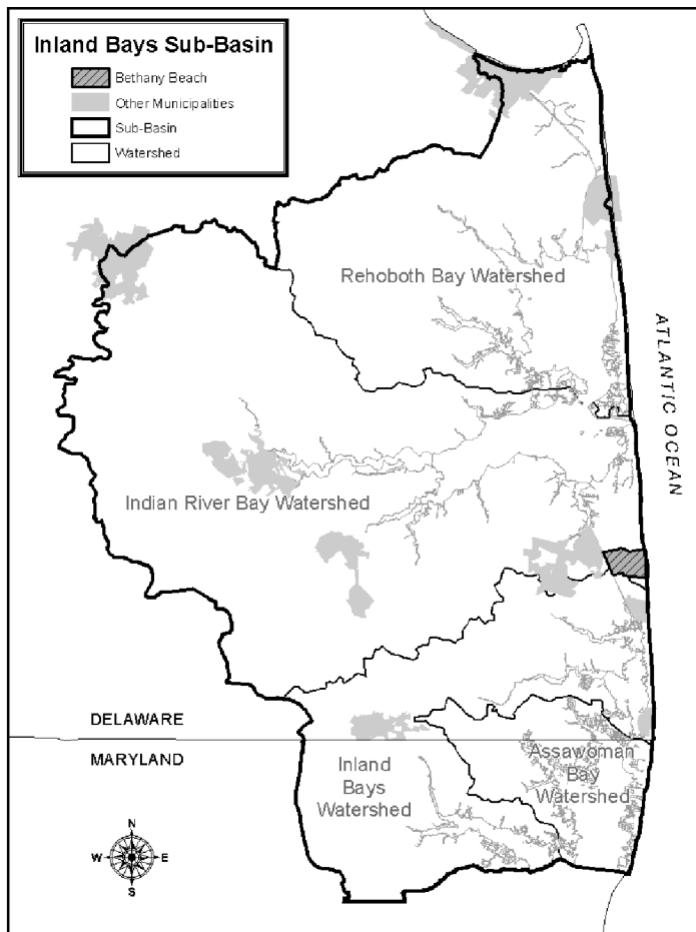
Indian River. Article 4 calls for a 40 percent reduction in the overall nonpoint source nitrogen load from all other tributaries. Article 5 requires a 40 percent reduction in nonpoint source phosphorous loads for all remaining tributaries. Article 6 calls for a 20 percent reduction (from 1988–90 baseline) in the rate of atmospheric nitrogen deposition. Articles 7 and 8 discuss the margin of safety and ultimate attainment, as well as detailing the development and implementation of pollution control strategies (PCS).

TMDL 7429, within Title 7 of the Delaware Code, lays out the prescribed limits in eight articles for the Inland Bays Drainage Basin. Article 1 calls for a 40 percent reduction (from the 2000–05 baseline) in nonpoint source bacteria load from a variety of sources, including the Indian River. Article 2 calls for a 23 percent reduction (from 2000–05 baseline) for nonpoint source bacterial load from a variety of sources, including the Indian River. Article 3 caps all point source bacteria loading in the drainage basin (including Indian River) to a mean concentration level of 35 CFU enterococcus/100mL until all point source discharges are eliminated. Articles 4 and 5 discuss the margin of safety and ultimate attainment, as well as detailing the development and implementation of pollution control strategies (PCS).

An overview of the pollution control strategy (PCS) development, regulations, and voluntary actions for the overarching Inland Bays area may be viewed at <https://dnrec.alpha.delaware.gov/watershed-stewardship/assessment/inland-bays/>

Issues surrounding water quality in the Sussex County coastal region focus primarily on the health of the region's Inland Bays. The protection of these sensitive natural resources, and the surrounding waterways and water bodies, is dependent upon the efforts of public, private, and corporate stakeholders alike. While the Town of Bethany Beach is a member of this group of necessary participants in the protection of the regional environment, it is only one of many stakeholders whose actions have a direct impact on regional water quality. While the Town is willing to do its part to explore and implement strategies to improve water quality, significant collective effort will be required at the regional and state levels to truly improve air and water quality in the region.

*Figure 4. Inland Bays Sub-Basins*



## 8-2b. Excellent Groundwater Recharge Potential Areas and Wellhead Protection Areas

Excellent groundwater recharge potential areas are places where soil composition and slope allow precipitation to readily infiltrate to such a depth that open, unconfined, underground aquifers may be recharged and replenished. Open, unconfined aquifers are often shallow with depths around 100 feet.

Excessive soil compaction, paving, or developing these areas with impervious cover, such as rooftops, driveways, and parking lots can diminish the function of shallow aquifers. As depicted on the Environmental Features Map, Bethany Beach has an excellent groundwater recharge area. The excellent groundwater recharge potential area consists of a bell-shaped area centered on Kent Avenue between Fairway Drive and Coastal Highway.

Fortunately, Bethany Beach draws water for its public water system from closed, confined aquifers, with depths greater than 250 feet. Those aquifers are the Ocean City/Pocomoke aquifer and the Manokin aquifer.

The Delaware Wellhead Protection Plan, approved by the EPA in 1990, delineated wellhead protection areas around public water supply wells and set out steps needed to protect critical areas around the wellhead in communities with populations larger than 2000. The wellhead protection area for wells accessing confined aquifers is a fixed radius of 150 feet.

Water is supplied to the Town's public water system from four wells, three along Garfield Parkway in the vicinity of Bethany Beach Central Park and another between Collins Street and Bellhaven Court, at the location of the Bethany Beach Water Department.

The location of the well heads near the Town's Park and on Town Water Department property is beneficial since the Town can regulate the presence of any potential toxic pollutants and monitor the extent of impervious surfaces within the mandated 150-foot radius.

Additionally, the Town can educate neighboring property owners residing of the sensitive nature of their land and request notification when harmful substances are present.

## 8-2c. Wetlands

Bethany Beach has a combination of tidal and nontidal wetlands. Tidal wetlands are commonly referred to as marshes and act as giant sponges or reservoirs, particularly during significant storm events. In times of heavy precipitation, wetlands areas absorb water, limiting the effects of flooding and buffering inland areas from storm surge. In addition to flood mitigation, they provide unique and vital habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Shown on the Environmental Features Map, tidal wetlands appear extensively along the Town's northern boundary and to its north, including the Salt Pond, Assawoman Canal, and the Loop Canal. The nontidal wetlands are much smaller in scale and found in scattered locations throughout Town.

Protection of wetlands falls under the regulatory jurisdiction of Section 404 provisions of the Federal Clean Water Act. Tidal wetlands are subject to additional regulatory protection under Title 7, Chapter 66 provisions of the Delaware State Code. Given their importance, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) and other environmental advocates strongly encourage the formation and maintenance of buffers around

wetlands boundaries. This margin helps to slow the velocity of stormwater runoff, thus minimizing erosion, and helps to filter pollutants, thereby improving water quality. Development within the potential buffer areas of Bethany Beach occurred prior to such best practices being widely accepted. However, the Town understands the vital role that wetlands play and continually assesses properties with ecological value for potential acquisition. In 2019, the Town purchased 12.3 acres which includes substantial wetlands to protect it from residential development.

## 8-2d. Flood Hazards

A floodplain is the land area adjoining a waterbody that has historically been inundated by flood waters during the 100-year storm. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for issuing the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) that delineate Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA). These maps were most recently updated for all of coastal Sussex County in 2014. These updated maps reflected significant—and increased—flooding patterns in Bethany Beach. The expansion of the SFHAs occurred most pointedly to the west of state Route 1 and south of state Route 26, specifically in the Bethany West and Turtle Walk neighborhoods. With these changes, approximately 85 percent of the Town is now considered vulnerable to coastal and other types of flooding.

Flood hazard areas in Town include AE—the areas with a 1 percent chance of flooding each year; the AO—areas subject to shallow flooding between 1 and 3 feet; Zone X—the 500-year floodplain; and the VE—coastal high-hazard areas, which highlights the area along the coast that is at additional risk of damage from storm surge waves. Development within the AE, AO and VE are subject to the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. Since much of the Town was developed prior to the widespread adoption of floodplain ordinances, significant development may exist within these special hazard areas that may not be compliant with current codes and thus at a higher risk of damage than those in compliance with current regulations. The table below shows the number of principal structures within each Special Flood Hazard Area.

*Table 21. Dwelling Units by Flood Zone*

Special Flood Hazard Areas	Dwelling Units
Zone AE	1,225
Zone AO	208
Zone VE	131
Zone X (500-year floodplain)	192

Bethany Beach's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance meets and exceeds the minimal standards for floodplain ordinances according to FEMA and includes provisions for floodproofing, freeboard (the practice of raising the first floor of a structure above the base flood elevation), and cumulative substantial improvement (a provision that requires buildings that undergo any combination of reconstruction, rehabilitation, addition, or improvement to be brought into compliance with current code requirements if the value of such improvements over the previous 10-year period exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the structure). This aggressive stance on floodproofing earns the Town a Class 8 rating on the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System and thus a discount on their flood insurance premiums for the eligible Town residents. Flood insurance is only required for federally backed mortgages.

It is important to recognize that the FEMA flood maps are based upon historic data and do not take sea level rise and other future conditions, such as increased impervious coverage and other changes within the watershed, into account. To be forward looking, the Town and its residents should continue to consider policies and programs that go above and beyond FEMA recommendations.

## 8-2e. Beach Strand

Bethany Beach is most notably defined by its one mile of Atlantic coastline. This namesake asset is the Town's most significant natural resource, as well as its largest public area. The beach is largely protected from development by the State's Beach Preservation Act (1972, last amended in 2016). This law delineated an eastern boundary for construction activities to protect the beaches and dunes from encroachment. The so-called Building Line parallels the coastline and is regulated by DNREC. Construction, expansion, or modification of any structure to the east of the Building Line requires a Letter of Approval. The alteration, removal, or deposition of substantial amounts of beach sand or other materials landward of the Building Line and within the beach area also requires a Letter of Approval.

Today, the most imposing threat to the health and vitality of the beach comes from the forces of nature. Hurricanes, nor'easters, and other coastal storms batter the coastline, sweeping sand away and compromising dunes. Left untended, the overall width of the beach will erode. This is undesirable not only because of the severe impacts on recreational and economic opportunities, but also because the dunes and beach play a key role in protecting the homes, businesses, and infrastructure of the Town. These areas are the first lines of defense against coastal storms and take the brunt of storm forces. Without them, the Town is in more danger of damage from such systems.

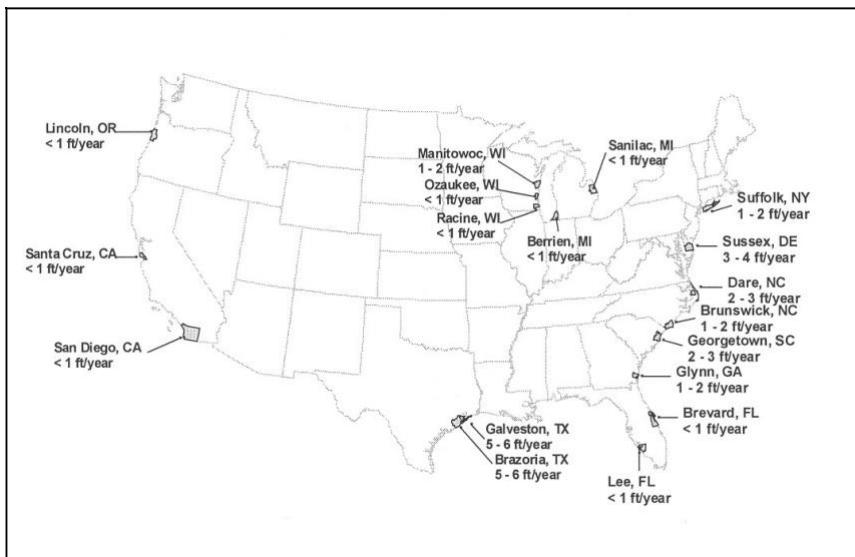
The number of housing units protected by this natural defense system has increased by approximately 25 percent since 1997. Table 22 details the number of housing units at risk in Bethany Beach according to their distance from the shoreline. There have been additional housing units built in each coastal zone.

*Table 22. Housing Units in Coastal Zones Bethany Beach, 1997–2020*

Coastal Zone	Housing Units			
	1997*	2009*	2016*	2020*
Oceanfront	89	101	105	108
Zone 1 (<500 ft)	224	257	285	290
Zone 2 (500–1500 ft)	521	596	614	621
Zone 3 (1500–2500 ft)	342	395	418	427
Zone 4 (2500–3500 ft)	231	298	311	320
Total (All Zones)	1,407	1,647	1,733	1,766

Source: New Construction Permits per Building Inspector records, 1997–2020\*\*

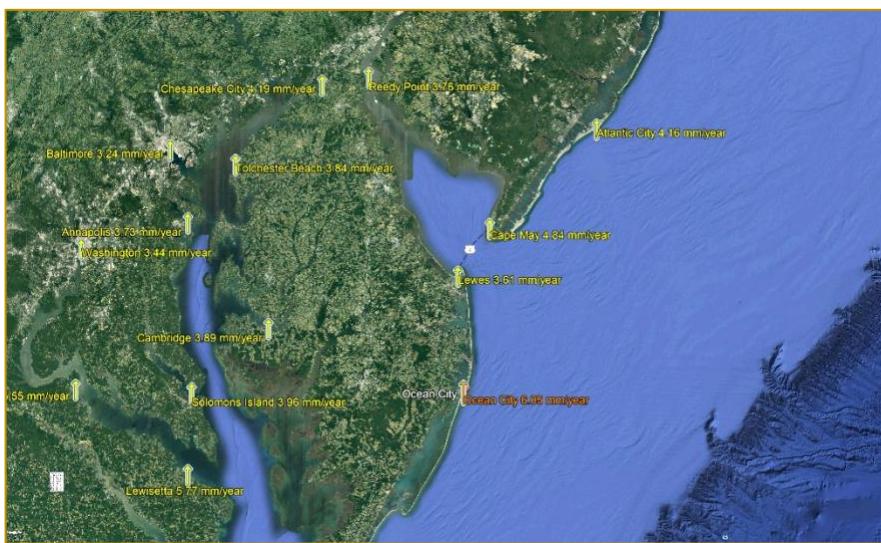
Beach erosion has been a key concern among stakeholders for many years. A report depicting the average yearly erosion rates for beach strands of specific counties in the U.S. showed that the coastline of the mid-Atlantic region experiences greater erosion rates relative to other areas studied. Sussex County's yearly erosion rate of 3–4 feet was the highest identified along the nation's Atlantic Coast. The forces that contribute to this high rate of erosion are now tied to an increased rate of sea level rise in the mid-Atlantic.

**Figure 5. Average Yearly Erosion Rates for Selected Areas**

Source: Heinz Center, 2000

## 8-2f. Sea Level Rise

Sea level rise poses a significant challenge to coastal towns along the entire United States coastline. This is particularly true in Delaware as a peninsula with the lowest mean elevation of all U.S. states that lies within a sea level rise "hotspot" (Kopp, et al, 2015). Rates of sea level rise in the mid-Atlantic are believed to be increasing faster than other areas along the East Coast due to a variety of forces. Figure 6 depicts sea level rise trends from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

**Figure 6. Sea Level Rise Trends**

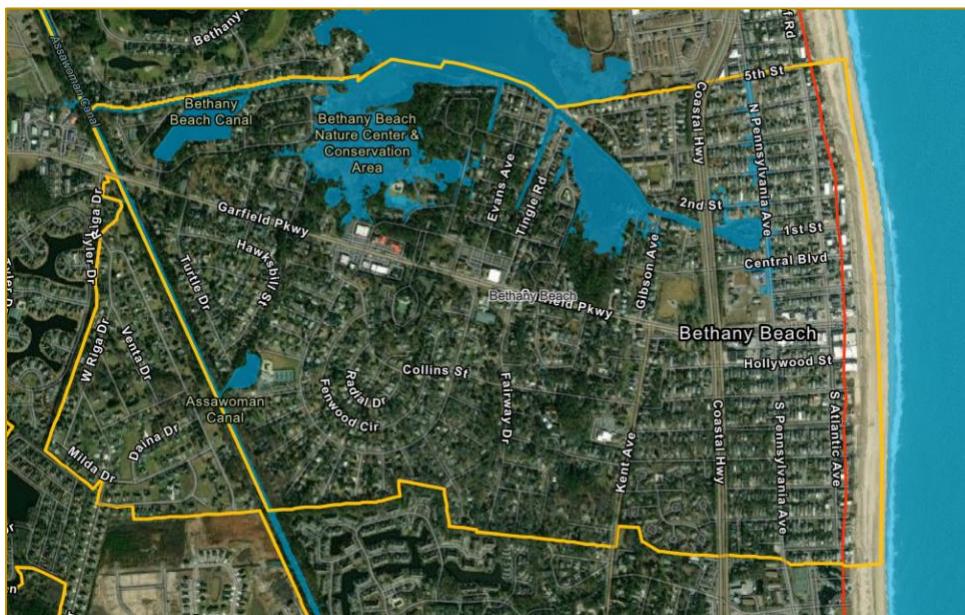
Source: NOAA, 2022. Accessed at <https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/slrtrends.html>

Bethany Beach already experiences periodic high-tide and “sunny day” flooding, which is not associated with any rain or storm. The Town’s low mean elevation combined with sea level rise translates into a much higher risk for future flooding and inundation from both the sea as well as via the tidal wetlands and canals. Based on the most recent science and forecasts, the state, through DNREC, has presented three scenarios for sea level rise through 2100. These scenarios represent the amount of rise at the lowest estimate, intermediate, and high estimate. They reflect the following inundation levels for the year 2100:

- 0.5 meters (1.64 feet, low estimate)
- 1.0 meters (3.28 feet, intermediate estimate)
- 1.5 meters (4.9 feet, high estimate)

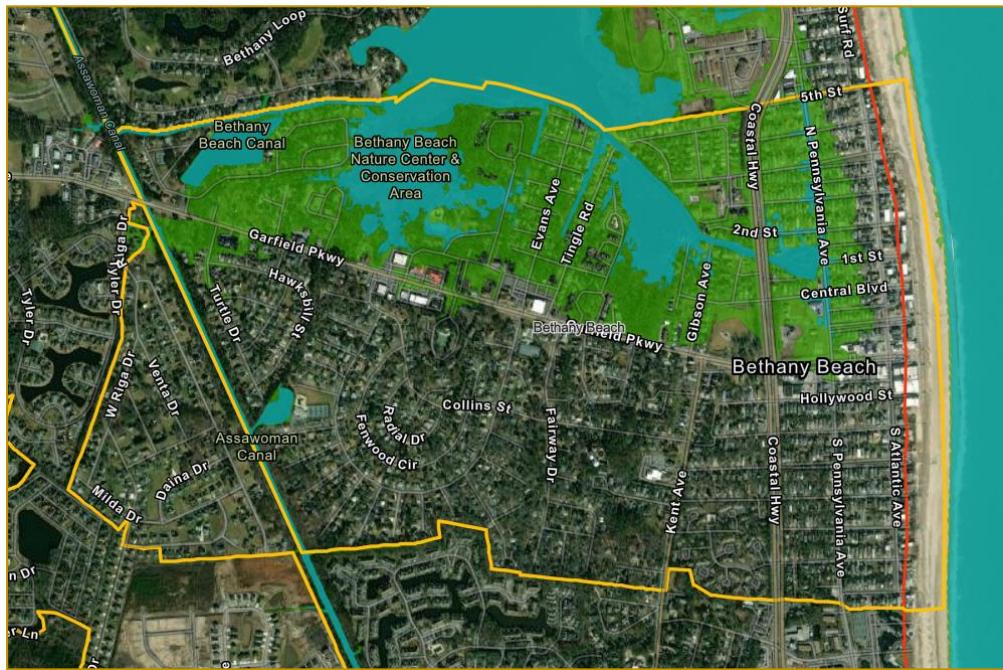
The State of Delaware has also developed a Flood Planning Tool to assist property owners and municipalities to better understand their risk of flooding, as well as what potential inundation at various levels of sea level rise would look like. Figures 7–9 illustrate the inundation of Bethany Beach at one foot, three feet, and five feet of sea level rise per the Flood Planning Tool.

*Figure 7. Inundations Levels in Bethany Beach at 1-Foot Sea Level Rise*



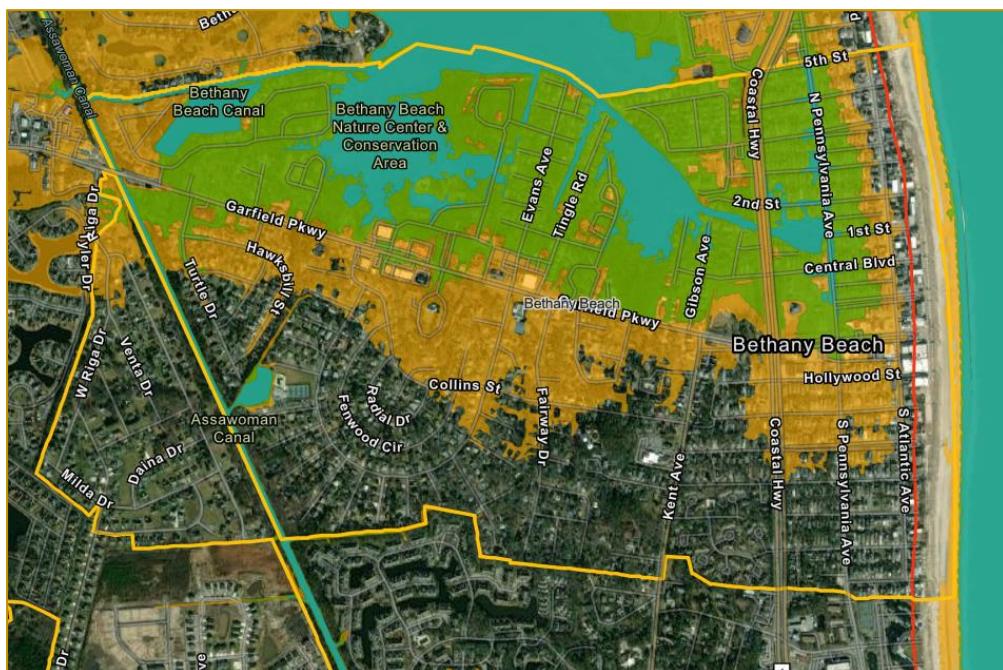
Source: Delaware Flood Mapping Tool (<https://floodplanning.dnrec.delaware.gov/>) accessed October, 2022)

Figure 8. Inundations Levels in Bethany Beach at 3-Feet of Sea Level Rise



Source: Delaware Flood Mapping Tool (<https://floodplanning.dnrec.delaware.gov/>) accessed October, 2022)

Figure 9. Inundations Levels in Bethany Beach at 5-Feet of Sea Level Rise



Source: Delaware Flood Mapping Tool (<https://floodplanning.dnrec.delaware.gov/>) accessed October, 2022)

These figures illustrate that a significant portion of the town's land could be submerged over time. Working with the State and other coastal towns is vital for a coordinated and comprehensive response to the challenges of climate change.

## 8-3. RELEVANT PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

### 8-3a. Surface Water Protection—Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)

The Clean Water Act and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Water Quality Planning and Management Regulations were developed to maintain the health of our nation's waters. They provide for the regulation of impaired waters (those polluted to the extent that they no longer meet their designated uses). Designated uses are identified in state water-quality standards.

When waters do not meet these designated uses, TMDLs are required. They serve to specify the maximum amount of pollution that may be allowed to enter a water body and allow it to still meet water-quality standards. The relevant TMDLs are described in section 5-2a of this document.

With participation from local stakeholders, DNREC developed pollution control strategies (PCS) to meet the TMDL designated reductions. A PCS is a document that specifies where pollution reductions can be made to meet TMDL targets. The PCS document was completed in 2008. The strategies were designed to reduce nutrient loadings from existing and future land use practices. If implemented as designed, the combination of actions delineated in the strategy should lead to the achievement of the TMDL. DNREC reviews the strategies every ten years to assess if adequate progress is being made. The Town continues to comply with TMDL standards and requirements as delineated by the State of Delaware and Sussex County. The Town should continue to engage with DNREC when a revision to the relevant pollution control strategy is developed and continue coordination with the relevant tributary action team. The PCS for the Inland Bays is discussed and linked in section 8-2a of this document.

### 8-3b. Air Quality

Air quality remains a regional concern according to the American Lung Association's "State of the Air" report, which gave Sussex County a "C" grade in 2022 for Ozone and an "A" for particle pollution. Bethany Beach is committed to playing its part in regional air quality. Though land use regulations in Delaware for moderately sized municipalities do not typically regulate air quality, Bethany Beach's investments in EV charging, encouragement of alternative modes of mobility, and conservative approach to growth may aid in incrementally improving the region's air quality.

Additionally, the Town is considering a tree ordinance that would require all new construction to provide a minimum number of trees as part of the site development. It is encouraged that all property owners consider achieving the minimum requirements by adding trees where appropriate.

## 8-3c. Beach Replenishment

In proactive response to concerns over beach erosion, Bethany Beach became one of 36 Towns across the country to pass a “yes to beaches” resolution in March 2004. The resolution was part of a national beach protection campaign organized by the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association.

More tangibly, the Town has long partnered with the State and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to participate in a beach replenishment program, as part of the Corps’ 50-year commitment. Beach replenishment or nourishment physically relocates sand from offshore to replace sand that has been carried away and dunes that have been weakened. As a result, the strand is widened, and dunes are reinforced. These activities allow for continued enjoyment of the beach area, a vital part of the Town and the State’s economy, but equally important, they protect the Town’s structures and infrastructure from flood damage. Although widely used along the Delaware coast, beach replenishment activities offer only temporary respite from the erosion and must be repeated in four-to-five-year cycles. Additional replenishment efforts are needed after notable storms, which have become more frequent. As shown in Table 23, Bethany Beach has replenished several million cubic yards of sand over the past thirty years, at a cost of over thirty million dollars, largely subsidized by the State and Federal government.

*Table 23. Beach Replenishment Projects, Bethany Beach*

Year	Volume of Sand	Cost
1989	284,500 cubic yards (yd <sup>3</sup> )	\$1.6 million
1992	219,735 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$1.0 million
1994	184,452 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$0.8 million
1998	321,700 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$1.3 million
2007	3,200,000 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$19.8 million
2011	387,000 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$1.5 million
2013	536,600 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$3.6 million
2018	659,000 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$8.8 million
Total	5,792,987 yd <sup>3</sup>	\$38.4 million

Source: US Army Corps of Engineers

With environmental changes causing more frequent and more turbulent storms, the frequency of need for beach replenishment and the costs associated with the program are expected to rise significantly. While such projects typically require that local partners (i.e., the State) contribute up to 50 percent of a project’s cost, this may not always be the case. As the overall cost of the replenishment program continues to grow, it is expected that local jurisdictions will be required to carry a larger share of the burden. Addressing these challenges will require more creativity and advocacy on the part of both the State and the Town, in partnership with other coastal communities.

The Corps’ 50-year commitment to its beach nourishment project in Bethany Beach will expire in 2057. The Corps has the authority to study extending the period of nourishment an additional 50 years (Section 156 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1976, as amended (42 U.S.C. 1962d-5f), available:

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/1962d-5f>). To allow sufficient time for planning, budgeting, funding, and executing the study for extending the period of nourishment, as well as for the extension to be authorized, the Corps, as well as the Delaware Congressional delegation, recommend that Bethany Beach, working with the non-Federal sponsor as applicable, contact the Corps (Philadelphia District) at least 10 years before the expiration date, in 2047.

## 8-4. SUSTAINABILITY AND ADAPTATION

This section presents a discussion of Bethany Beach's desire to strengthen its ability to adapt to and mitigate the adverse impacts of environmental change and become more resilient. The result of such actions will save lives, reduce losses, and ideally make the Town a healthier, more attractive place to live along the way.

### 8-4a. Green Bethany Initiatives

The Town has already undertaken a variety of actions to create a more environmentally friendly and resilient community. While the Town has long had a stormwater and flooding committee to study and guide efforts to improve stormwater management and reduce flooding, other initiatives since the last comprehensive plan include providing trash recycling service, converting some Town facilities to solar power, piloting the use of pervious pavement for Town streets, and providing charging stations for electric vehicles. The Town is also actively monitoring opportunities to preserve more ecologically valuable green space and participates in the Tree City USA program, increasing its urban tree canopy. Currently these efforts do not fall under one committee or umbrella, other than the administration. In the future, the Town would like to assess all of these efforts holistically in order to consolidate and prioritize future efforts, identify gaps, and improve its resiliency framework.

#### Resilient Community Partnership Impervious Surface Study

In 2018, seven coastal communities, including Bethany Beach, received assistance from DNREC through its Resilient Community Partnership (RCP) program. The project included an assessment of impervious coverage in each Town, development of a best management practices (BMP) guide, and the development of a BMP toolkit summarizing strategies for reducing existing and future impervious surface coverage and increasing stormwater infiltration in the participating Delaware communities. Of the seven Towns evaluated, Bethany Beach has the third highest percentage of impervious surface, higher than the average of 35.2 percent, and the second largest increase in impervious surfaces over the time studied.

These results were not surprising to the Town officials. While Bethany Beach's Zoning Ordinance has long limited the maximum lot coverage by buildings to 40 percent, it has not limited the amount of impervious ground cover for the remainder of the lots or provided alternative best practices to promote better stormwater management to lessen surface runoff. The study provided a menu of strategies and BMPs for the Town to consider. A BMP is a technique or device that captures or treats stormwater runoff, thereby lessening impacts offsite. These practices include the use of pervious pavement systems, bioswales, green roofs, tree planting and native landscaping, and dry wells.

The Town has already started implementing some of the recommended BMPs to show its commitment to resiliency efforts. In 2019, the Town completed a redesign and resurfacing of 10 blocks of Cedarwood Street and S. Atlantic Avenue using a porous paving to alleviate

flooding problems and improve drainage. The Town is considering expanding the project to include other areas, where feasible. The report also recommended the addition of new regulations for impervious surfaces, including definitions. The Town has adopted an ordinance addressing pervious and impervious surfaces. The Town is in the process of adopting alternative best management practices to lessen surface runoff. In the future, examining other recommendations from the study may provide additional opportunity to expand and improve the Town's green infrastructure.

### **Storm Emergency Relief Fund**

The Storm Emergency Relief Fund (SERF) was created as part of the fiscal year 2017 budget to accumulate funds to be used to aid the Town in recovering from a hurricane, nor'easter, or other storm event. Use of these funds are restricted to debris cleanup, repair of infrastructure such as the boardwalk, replacement of equipment, and operating expenses that are needed as a result of revenue lost in the aftermath of a storm. Accessing the SERF reserve requires approval from a Supermajority, defined as at least five of seven Town Council members. The SERF is funded through a variety of sources including portions of property taxes, residential and commercial rental taxes, and the hotel rental tax. In 2020, the Town added a portion of the hourly parking rate as an additional regular source of funding.

## **8-4b. Stormwater Management/Mitigation Policy**

Stormwater management is equal to beach preservation in terms of the Town's priorities and its capital expenditures. As discussed, 85 percent of the Town lies within flood hazard areas and sea level rise is expected to exacerbate what are already substantial flooding challenges within the Town. Adding to this challenge is the Town's highwater table and lack of a cohesive storm sewer system. Flooding in the north end of Town is primarily due to a combination of tidal flooding and heavy precipitation, while flooding south of state Route 26 is more likely to be caused by excessive rain and surface pooling.

The stormwater drainage system in the northern half of Town relies on drainage into the Loop Canal and the Salt Pond. During nor'easters and other heavy rains, waters from the Atlantic Ocean are driven into Indian River and Cove Bays through Fresh Pond Park, into the Salt Pond and Assawoman Canal. This action ultimately pushes into the Loop Canal, raising its water level and preventing drainage from the surrounding neighborhoods and streets. As sea level rises, the increased water level of the Canal will become a more regular occurrence.

Areas where flooding has a more frequent and severe impact include North Pennsylvania Avenue, the Bethany Loop Canal area, and the Bethany West area.

**North Pennsylvania Avenue** currently floods with every sustained tidal and/or heavy rain event largely due to topography. Atlantic Avenue and all the side streets between Atlantic Ave and Coastal Highway drain toward Pennsylvania Avenue, which has an elevation just above sea level. This low elevation combined with an inadequate drainage system along Pennsylvania Avenue causes the roadway to flood quickly. With heavy rains, saltwater pushes into the Loop Canal, through the Pennsylvania Avenue drainage system and floods the street. This flooded condition may remain on the roadway through several tide cycles and/or days until water levels in the Canal drop enough to allow the street to drain.

The rising waters in the Loop Canal impact more than Pennsylvania Avenue. The waters also affect the properties in the immediate and proximate vicinity of the **Bethany Beach**

**Loop Canal.** The low elevation of these areas and the number of drainage outfalls along the Loop Canal creates a similar situation to North Pennsylvania Avenue. During nor'easters or sustained high tide events, the Loop Canal may overflow its banks, which can flood all of the way to state Route 26.

Situated on higher lands, **Bethany West** is not directly affected by wind-driven tides. However, its stormwater system still relies on drainage into either the Loop Canal or the Assawoman Canal. When elevated water levels in the canals slow the flow of water from Bethany West, runoff remains in the ditch systems until the canal water levels recede. Challenges arise from the lack of maintenance of the swales, an inadequate culvert network, and increased runoff. Ensuring the ditches remain clear of debris and vegetation is the responsibility of the individual homeowners, who are not always aware or responsive to such needs. The culvert system is inadequate in that many were installed incorrectly and do not have proper elevation and/or pitch. This deters the water from flowing through the system. Finally, as the homeowners seek to maximize the use and enjoyment of their property, home additions, bigger driveways, patios, pools, and other amenities have greatly increased the impervious coverage on the lots. The additional runoff adds to the volume of water using an already burdened and malfunctioning system.

## Regulations and Development Review

Bethany Beach has delegated review of sediment and stormwater regulations to the Sussex Conservation District, the local delegated authority for the Delaware Sediment and Stormwater Regulations. A sediment and stormwater plan is required when disturbing 5,000 square feet or more. The Town requires a Letter of Approval from the Sussex Conservation District prior to the approval of subdivision and commercial site plans, as well as the issuance of any building permits. Subdivision and commercial drainage plans are also reviewed by the Town's engineering firm. The engineer identifies drainage system concerns, and a full report is submitted to the Town. All issues must be addressed prior to approval of any subdivision or commercial property. In addition, the Town Building Inspector and the Public Works Director inspect all properties prior to and during construction, providing guidelines for driveway culvert installations and proper lot grading.

## Drainage Plans

The Town has made significant effort and investment in upgrading and maintaining its stormwater system. A 2002 Town-wide drainage study completed an inventory and performance evaluation of the drainage infrastructure throughout the Town. All top priority projects were completed as well as many of the ongoing and secondary items. This regular maintenance demonstrates the Town's proactive and fiscally responsible stance and will lengthen the useful life of the infrastructure. Such investments benefit the community through reduced flood-insurance premiums, reduced damage to infrastructure (roadways and sidewalks), reduced demand on emergency responders, and reduced damage to personal property (automobiles, homes, and yards). Such plans also help to identify potential longer-term solutions such as the Loop Canal mechanically activated steel dam and floodgate.

### 8-4c. Loop Canal Flood Mitigation Concept

The low elevations of Town means that the stormwater drainage system is also shallow and drains into the Loop Canal and the Salt Pond. During storm events, and increasingly during the average king tide, water rises within the Loop Canal system and prevents drainage

from the surrounding neighborhoods and streets, leading to surface flooding, particularly of the roadways.

Potential flood mitigation strategies for the Town have been studied extensively in the recent decades. The most recent mitigation proposal for the Loop Canal seems to offer some promise of success. The strategy involves constructing two structures. The first, a so-called mechanically activated steel dam, proposed at the confluence of the Loop Canal and Assawoman Canal, would help to minimize tidal flow into the Loop Canal from the Assawoman Canal. The second structure would be a one-way tidal flap gate located at the northern end of the Fresh Pond Area of the Delaware Seashore Park. A hydraulic analysis report, most recently revised in April 2022, concluded that "the mechanically-actuated steel dam is effective at protecting the interior system draining to the Loop Canal/Salt Pond from sunny day flooding up to 2.5' with some benefit even when the dam is overtopped."

The Town is actively pursuing this option and has had a consultant produce a 30 percent preliminary design and cost estimate. If results of the 30 percent study are positive, then securing funding for this investment will become a high priority to the Town.

## **Resilient Redevelopment**

There are many other strategies that the Town might consider as it looks to a more resilient future. These may take the form of either nonregulatory programs or regulations. A recent Resilient Community Partnership project in Lewes identified a series of best practices for improving a community's ability to withstand future flooding and sea level rise. These included both regulatory and nonregulatory strategies. Regulatory strategies included increasing the required freeboard for new construction or redevelopment above the required 18 inches, requiring freeboard even when fill is used to bring the grade of a property up to the base flood elevation, or expanding the freeboard requirement to apply to the 500-year floodplain area. As seen in the last FEMA floodplain map update, special flood hazard areas are expanding within Town, covering greater areas. These maps combined with the projected sea level rise maps demonstrate that proactive incorporation of flood mitigation strategies, including freeboard, now could protect properties and lives in the future.

In addition, the 2018 Impervious Surfaces study recommends instituting a local review of projects that disturb less than 5,000 square feet, creating the opportunity to increase awareness of the impacts of impervious surfaces but also incorporate incentives to provide BMPs. The recommendation stems from the fact that Delaware's sediment and stormwater regulations affect very few projects in Town because most are smaller than the 5,000 square foot threshold.

Landscape standards present yet another opportunity to improve the health and biodiversity of the Town. Ensuring that a percentage of native plants and trees are incorporated into landscape plans, as well as considering incorporating these standards into zoning so that they apply to redevelopment and not just subdivision.

Overall, the Town is pursuing many current strategies for strengthening its ability to adapt to a changing climate and recognizes that there is more to be done. To assist in these efforts, the Town may wish to consider these and many other approaches to increasing its resilience to flood damage and sea level rise.

## 8-5. GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Goal

- To conserve, sustain, and enhance natural areas and resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations and to encourage, promote, and educate citizens and visitors in achieving a "Green Bethany."

### Recommendations

- **Continue to explore the acquisition of properties of unique environmental value.** The Town has invested in the acquisition of historical and environmentally sensitive properties for Town stewardship and to protect them from residential development. The 2019 and 2021 purchases and preservation of some 15 acres of undeveloped property, which include non-tidal wetlands, is one example.
- **Continue regional cooperation regarding Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL).** A TMDL is the maximum level of pollution allowed for a given pollutant, below which a target water body can assimilate and still meet water-quality standards necessary to support activities such as swimming, fishing, providing drinking water, and shellfish harvesting. The Town continues to comply with TMDL standards and requirements as delineated by the State of Delaware and Sussex County. The Town should continue to engage with DNREC when a revision to the relevant pollution control strategy is developed and continue coordination with the relevant tributary action team.
- **Continue to maintain and improve the Town's stormwater drainage system.** Efficient and effective stormwater drainage remains a high priority for the Town. Drainage systems throughout the Town includes of both open swales and ditches as well as closed pipes. Open swales and ditches are considered best management practices (BMP) for stormwater management and are strongly encouraged. Vegetative swales and ditches help filter out pollutants from runoff and reduce Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) levels. Phosphorous and nitrogen have been identified as two of the major polluters of our Inland Bays. Most of the stormwater in the Town drains either directly or indirectly into the Loop Canal, with a lesser amount into the Assawoman Canal. The Town should continue to maintain and improve the stormwater drainage infrastructure throughout the Town and educate property owners to the importance of keeping swales and culverts on their property free from debris.
- **Expand efforts to educate property owners living in the excellent groundwater recharge area.** The Town should consider additional and ongoing actions to educate property owners living in the groundwater recharge area. These efforts should alert owners to the sensitive nature of their land and how their use of it may impact water quality in the area. In addition, the Town could consider providing incentives for avoiding additional impervious surfaces or planting additional trees.
- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany Beach's beach and dune structure to the Town cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property, and

infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal representatives, agencies, and officials, as well as participation in the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

## Goal

- Continue to assess the Town's vulnerability to sea level rise and explore ways to adapt and mitigate risks.

## Recommendations

- **Continue exploring infrastructure and policy approaches to ameliorate flooding and drainage problems.** The Town's storm resilience fund (Storm Emergency Relief Fund), study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond, the existence of an active Town committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways for residents to minimize stormwater impacts are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has, and will continue to, take to address flooding. The Town is actively participating in the United States Army Corps of Engineers Back Bay Study and the DelDOT State Route 1 Coastal Corridor Resiliency Study. The Town may also consider policies developed by other coastal communities, such as Lewes' recent sea level rise initiative.
- **Continue and expand the Town's "Green Bethany" initiatives.** As evidence of its ongoing commitment to sustainability, the Town has taken steps to create a more environmentally friendly community, including by providing trash recycling service, converting to solar power at some Town facilities, providing charging stations for electric vehicles, and creating more green space. The Town should continue to explore opportunities to be more sustainable and resilient. Examples include stormwater management, tree preservation, green building, renewable energy, the use of non-chemical fertilizers and weed/insect control, and green vehicles. Such initiatives not only contribute to a more healthy, sustainable environment, but may serve as positive examples for other Delaware municipalities. Moreover, as evidence of the Town's environmental stewardship, they would also lend support to any future Town request for federal or state funding for environmental projects.
- **Increase the tree canopy coverage to 45 percent by 2032.** Continue to recognize and promote the benefits of trees within the community by increasing our tree canopy from 40 percent to at least 45 percent by 2032. The Town is committed to improving air quality and participates in the Tree City USA program. Additionally, the Town recently adopted a new ground coverage ordinance—it limits the amount of pervious surface.

# CHAPTER 9. PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

## 9-1. LOCAL AND REGIONAL FACILITIES

### 9-1a. Bethany Beach

Parks and open space in Bethany Beach can be categorized into several distinct types. The Town provides several public parks: the Loop Canal Park, Central Park, a much larger public park located at the northwest corner of state Routes 1 and 26, a pocket park located adjacent to Town Hall, and a public playground area at the northwest corner of Garfield Parkway and Pennsylvania Avenue (land leased from the Disciples of Christ Church). There is also, of course, the public beach and boardwalk along the Town's eastern border. At the center of the Town's boardwalk is a public bandstand and plaza area. One of the Town-owned wetlands areas, the 27-acre Natter Property, has been developed by the Town as a nature center and park and is seasonally staffed to provide educational eco-tours. In 2019, the Town purchased approximately 12 acres of wetlands and another adjoining 2.7-acre wetland parcel in 2021. The Town's intention is to keep these two properties free from residential development.

While these areas do not make up a large percentage of the total parcels in Bethany Beach, all of these areas together—particularly the beach—contribute significantly to the character of the Town and its economy. The total area of the Town is roughly one square mile (638 acres). The total area of the beach is approximately 24 acres, the Nature Center is an additional 27 acres. Central Park is approximately 6.8 acres. Combined with roughly 16-acre Maryland Avenue Extension, and 15 acres of wetland parcels, the Town boasts around 88 acres of open space, most of which is used as Park and Recreational Areas.

Eastern Sussex is blessed with an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities. Aside from its own municipal parks and public beach strand, Bethany Beach residents are a very short drive, or walk, from municipal offerings in neighboring Ocean View, such as the John West Park and the Evans Park in Millville. Just north of Bethany Beach's municipal boundary sits the Fresh Pond Trailhead. Also north, the Bayshore Campsites and Holts Landing Delaware Seashore State Parks are a 15–20-minute drive. A few miles south, the Assawoman recreation area and the Fenwick Island State Park are within easy reach. The James Farm Ecological Preserve is an oasis of wildland on Indian River Bay, located just a short drive from Bethany Beach, on Cedar Neck Road in Ocean View.

While there is certainly no shortage of sun, fun, and nature, access to traditional athletic fields like soccer, tennis, and baseball for youth and adults are a short drive away. The Towns playground has a basketball court. The Pyle Center Softball/Little League fields are 20 minutes west in Frankford. Ocean City, Maryland, hosts the nearest indoor general purpose recreation facility, featuring pickleball, basketball, and volleyball with the Ocean City Tennis Center just a bit further south on state Route 1.

## 9-2. RECREATIONAL FACILITY NEEDS

Delaware is fortunate to have a recent statewide inventory and analysis of parks and open space. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, commonly referred to as SCORP, was released in 2018. Its development was a collaboration between Delaware State Parks and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control

(DNREC). The full report may be accessed at  
<https://destateparks.com/wwwroot/downloads/SCORP/SCORP%202018.pdf>

It methodically delineated the State into five regions. Surveys of residents of each, along with a consideration of demographic information, resulted in a matrix of recreational needs and priorities for each. Bethany Beach and all of Eastern Sussex fall into the SCORP Region 5.

Regardless of the region surveyed, there was a remarkable consistency in the survey responses. Walking and jogging ranked first across all areas with swimming at the beach a universal second place. Third to fifth places showed some variability, but was commonly picnicking, visiting historic sites, swimming in a pool, bicycling, or fishing. Region Five's High priorities were 1) Walking or jogging, 2) Swimming at the beach, 3) Fishing, 4) Visiting historic sites, 5) Bicycling, 6) Swimming in a pool, 7) Picnicking, 8) Dog walking, 9) Gardening, and 10) hiking.

Given the results of the analysis and the abundance of compatible offerings within, or very near, Bethany Beach, the Town appears very well positioned to meet the current and anticipated recreational needs and wants of its residents and those of neighboring communities.

Although the Town is pleased to host offerings desirable to the region and the state, it is not content to stand pat. It continues to make investments in physical infrastructure and parklands and tirelessly advocate for, and pursue appropriate funds, to maintain its part of the beach that the SCORP shows is consistently ranked as among the most popular outdoor activities for all state residents.

Aside from physical investment, the Town continues to invest considerable human capital in outdoor, historical, cultural, educational, and recreational programming. This effort to foster a year-round sense of place and belonging is discussed at greater length in the economic development and community character portions of this plan document.

## Goal

- Provide areas and opportunities for outdoor relaxation and recreation.

## Recommendations

- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany Beach's beach and dune structure cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property, and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal representatives, agencies, and officials, as well as participation in the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).
- **Continue to conserve, sustain, and enhance natural areas and resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.** The Town should also encourage, promote, and educate citizens and visitors in achieving a "Green Bethany" by offering educational programs at its Nature Center and adopting best management practices as appropriate.

- **Evaluate off-season recreational opportunities.** During the peak and “shoulder” seasons, the Town provides spaces and permits numerous outdoor recreation opportunities. However, many businesses are seasonal, as is the attraction of the beach. Consideration should be given to surveying year-round residents to determine their interests and suggestions regarding off-season recreation opportunities.
- **Examine and investigate ways to make Bethany’s parks, public beach and boardwalk more accessible, convenient and available to all.** The Town should investigate ways to encourage and promote inclusiveness for citizens and visitors of all capabilities so that these assets can be enjoyed by everyone.

# CHAPTER 10. FUTURE LAND USE

This chapter begins with a discussion of Bethany Beach's existing land uses. It then focuses on the discussion of planning efforts that have been considered during the development of the Town's future land uses. The future land uses are depicted, and the connection between land use and the municipality's zoning ordinance are provided. The chapter discusses recommendations concerning land use and zoning, concluding with a discussion on growth and annexation.

## 10-1. EXISTING LAND USE

Existing land use is a snapshot of the Town's current development pattern. This development pattern is depicted on the Existing Land Use Map in the appendix. The map identifies the land use for each parcel as of early 2021.

### 10-1a. Existing Land Use Designations

Table 24 explains how land was classified into the uses shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

*Table 24. Existing Land Use Designations*

Land Use	Description
Open Space	Preserved public and private open spaces including parks, recreation facilities, and areas dedicated in connection with land development as well as areas where environmental considerations preclude residential development.
Parks and Recreation	The public beach strand and town parks.
Residential	Areas developed with any type of dwelling unit.
Vacant or Undeveloped	Undeveloped lots in recorded subdivisions, select homes or structures with no occupant for an extended time.
Commercial	Areas developed with retail, office, service, and similar use.
Institutional	Areas hosting schools, government, civic, and religious uses.
Transportation/Utility	Pumping stations, electrical substations, and similar uses.

As is readily apparent from the map, residential uses account for the vast majority of parcels and area within Bethany Beach. Open spaces also account for a significant area.

**Table 25. Existing Land Use Area Calculations**

<b>Existing Land Use</b>	<b>Parcels</b>	<b>% Parcels</b>	<b>Acreage</b>	<b>% Acreage</b>
Commercial	40	1.79%	23.74	2.32%
Institutional	11	0.49%	29.04	2.84%
Open Space	10	0.45%	108.60	10.61%
Parks and Recreation	5	0.22%	28.06	2.74%
Residential	2118	94.77%	817.34	79.82%
Transportation / Utility	6	0.27%	3.71	0.36%
Vacant or Undeveloped	45	2.01%	13.49	1.32%
Total	2235		1024.0	

## 10-2. PLANNING ENVIRONMENT

The Comprehensive Plan effort has reviewed other applicable plans and policies that influence the Bethany Beach Area.

### 10-2a. Strategies for State Policies and Spending

*Delaware's Strategies for State Policies and Spending*, prepared by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination and adopted by Executive Order 42 by Governor Carney on July 23, 2020, identifies "Level of Investment" areas that are guidelines for land use and state investment. The 2020 Strategies Map, in the appendix, show Level of Investment Areas within the Town. Bethany Beach is shown to be almost entirely within the Level 1 and 2 zones. Small, marginal areas within appear as Level 3. There are also some areas "Out of Play." Generalizing, the State is most supportive of new growth and redevelopment in Level 1, anticipates growth in Level 2, and is accepting of thoughtful, planned, adequately resourced development in Level 3.

### 10-2b. Sussex County

The most recent plan was adopted in 2018 and amended as recently as the Fall of 2022. The plan's "2045 Future Land Use Map" identifies Bethany Beach as a municipality surrounded by "Coastal Area." The map is available for review at [https://sussexcountyde.gov/sites/default/files/PDFs/FutureLandUse\\_Final\\_01162019\\_HighRes.pdf](https://sussexcountyde.gov/sites/default/files/PDFs/FutureLandUse_Final_01162019_HighRes.pdf)

Generally, the Sussex Plan acknowledges the County's pace of growth and anticipates numerous needs for improvements in infrastructure and services; namely, schools, water and sewer, transportation, health and social care, affordable housing, and public recreation facilities.

More specific to the Bethany Beach area, the County considers the surrounding "Coastal Area" to be a growth area, as well as incorporated municipalities. Here, the County plans to encourage the most concentrated forms of new development. However, the plan includes an important caveat regarding coastal areas in particular, cautioning that only "appropriate" types of concentrated development should be considered, given the environmental sensitivities. The plan calls for a range of housing types to be provided in the surrounding coastal areas, suggesting that the existing base density of 2 units per acre is largely

appropriate, but not to the exclusion of medium and higher density development, which the plan characterizes as 4-12 units per acre. The entire plan is available for review online at <https://sussexcountyde.gov/sites/default/files/PDFs/2018CompPlan-Final.pdf>

### 10-2c. Ocean View

The Town of Ocean View adopted a new comprehensive plan in March 2020. Like the County, Ocean View is mindful of population pressures and the desirability of its location. Its stated goals indicate it seeks economic growth, economic diversification, thoughtful growth, and an enhanced sense of community. It also references improvements to services, particularly transportation.

Though it does have some identified annexation areas west of the canal and south of the existing municipal boundary, its plan states that its emphasis going forward will be largely on infill development. At present, the Assawoman Canal is the boundary between Ocean View and Bethany Beach with neither documenting any interest or intent to go beyond. Still, Ocean View's desire to continue growing, may continue to challenge the area's overall infrastructure and send an increasing number of visitors to neighboring Bethany Beach. Ocean View's Comprehensive Plan may be accessed online at [Ocean View Comprehensive Plan](#).

### 10-2d. Millville

The Town of Millville adopted a new comprehensive plan in October 2019. In recent years Millville's boundaries have expanded significantly with the annexation of lands for large scale residential developments. Commercial development has increased to serve the Town's population and the surrounding communities. Millville sites balancing the needs of a growing resort and retirement community while retaining its small-town charm as a challenge.

Millville's desire to continue growing may continue to challenge overall infrastructure needs and increase the number of visitors to nearby Bethany Beach. Millville's Comprehensive Plan may be accessed online at [Millville Comprehensive Plan](#).

### 10-2e. South Bethany

The Town of South Bethany completed a comprehensive planning effort in 2016, which was amended as recently as 2022. Much like Bethany Beach, South Bethany is largely bound in by various natural and man-made features. Accordingly, it has no annexation intentions and is almost entirely built out internally.

It shares Bethany Beach's concern regarding the Delaware coastline and beach replenishment, as well as an awareness of regional growth, development, and traffic pressures. With little left to build, the Town's plan shows a focus on service efficiency and quality, sound fiscal policy, safety, and active outdoor recreation. South Bethany's Comprehensive Plan may be accessed online at [South Bethany Comprehensive Plan](#)

## 10-3. FUTURE LAND USE WITHIN TOWN

The Future Land Use Map, in the appendix, illustrates Bethany Beach's desired configuration for, at least, the next five to ten years. The Town does not propose any significant changes to future land use from the most recent addendum to its plan. The only changes were a handful of housekeeping edits. Table 26 (below) characterizes the continuing future land use classifications.

**Table 26. Future Land Use Designations**

Land Use	Description
Open Space	Preserved public and private open spaces including parks, recreation facilities, and areas dedicated in connection with land development as well as areas where environmental considerations preclude residential development.
Parks and Recreation	The public beach strand and town parks.
Residential	Areas developed with any type of dwelling unit.
Commercial	Areas developed with retail, office, service, and similar use.
Institutional	Areas hosting schools, government, civic, and religious uses.
Transportation/Utility	Pumping stations, electrical substations, and similar uses.

Bethany Beach's classifications for future land use match the designations it chose to use for existing land use.

**Table 27. Future Land Use Area Calculations**

Future Land Use Type	Parcels	% Parcels	Acreage	% Acreage
Commercial	40	1.79%	23.74	2.32%
Institutional	11	0.49%	29.04	2.84%
Open Space	9	0.40%	100.93	9.86%
Parks and Recreation	6	0.27%	35.73	3.49%
Residential	2163	96.78%	830.84	81.14%
Transportation/Utility	6	0.27%	3.71	0.36%
Total	2235		1024.0	

## 10-4. LAND USE AND ZONING

The link between land use and zoning is important because Title 22, Section 702(c) of the Delaware Code requires that municipalities:

*"...within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan or revision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the uses of land provided for in the comprehensive development plan."*

Zoning is the primary means for implementing the Comprehensive Plan, consisting of a written document and a series of maps. The maps show districts or zones into which the municipality is divided to regulate the use of land. The document specifies the types of activities (uses) that can occur in each district either as a matter of right (in all circumstances) or under certain conditions (conditional uses). It also regulates building height, lot sizes, setbacks, yards and green space, the number and sizes of signs, and space for off-street parking. Some municipalities incorporate environmental protection standards in zoning ordinances, while others have stand-alone ordinances with cross-references to zoning standards.

Zoning works with subdivision regulations. Subdivision refers to the process of splitting up or assembling land for development. The regulations governing this process designate utility locations, street rights-of-way, open space, and common areas. They also outline the services, such as water, sewer, gas, and electricity, and amenities that a developer must supply prior to the sale of subdivided (or assembled) land. Increasingly, there is often less of a distinction between zoning codes and subdivision ordinances.

Development plan approvals cannot take place without making sure that plans comply with zoning and subdivision codes. Over the past several years, there has been a trend in the state toward consolidated subdivision and zoning regulations into a single land use code.

## 10-4a. Bethany Beach's Existing Zoning Classifications

Bethany Beach makes routine updates to its zoning ordinance and considers its current land-use ordinances to be well developed and well suited, with continued revision, to implement its vision. Still, it is very important to keep two things in mind. One, the map that appears at the end of the linked document is **not Bethany Beach's Official Zoning Map**. It is a useful guide. Still, interested parties or development interests should view the Official Zoning Map and code at the municipal offices.

Second, this map depicts Bethany Beach's zoning as it was before the adoption, certification, and implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. As is discussed in the section above, municipalities have an 18-month window to update their zoning and subdivision ordinances following the adoption and certification of a new comprehensive plan. The discussion that follows is intended to demonstrate the suitability of the longstanding framework Bethany Beach has constructed within its land use ordinances in continuing to implement its future land use vision. The Town's code and map may be viewed at <https://ecode360.com/11903137>

Bethany Beach's zoning is quite straightforward, both in words, and in the continuity evidenced on its zoning map. Each classification is outlined briefly below.

**R-1 Residential District** – By right, this district allows for up to four dwelling units per structure. Accessory buildings (deemed appropriate by the code) are permitted, as well as home occupation or home-based businesses (subject to conditions found elsewhere in the code). As is common in many codes, schools, churches, hospitals, libraries, playgrounds, and various utilities are permissible under a special exception or as a conditional use.

**R1-A Boardwalk Residential District** – This district purposefully duplicates the requirements and standards of the R1 district, including the same by-right and conditional uses. The key differences are that street frontage is not required if there is sufficient boardwalk frontage. There is also a minimum lot area of 2,500 square feet and additional verbiage detailing the repair and renovation of such structures. Structures in this district may be repaired, remodeled, or entirely rebuilt within the existing dimensions, provided that off-street parking is not reduced.

**R1-B Sea Villas Residential District** – This district also purposefully duplicates the requirements and uses of the R1 district. Here a distinction is made for properties that do not abut a street on their eastern edge. These may construct or replace open decks or cantilevered balconies.

**R-2 Residential District – Individual lots require 7,000 sq ft.** This district is heavily utilized west of state Route 1 and is a bit more suburban in character, compared to the R1 zone. Otherwise, all by-right and conditional uses are identical.

**C-1 – Central Commercial District** – This district, at present, applies largely to commercial properties east of state Route 1, mostly in proximity to Garfield Parkway. All are subject to nonresidential design guidelines developed in 2008. With possible exceptions, lots must be 5,000 square feet. All residential uses allowed in R1 and R2 are allowable by-right, as well as apartments and commercial lodging, numerous types of retail, personal services, various types of eateries, and art galleries, as well as building supply and service type uses, provided there is no outdoor storage of materials. Mini golf is allowable provided design guidelines and fence requirements are met. Pool halls, bowling alleys, auto sales and service, funeral homes, gas stations, social clubs, and some other uses may be considered by special exception or conditional use.

**C-2 Neighborhood Commercial District** – This district, at present, applies to a handful of properties in the center of the Town, well away from the boardwalk. Like C1, they are subject to design guidelines. Bars, taverns, and other similar uses are not allowed. Also, residential uses are not allowed. Permitted uses include most common personal services, retail, and eateries.

**CL-1 Commercial Lodging District** – This district, at present, applies to a handful of properties fronting the beach or abutting Atlantic Avenue. It is intended for lodging that may also offer fitness, conferences, or meeting rooms. Lots are required to be at least 3,750 square feet. Stand-alone bars are not allowed.

**(MORE) Municipal, Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Educational District** – This district regulates municipally owned or controlled property and is intended for outdoor recreation, education, and beautification.

As of the date of this plan's adoption, the Existing Zoning Map and the descriptions of the existing zoning categories (above) represent the state of the Town's ordinances and maps at a fixed point in time. Bethany Beach reserves the right to amend its ordinances or the zoning of various parcels, so long as such changes are consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan. The above discussion is for informational purposes only and documents the Town's successful and mature efforts at land use control. The Town's code and maps may be reviewed at <https://ecode360.com/11902959>.

## 10-5. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN – FUTURE LAND USE AND GROWTH

Bethany Beach considers itself largely built out internally and bound by a combination of natural or common-sense boundaries externally. Though there is considerable room for economic growth and population growth, the Town feels that most of this will likely be accomplished during a gradual transition to a year-round, permanent resident model. The Town is not opposed to any geographic expansion but considers the prospect of such growth in the next ten years so remote as not to warrant serious consideration. In any event, were such an unexpected and impactful opportunity to arise, it would almost certainly be prudent to do so in the context of a fresh comprehensive plan and community strategy.

## 10-5a. Community Development Plan – Foundational Policy Statements

### Community Character

*A thriving year-round residential community that seeks to preserve its family-friendly, small-town character and beauty while maintaining its roots as a quiet and safe beach resort for all.*

### Position on Housing Growth

*Bethany Beach welcomes ongoing investment, care, and renovation of its existing residential properties, as well as conscientious redevelopment consistent with the Town's code and the community character.*

### Position on Population Growth

*Bethany Beach is in the somewhat unique position where the full-time residential population does not correspond closely to the number of homes. The population is far less than would be expected, given the number of homes. However, more property owners are moving to Bethany Beach as full-time residents. The Town cherishes its identity as a quiet, family-friendly beach community, is open to such year-round population increases, and welcomes all who would consider making this wonderful community their home.*

### Position on Commercial Growth

*Bethany Beach welcomes ongoing investment in, and care and renovation of its existing commercial properties, as well as conscientious redevelopment consistent with the Town's Code and the community character.*

## 10-5b. Community Development Plan – Future Land Use in Town

Over the past two-plus decades, development pressure in the coastal area of Sussex County has had a measurable effect on the character and environment that defines the Town of Bethany Beach. Over this period, most of the land that was available for development within the Town has been subdivided and developed according to the Town's existing regulations, Town codes, and development plans. In keeping with the long-term vision of the Town, established by the Town's previous Comprehensive Plan document, Bethany Beach has been successful in maintaining its quiet, residential atmosphere.

It seeks to respect the integrity of this long-term vision that was set forth nearly a half-century ago and remains valid today. Therefore, the future land use plan for the Town will

reflect the desire to maintain land use patterns and development characteristics rather than to initiate any significant changes. Considering the mounting regional development pressures, simply maintaining the existing community character and quality of life may prove a challenge in itself. No major land use changes are anticipated in the future land use plan. This is shown on the Future Land Use map in the appendix. The existing areas of residential use should be maintained, with potential future higher-density development channeled to considerable areas already zoned for this type of use.

Institutional uses and their existing intensities should be maintained within the current zones in which they are permitted. The two existing commercial areas and the commercial lodging district in the Town should be maintained as such and dramatic intensification of these commercial uses should be discouraged to maintain consistency with the low-density, community-centered character of the Town. The existing institutional land uses, presently regulated under the MORE zoning classification, will be maintained, and the areas now devoted to parks and open space will also remain intact, with incremental expansion of these important uses being desirable.

### 10-5c. Community Development Plan – Growth and Annexation

The basic shape and extent of the municipal boundaries of Bethany Beach have not changed significantly since the Town's founding in 1901. The last notable adjustment to the Town's boundary took place in the 1980s, when the Town redrew the municipal border north of the Loop Canal and west of state Route 1. The Town of Bethany Beach has no immediate plans to annex additional land into the Town's municipal boundaries in the foreseeable future. Should such an unlikely event present itself, the Town would embark on the evaluation within the confines of a robust planning effort that would replace this document and adhere to the annexation requirements of the Town Charter. Annexation requires a vote by the residents and property owners of the Town.

The last geographic addition of any type involved the Bethany Beach Loop Canal, which has been a central part of the community since the community was founded in the first part of the 20th century. The Loop Canal was the last bit of "road" that visitors to Bethany Beach had to traverse to reach the Town's pristine beaches. The Loop Canal was constructed by early Bethany Beach property owners and developers and remained an integral and necessary part of the community for many decades. In time with the construction of east/west and north/south roadways in the area the Loop Canal became more of a scenic feature of the community rather than a necessary and well-traversed waterway. Regardless, the Loop Canal is an important and historic feature of Bethany Beach.

The Loop Canal has always been within the limits of corporate Bethany Beach and the canal is under municipal ownership. However, some of the Canal's banks were previously in privately owned properties.

### 10-5d. Position on Development of Adjacent Areas

Bethany Beach's surrounds are either already developed or permanently preserved. The lone possible exception is the National Guard Center north of the Town. If this facility were to close, be sold, or significantly change function, the Town would appreciate the opportunity to explore its acquisition.

## 10-6. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### **Goal**

- Preserve and enhance the established character of the Town, continue effective land use policies, and remain engaged in addressing development in the surrounding area that may affect the Town.

### **Recommendations**

- **Maintain effective land-use ordinances and provide for appropriate development.** The Town should continue to consider regulatory efforts to incentivize appropriate development and redevelopment of homes and properties consistent with the community character. The Town zoning map and related ordinance should be updated, as needed, to reflect the future land use changes.
- **Continue to base any requests for annexation on the best interests of the Town and its property owners.** The Town is satisfied with its established municipal boundaries, and there are no current areas of annexation under consideration. As in the past, any request for annexation by communities outside the corporate limits of Bethany Beach will be based on an informed assessment of the best interests of the Town, its residents, and property owners.

# CHAPTER 11. IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

## 11-1. POST-PLAN REQUIREMENTS

This section summarizes the provisions of the Delaware Code that must be complied with following adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.

- Section 702(c) – Adopt comprehensive rezoning in accordance with land uses provided for in this plan within 18 months after adopting this Plan.
- Section 702(e) – Within five years following adoption, review this plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant.
- Section 702(f) – Submit annual reports to the Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) each July 1.

## 11-2. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

Though Bethany Beach is somewhat affluent, it is still a very small town with limited staff. Unlike some Delaware municipalities of similar size, Bethany Beach is confronted with some sizeable issues; many without easy or obvious solutions. These would include sea level rise, beach erosion, housing affordability, regional growth pressure, emergency preparedness, water quality, a maturing population, and the constant press of visitors from in and out of state that impact local and state infrastructure. Notable areas where collaboration will remain essential include:

- Ongoing assurance of adequate police, fire, and EMS services and mutual aid agreements
- Ongoing cooperation with DNREC and the USACE regarding beach replenishment
- Continued engagement with the same agencies regarding potential structural and engineering improvements to address ongoing flooding
- Continued engagement with DelDOT to address traffic volume and speed and facilitate convenient access for visitors to the State's beaches
- Partnering with DNREC in any upcoming pollution control strategy for the Town's watersheds
- Ongoing involvement in any State or Sussex County initiatives concerning the National Flood Insurance Program
- Engagement with Sussex County, neighboring municipalities, and the Delaware State Housing Authority for innovative approaches to Eastern Sussex's housing affordability issues
- Ongoing engagement between Sussex County and the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District
- Involvement with the Delaware League of Local Governments (DLLG), the Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT), and the Association for Coastal Towns (ACT)

for issues such as municipal street aid, beach replenishment, other municipal priorities, safety, and environmental and coastal issues.

## 11-3. IMPLEMENTATION

Below are the Town's identified goals and recommendations specific to intergovernmental coordination. In practice, the majority of Bethany Beach's priorities will require a measure of collaboration. The full list of all plan goals and objectives are listed in the first chapter of this document.

### Intergovernmental Coordination Goal

- Work collaboratively to address local and regional challenges that impact the future of the Town and other Delaware coastal communities.

### Recommendations

- **Continue intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.** The Town should continue to work regionally to address common challenges, particularly as related to beach communities to include, for example, continuing to be an active participant in the SCAT, DLLG, the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT), the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA), as well as informal workgroups and formal training and networking opportunities, such as those provided by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware. In addition, the Town should continue its close relationship and ongoing communications with local, state, and federal representatives, officials, and agencies.
- **Maintain the 50-year beach replenishment project.** The importance of Bethany's beach and dune structure cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property, and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished and maintained consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state, and federal representatives, agencies, and officials, as well as participation in Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).
- **Continue to explore and pursue grants and low-interest loans for the Town.** As a faithful steward of taxpayer dollars, the Town government routinely seeks state and federal grants and loans applicable to infrastructure, Town services, the beach, and a host of other areas.
- **Continue intergovernmental coordination and cooperation.** Wastewater collection and treatment services are performed by Sussex County through an agreement with the Town of Bethany Beach. The Town is in the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District, which feeds into the Sussex County Regional Wastewater Facility near Ocean View. The Town has an agreement with Sussex County for the treatment of up to 3 million gallons per day (mgd). Considering that the Town's current maximum finished water-delivery capacity is 2.3 mgd, this arrangement

fits well with the current and future needs of the Town. The Town should continue to work with Sussex County to ensure adequate and uninterrupted services.

- **Continue to meet or exceed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) stormwater regulations.** The Town has a detailed stormwater management improvements strategy and regularly performs necessary upgrades and repairs. Significant updates to the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Code (Chapter 453 of the Town Code) have been modified to meet or exceed state and federal standards. Further code adjustments could be required if State or Federal standards are amended.
- **Continue to explore infrastructure and policy approaches to ameliorate flooding and drainage problems.** The Town's Storm Emergency Relief Fund, study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond, the existence of an active committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways for residents to minimize stormwater impacts, are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has, and will, take to address flooding. The Town is actively participating in the United States Army Corps of Engineers Back Bay Study and the DelDOT State Route 1 Coastal Corridor Resiliency Study. The Town may also consider policies developed by other coastal communities, such as Lewes' recent sea level rise initiative. The "Green Bethany" initiative and this subject are addressed further in the sustainability and adaptability section of this Comprehensive Plan.
- **Maintain National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Class 8 (or better) rating.** Flood insurance is a significant cost for property owners in Bethany Beach. Because of this, the Town participates in NFIP's voluntary CRS incentive program, which recognizes community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum program requirements. As a result of the Town's actions, FEMA has approved a 10 percent rate reduction for eligible properties in Special Hazard Flood areas. The Town should continue to adhere and adapt to NFIP requirements to retain the current discount.
- **Support local affordable housing initiatives.** Continue to explore avenues of encouraging or supporting affordable housing within, or in proximity to Bethany Beach, particularly for the vital workforce needed as the Town evolves into a year-round destination.
- **Continue to coordinate with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to improve traffic safety.** The state Route 26 streetscape project is one example of local coordination with DelDOT to promote traffic safety. Other examples include the installation of overhead lights in the median and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at several intersections on state Route 1. The Town should also continue working with DelDOT on a plan to build a pedestrian pathway along the west side of Kent Avenue, connecting the Town's planned pedestrian and bicycle pathway along the south side of Collins Street with another pathway along the south side of the 300 block of Wellington Parkway with another RRFB on Kent Avenue at the Library. The Town should continue this partnership by coordinating with DelDOT's designated planner for Sussex County.

The Town values its relationship with DelDOT and has consulted with DelDOT during the development of this plan.

- **Local roadway safety.** The Town should continue to work with South Bethany, Sea Colony, Middlesex, and DelDOT on a study of traffic on state Route 1 with a goal of lowering the speed limit through those communities to 30 mph from 35 mph and another study of traffic on state Route 26 to determine if the data justify the lowering of the speed limit on that road. The Town should also continue to work with DelDOT on its goal of lowering the speed limit on municipal streets from 25 mph to 20 mph. The Town should continue to work with other municipalities through the DLLG to effect a legislative change that would enable local jurisdictions to set a speed limit of 20 mph on its own streets without an engineering and traffic investigation so long as the jurisdiction has developed procedures for doing so based on a revised Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- **Intergovernmental coordination.** Funding for local roadway maintenance and improvement (most notably through the Municipal Street Aid Fund and the Community Transportation Fund), are critical to towns like Bethany Beach. In addition to working closely with DelDOT, the Town should continue to pursue political avenues, including working with elected State representatives and the DLLG to secure adequate funding.
- **Continue to base any requests for annexation on the best interests of the Town and its property owners.** The Town is satisfied with its established municipal boundaries, and there are no current areas of annexation under consideration. As in the past, any request for annexation by communities outside the corporate limits of Bethany Beach will be based on an informed assessment of the best interests of the Town, its residents, and property owners.

# Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware



## Aerial View



Adopted, August 2023



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Source: Digital Orthophotography - State of Delaware, Sanborn Map Company, Inc. 2022.  
Municipal Boundaries - Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC).  
FratMap 08/23  
Road and Rail Network - Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT).  
FratMap 08/23  
Hydrology - National Hydrography Dataset (NHD). USGS and EPA.  
FratMap 08/23  
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State of Delaware, Sanborn Map Company, Inc.

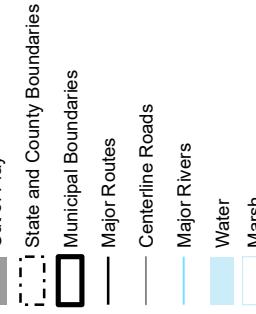
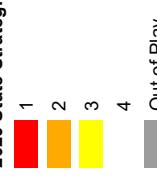


# Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware



## Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending

2020 State Strategies Levels

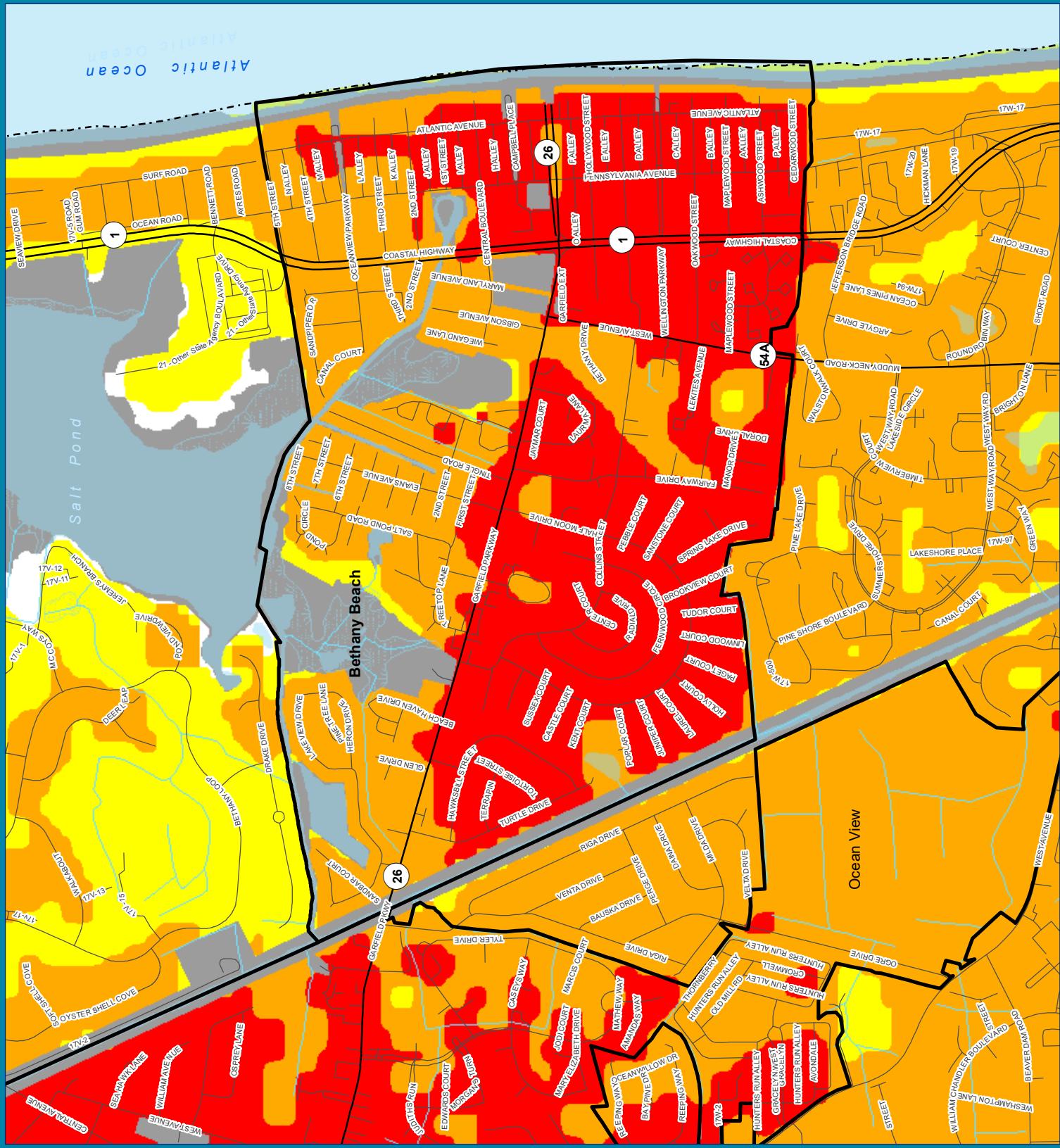


Adopted, August 2023

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Sources:

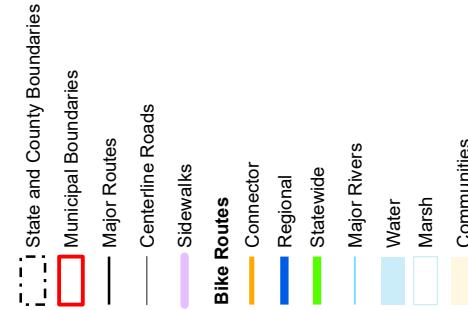
Delaware Strategies for State Policies and Spending, Office of State Planning Coordination (OSC), 2020, Final, May 01, 2023.  
Municipal Boundaries, Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination (OSC), Final, May 01, 2023.  
Road Network, Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT), Final, May 01, 2023.  
Communities - Sussex County, Delaware State Map 023.  
Hydrography, National Hydrography Dataset (NHD), USGS and EPA, Final, May 01, 2023.  
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# Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware



## Bethany Beach Sidewalk and Walking Pathways



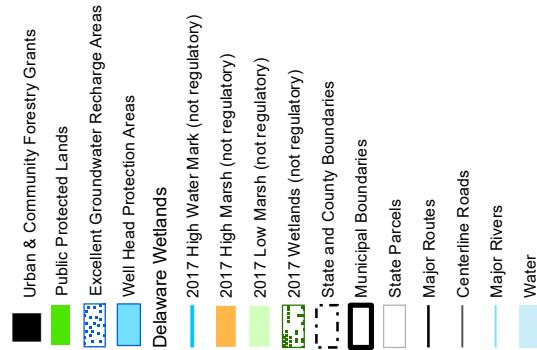
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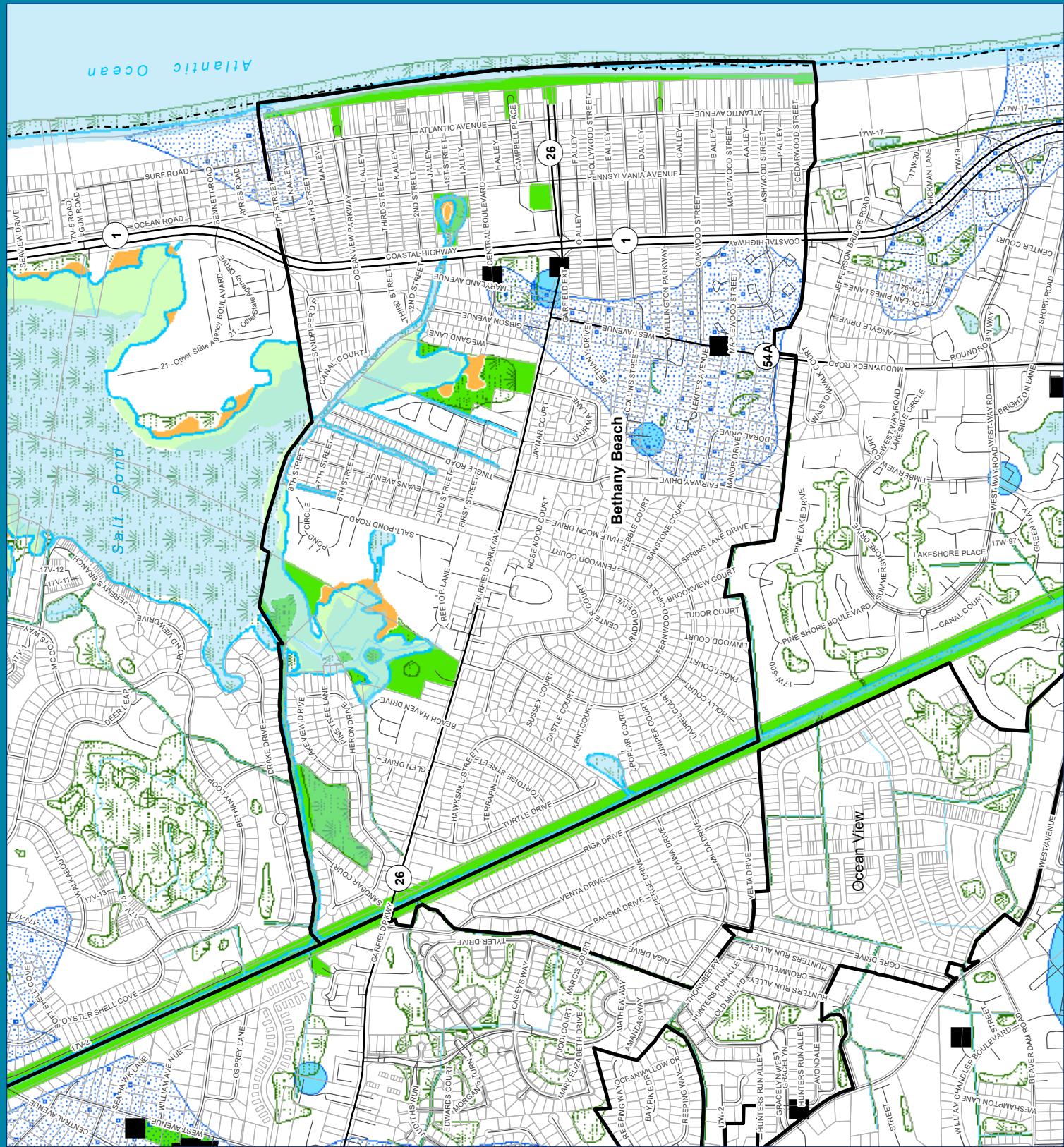
## Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware



## Environmental Features



Adopted August 2023





# Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware

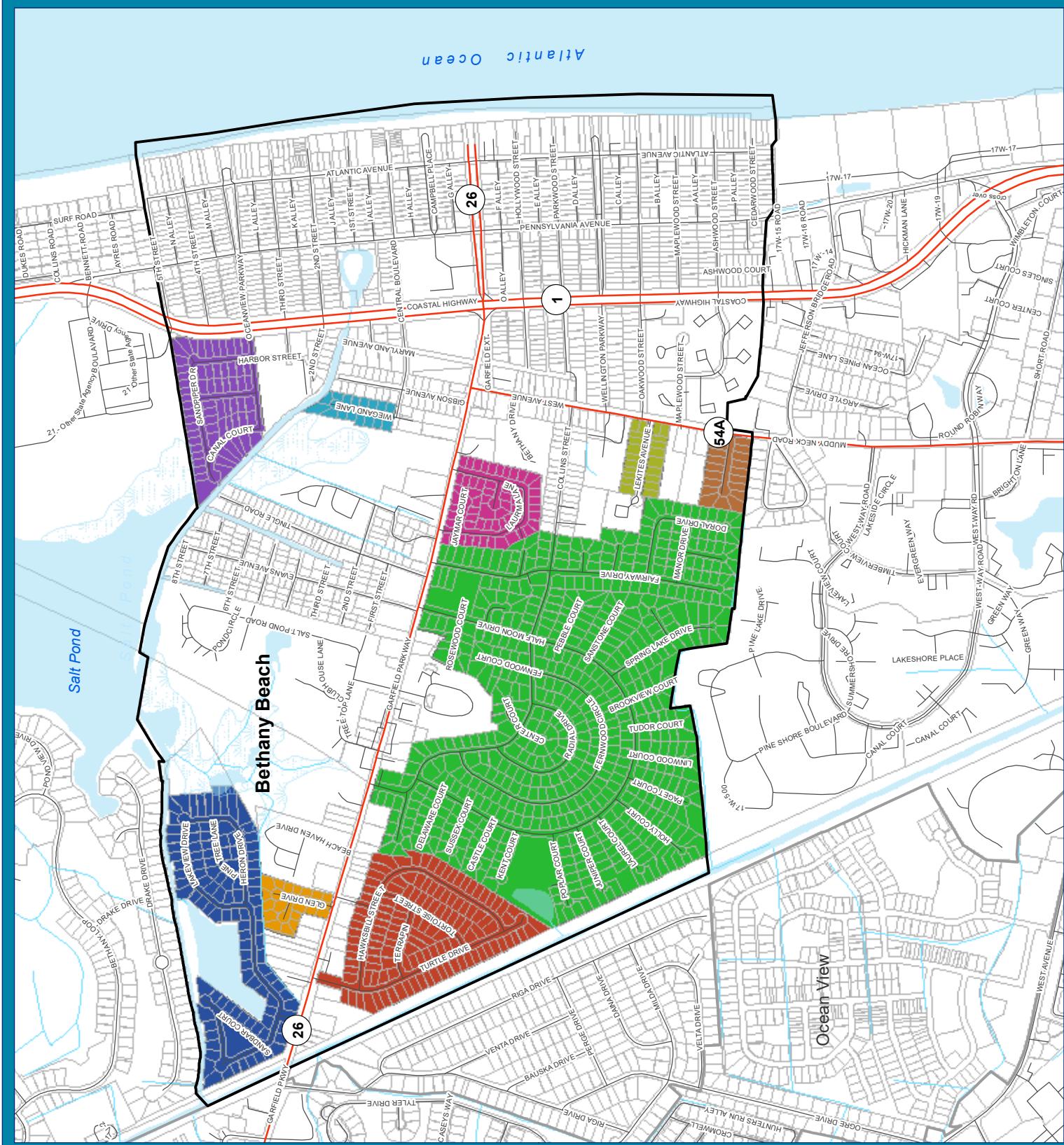
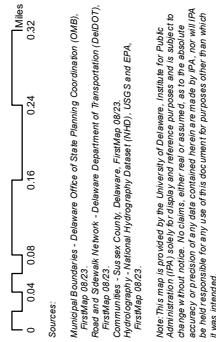


## Communities

### Bethany Beach Communities

- Lake Bethany
- The Canal
- Bethany Glen
- Brewerdale
- Turtle Walk of Bethany
- Bethany West
- Candlelight AC
- Beachwood Subdivision
- Cea-Esta Manor
- Town of Bethany Beach
- Other Municipal Boundaries
- State Parcels
- Major Routes
- Centerline Roads
- Water
- Marsh

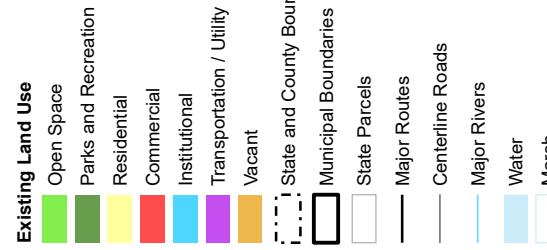
Adopted, August 2023



# Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware

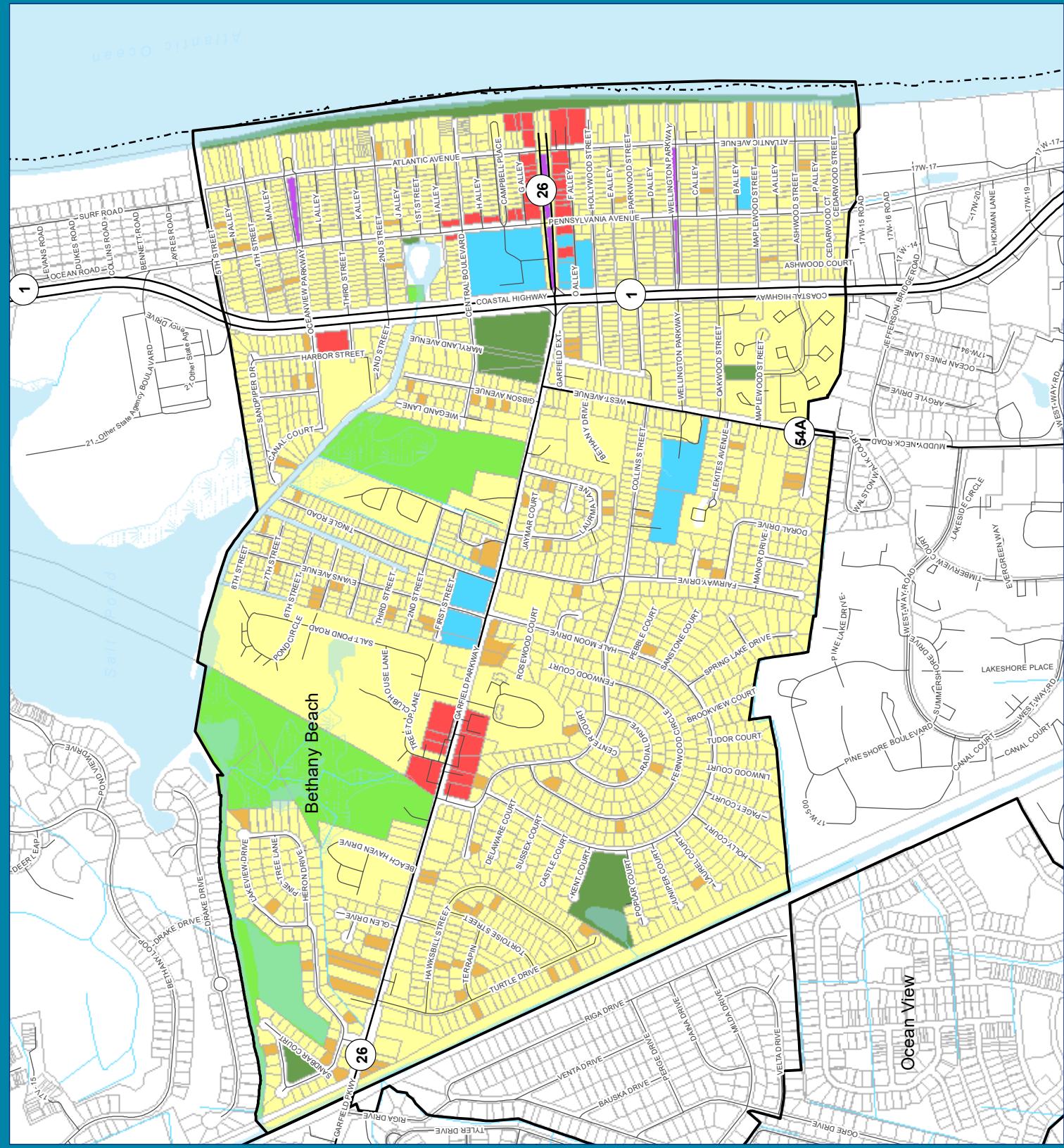


## Existing Land Use



Adopted, August 2023

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Sources:  
DRAFT Existing Land Use - created by the University of Delaware Institute for  
Municipal Administration and edited by the Town of Bethany Beach, 08/23  
Road Network - DelDOT, PNT, DE Dept of Transportation, 08/23  
Communities - Sussex County, Delaware Fire Map, 08/23  
Hydrography - National Hydrography Database (NHD), USGS and EPA,  
Fire Station - DE 08/23  
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## Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware



## Future Land Use

Entire | and | |se

Open Access

Parks and Recreation

Page 11 of 11

Ruddiment

Commercial

Institutional

Transportation

## State and County Boundaries

Municipal Boi

State Domes

State Fairs

## — Major Routes

— Centerline Road

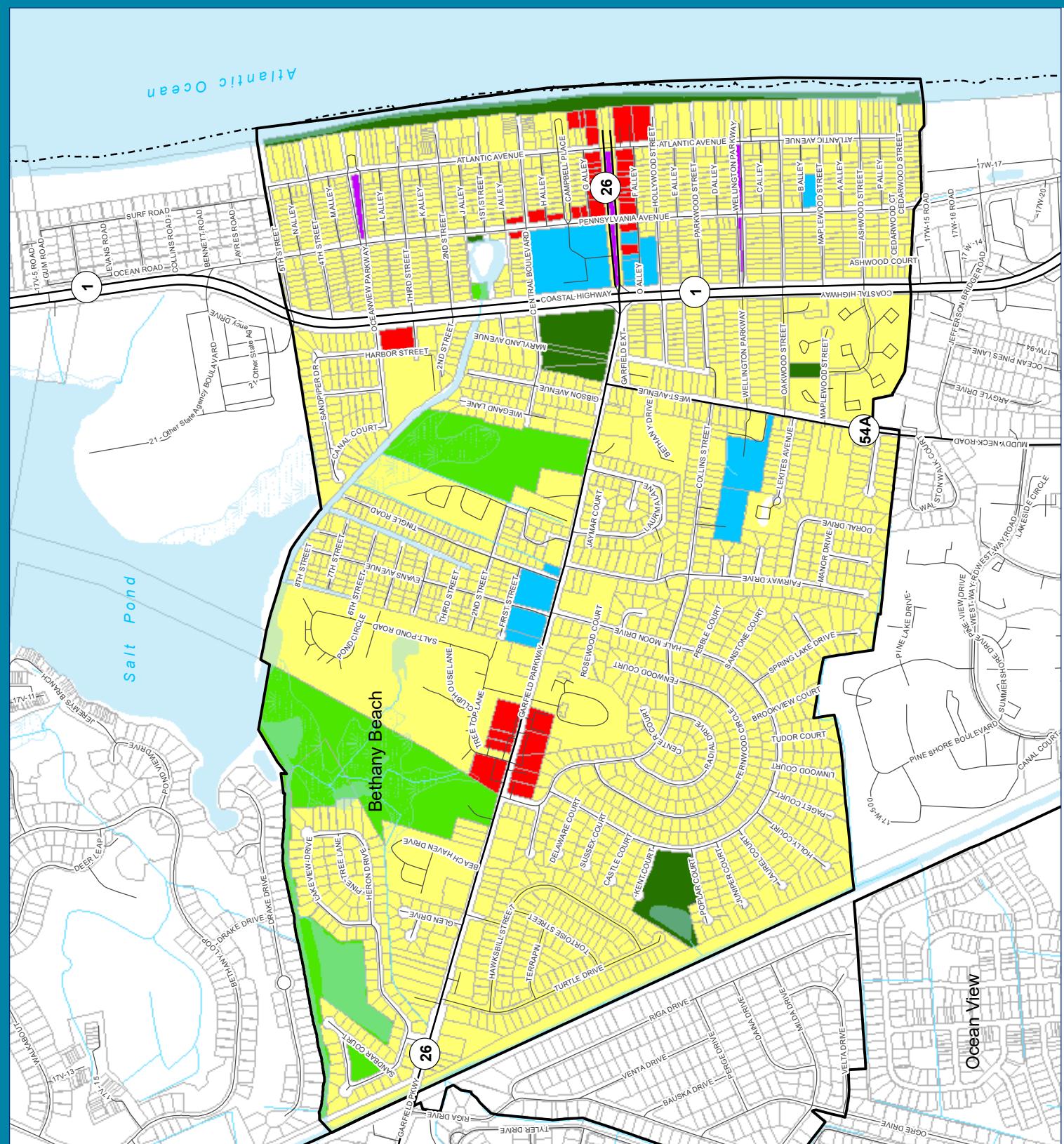
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Watel

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Accepted August 2002

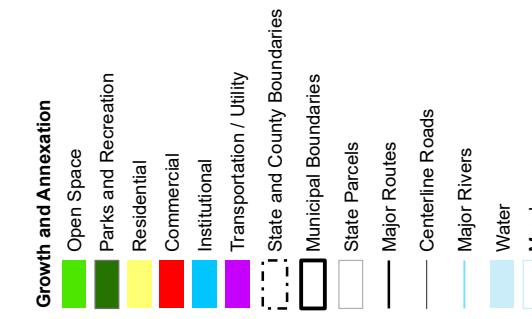
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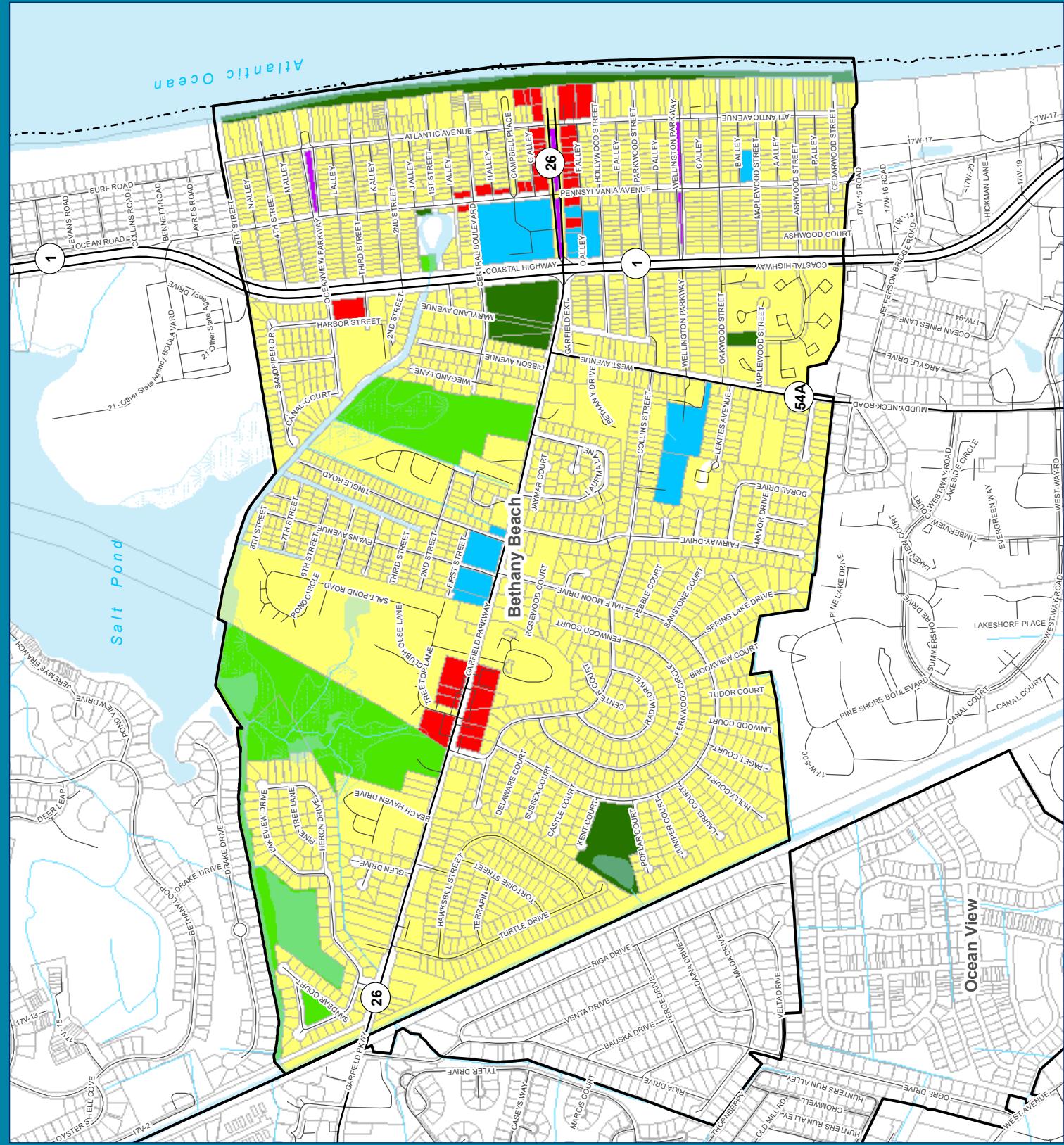
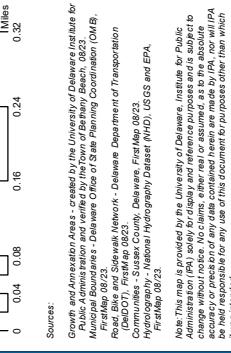
## Town of Bethany Beach, Delaware



## Growth and Annexation



Adopted August 2023





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