



**town of fenwick island**

comprehensive plan draft 28 september 2007

**town of fenwick island**  
comprehensive plan  
adopted and certified month 2007

prepared for the town of fenwick island by:





## Table of Contents

### Foreword

Town, County, State Officials and Participants  
List of Figures, Tables and Maps

### Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Authority to Plan	1-2
1.2 Community Overview	1-2
1.3 Executive Summary	1-3
1.4 Priority Implementation Actions	1-12

### Section 2: Planning Process

2.1 Approach	2-1
2.2 Public Engagement	2-1
2.3 Phase One: Understanding What's Going On	2-3
2.4 Phase Two: Exploring & Imagining	2-3
2.5 Phase Three: Deciding What To Do	2-4

### Section 3: Municipal Development Strategy

3.1 Demographics and Population	3-1
3.2 Housing	3-6
3.3 Land Use and Annexation	3-10
3.4 Redevelopment	3-13
3.5 Infrastructure	3-16
3.6 Community Character-Built Environment	3-26
3.7 Community Character-Natural Environment	3-32

### Section 4: Implementation

4.1 Implementation Strategy	4-1
4.2 Intergovernmental Coordination	4-8

### Glossary

### Bibliography

### Appendix

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## Tables, Figures and Appendix

### Tables

**Table 1:** Fenwick Island Population Projection Scenarios

**Table 2:** Racial Composition by Place

**Table 3:** Age Groups by Place

**Table 4:** Fenwick Island Population Age Profile

**Table 5:** Educational Attainment

**Table 6:** Median Household Income by Place

**Table 7:** Fenwick Island Resident Income Sources

**Table 8:** Poverty Status by Age Group and Place

**Table 9:** Type of Housing Units

**Table 10:** Age of Regional Housing Stock

**Table 11:** Traffic Counts by Place Along SR 1

### Figures

**Figure 1:** Fenwick Island Total Population

**Figure 2:** Fenwick Island Population Projection Scenarios

**Figure 3:** Ownership and Vacancy Rates

**Figure 4:** Median House Value

**Figure 5:** Civic Spaces Diagram

**Figure 6:** Streets, Lots and Buildings

### Appendix

**Section 1:** Existing SR 1 Section

**Section 2:** SR 1 Section- Minor Planning Influence

**Section 3:** SR 1 Section- Major Planning Influence

**Snapshot 1:** Housing

**Snapshot 2:** Land Use and Annexation

**Snapshot 3:** Redevelopment

**Snapshot 4:** Infrastructure

**Snapshot 5:** Infrastructure (continued)

**Snapshot 6:** Community Character- Built Environment

**Snapshot 7:** Community Character- Natural Environment

**Map 1:** Aerial Photo

**Map 2:** Roads and Boundaries

**Map 3:** State Strategies for Policies and Spending

**Map 4:** Proposed State Strategies for Policies and Spending

**Map 5:** Existing Land Use

**Map 6:** Existing Zoning

**Map 7:** Future Land Use

**Map 8:** Minor Planning Influence

**Map 9:** Major Planning Influence

**Map 10:** Commercial Corridor Key Plan

**Map 11:** Commercial Corridor Enlargement A

**Map 12:** Commercial Corridor Enlargement B

## Section 1 Introduction

The Town of Fenwick Island Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for planning, design and development decision making. It has been completed in keeping with Delaware Code 22 Section 9 and the intent that every municipality throughout the state should prepare or update a comprehensive plan. This plan successfully integrates the Delaware Code's five key principles of how communities should grow.

### **1) Guide growth to areas that are most prepared to accept it in terms of infrastructure and thoughtful planning.**

The majority of Fenwick Island is identified as most appropriate and appropriate for development according to the current State Strategies for Policy and Spending. The Town does not intend to annex areas outside of its municipal boundaries and prefers to influence potential development and growth in nearby unincorporated Sussex County through an Area of Concern.

Relevant documents were reviewed and analyzed for applicability to the Town for opportunities for consideration. Such documents included any updated materials in support of the update of the Sussex County Comprehensive Plan, the updated DeIDOT / Sussex County Transportation Plan, the updated Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan and the Office of State Planning Coordination's Strategies for Policies and Spending. The details of each document are contained within Section 3 – Municipal Development Strategy.

To further support the development of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town expanded upon the Future Land Use and Area of Concern elements within this document to be compatible with the State's Strategies for Policy and Spending. This State document identifies and categorizes lands within the state that are most supportive of future growth. These categories include Level 1 (the most appropriate area for development); Level 2 (appropriate for development); Level 3 (where long-term growth is expected); and Level 4 (areas which should not be developed). Fenwick Island recognizes that much of the Town is within the Level 1 and Level 2 areas, as shown on Map 3. The Town requests that all areas within the Town's boundary be designated as Level 1. A proposed map

illustrating this requested designation is included in this document as Map 4. The Town recognizes the regional impact of future development to the local community. Due to these influences the Town has identified its Area of Concern for the community as the Little Assawoman Watershed which includes a mix of all State Investment Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. In addition, this area is defined by the Sussex County Comprehensive Land Use Plan as an environmentally sensitive developing area which the County feels is an area of ecological importance. Based upon this information, the Town does not propose to grow outside of its current boundaries.

### **2) Preserve open space.**

The preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is an essential theme that runs through all sections of this document. The Town intends to establish itself as a leader in environmental stewardship among the state's coastal communities. This plan builds on past successes in open space preservation and environmental efforts to create a Green Infrastructure that protects the beach and bay and areas in between.

### **3) Promote infill and redevelopment.**

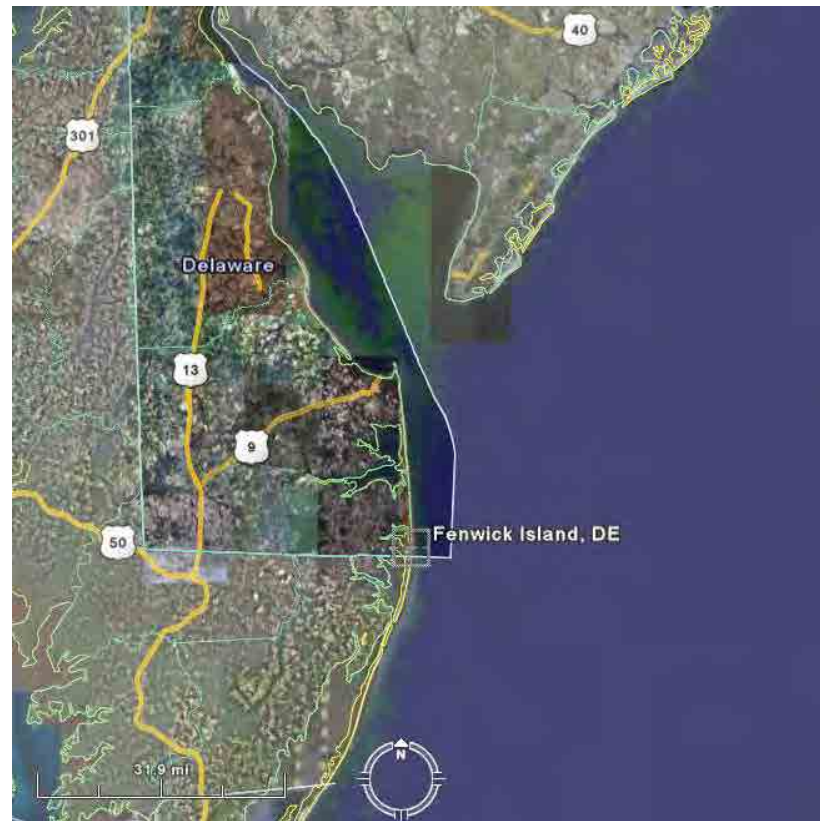
Planned growth will result from the development of the few remaining vacant properties and the redevelopment of existing properties within its compact block and lot grid. This plan contains a multi-pronged approach to ensure that infill and redevelopment efforts achieve multiple community goals. Site-sensitive and sustainable design within the context of a quiet and family-oriented community is considered vital.

### **4) Facilitate attractive attainable housing.**

Recognition of the high costs of development and the lack of available land in the resort areas led this plan to include more than one approach to facilitating attainable housing. The Town intends to cooperate in regional efforts to provide attainable housing which could include partnerships with other resort and inland municipalities. The Town will also explore methods of providing employee-occupied housing within commercial developments and redevelopments.

### **5) Spend taxpayer money effectively while curtailing sprawl.**

This plan makes the most of the unique opportunity to leverage taxpayer money to solve many community



Location Map: Google Earth 2007

concerns. Planned pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements through DelDOT are being combined into a broader plan to create a walkable, desirable and sustainable mixed use area.

### 1.1 The Authority to Plan

The State of Delaware requires that towns participate in comprehensive planning 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 towns, Sussex County and the State. This plan was written to comply with the requirements of a municipal strategy as described in the Delaware Code for towns with a population of 2,000 or fewer.

The Comprehensive Plan for small communities such as Fenwick Island is to be a “document in text and maps, containing at a minimum, a municipal 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.” The Town’s comprehensive planning process must demonstrate coordination with other towns, Sussex County, and the State during the plan’s creation. (22 Del. C. 1953, subsection 702: 49 Del. Laws, c. 415, subsection 1)

Delaware law also states that planning be an ongoing process and that towns identify future planning activities. This plan is the Town of Fenwick Island’s Comprehensive Plan as required by state law. It is intended to cover a 10-year planning window and be reviewed at least every five years.

#### Why Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is an official document intended to guide future development or redevelopment of a community in order to create and maintain a desirable environment and to promote health, safety, and welfare. The State of Delaware has enabled municipalities such as Fenwick Island to produce comprehensive plans. But what’s so important about planning?

Planning enables a community to understand and articulate its future. Even if that future is to stay the same as the Town is today, planning is an important process to undertake. This process involves many steps, culminating in the preparation of a plan document with maps and text. The plan contains all the elements that address the interrelationships between the physical layout of a community, the services provided, and the economic and fiscal demands pressuring the Town. The plan establishes the framework for identifying the community attributes to be protected and enhanced, understanding the community’s shortcomings to be addressed, and preparing a strategy for managing potential change in a manner that preserves quality of life while fostering a sustainable economy.

### 1.2 Community Overview

#### Location

The Town of Fenwick Island is a small incorporated community located in Sussex County with a population of 270. At its closest point, it is approximately one-quarter mile from the Maryland/Delaware border at the southeastern edge of the state. Fenwick Island is the southernmost Delaware incorporated community located on the Assawoman Bay barrier island. The Town is bounded by the Fenwick Island State Park to the north, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, unincorporated Sussex County to the south and the Assawoman Bay to the west.

The Town encompasses an area of approximately one-third of a square mile. Bisected by State Route 1—the primary north-south arterial through the state—and located approximately one-quarter mile from State Route 54—a key east-west arterial connecting the coastal communities with the state’s inland areas, Fenwick Island is very accessible.

#### History

The first traces of settlement on the land now known as Fenwick Island can be traced to colonial times. On March 23, 1680, Lord Baltimore granted an area of land known as “Fishing Harbor” to Col. William Stevens, who later conveyed the land to Thomas Fenwick in 1692.

Though Thomas Fenwick lived in Sussex County for quite some time, he never actually resided on the island. It is believed that Fenwick Island’s name actually hails from



William Fasset, the husband of Thomas Fenwick's daughter, Mary, who claimed Fenwick Island for himself.

Between 1750 and 1751, the Trans-Peninsular line was laid out by surveyors to denote the boundary between land claimed by the Penn family to the north and land claimed by the Calvert family of Maryland to the south. The first survey stone was set on a tract of land later purchased for the Fenwick Island Lighthouse and is considered the oldest standing man-made object on the coast between the Indian River and Ocean City.

With the exception of tales of pirates patrolling the waters of Assawoman Bay throughout the late 1600s into the mid-1700s, human habitation on Fenwick Island appears to have been quite limited. By the mid-1800s, increasing numbers of shipwrecks near the shoals to the east of Fenwick Island garnered the attention of the U.S. Lighthouse Board. The United States Congress authorized the construction of a new lighthouse on Fenwick Island in 1856, and in 1858 the government purchased a ten acre tract of high land to build the 87-foot-tall lighthouse and a two-story keeper's dwelling.

Two families lived in the keeper's house in relative isolation throughout the late 1800s. Improvements on the island were mostly limited to a bridge to the mainland constructed in 1880 and new keeper's house in 1881. The first bridge was destroyed by the strong ocean currents. A second bridge to the mainland was built in 1892, a third built in 1934, and eventually the current bridge was constructed in 1958.

The first cottages began to dot Fenwick Island in the early 1930s. These first cottages were of simple construction, with no running water or electricity, and many were built on State land. The State of Delaware recognized the "squatting" and in 1941 offered cottage owners the opportunity to buy lots from the State at a price of \$200 for beachfront lots or \$100 for street lots.

With increasing development surrounding Fenwick Island, residents sought to incorporate the land to protect it from surrounding development pressure. The Act to Incorporate the Town was passed in July of 1953.

Fenwick Island has become a year-round town that prides itself on its reputation as being one of "The Quiet Resorts" who, along with Bethany Beach and South Bethany to the north of Fenwick Island, remain quieter and less populated than nearby Ocean City.

### 1.3 Executive Summary

#### How to Use this Plan

This document is highly user friendly in its organization. Section 3 contains the Municipal Development Strategy and is a key component of this plan. It documents the issues and opportunities identified through the planning process. For each issue goals and objectives for addressing that issue are described. The following is an example of how a "Population and Demographics" issue is addressed in the document:

**Issue:** It is difficult to determine the Town's demographics and population given its small size and seasonal character.

**Goal:** Create a method by which the Town can estimate its permanent and seasonal population, including peak seasonal population. This method should also enable the Town to better understand community demographics.

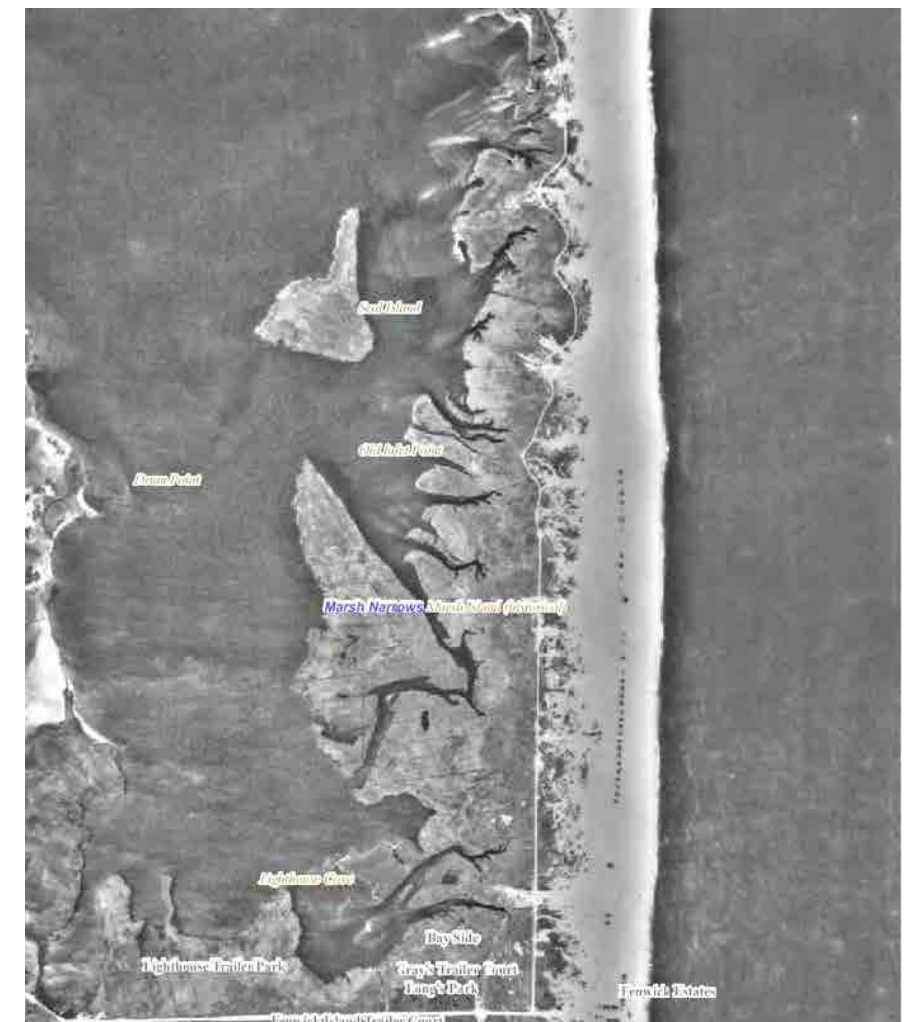
#### Objectives:

- 1.1 Use the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates as a starting point for determining the Town's makeup.
  - Supplement the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates with Town-derived information.
  - Coordinate with the US Census Bureau, prior to the 2010 census taking, to reduce the potential for error to the extent possible.

Section 4 describes the Implementation steps to be taken for the plan to be put into action. Each objective documented in the Municipal Development Strategy is



The first cottages began to appear in the 1930s.



Source: Delaware Geological Survey DataMIL (1936)



Working group members staffing a general public meeting.

turned into a recommendation. For each recommendation, a three-tier priority system is employed:

IO—Immediate or on-going current to first year timeframe  
ST—Short-term with a one to two-year timeframe  
LT—Longer-term with a two to five-year timeframe

The resources available for implementation are also identified by primary responsibility and partnering opportunities. The following is an example of how the same “Population and Demographics” objective becomes a recommendation:

*Recommendation 1.1—Use the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates as a starting point for determining the Town’s makeup.*

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination

Population Consortium

Delaware Economic Development Office

US Census Bureau, Local Coordinator

Local Real Estate Brokers

Sections 1 and 2, plus the appendix items, provide support for these two key sections.

### Section 1 Introduction

The Town of Fenwick Island Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for planning, design and development decision making. It has been completed in keeping with the State of Delaware’s Code 22 Section 9 and the intent that every municipality throughout the state should prepare or update a comprehensive plan. This plan successfully integrates the Delaware Code’s five key principles of how communities should grow.

The State requires that towns participate in comprehensive planning 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 towns, Sussex County and the State. This plan was written to comply with the requirements of a municipal strategy as described in the Delaware Code for towns with a population of 2,000 or fewer.

### Section 2 Planning Process

The Town of Fenwick Island took a unique approach with the preparation of their comprehensive plan. The plan is a working document reflecting and responding to changing conditions as they occur. The plan married the attributes of a policy plan with important design and physical considerations to create a guiding framework for future development. A working group was used to help shape the plan and to take advantage of the expertise of the Town’s many volunteer boards. The process to create the plan was divided into three distinct phases and was guided by a strong mission statement:

*“To be a quiet, family-oriented and walkable community that protects its natural beach and bay environment while including a desirable and sustainable primary residential area as well as a mixed residential and commercial use area per zoning.”*

A community based process is at the heart of this comprehensive plan. Through the Working Group meetings and homework, Planning Commission meetings, general and focused public meetings, planning advisors, the Town website and on-line message board, the local media and direct electronic and regular mailings, the Town was able to reach a broad cross-section of interested parties including:

- Full-time residents
- Part-time, or seasonal, residents
- Visitors
- Employees
- Business owners
- Town officials and staff
- County staff
- State staff

The first phase of the process is about figuring out what is going on in the community. It involved gathering existing conditions data from a variety of sources, reviewing previous planning efforts and current planning documents and gaining hands-on experience. This was also when the Working Group became oriented to the process and their roles and responsibilities. The analysis of this extensive collection of existing conditions and the summary and communication of the information resulted in ‘snapshots’ of the community.

The second phase is when ideas were generated and possible options started to emerge. The planning team used an in-house charette to explore various scenarios and imagine potential solutions. (Note: A charette is an intense brainstorming session used by design professionals to generate ideas.) In the case of Fenwick Island's comprehensive plan, two distinct physical planning scenarios emerged representing the range of planning influence the Town could consider.

The third phase was when everything that was learned during the first two phases was used to hone in on the preferred physical plan and the Comprehensive Plan was assembled. After a series of public meetings, the Major Influence physical plan was determined to be the preferred scenario. It best met the intentions of the community mission statement but was recognized as an "ideal" vision towards which the community could aspire. It was understood that it would take time and further discussions to enable its implementation. The Major Influence physical plan represented a shift in the Town's current planning direction and introduced new planning tools to achieve identified opportunities. Key features of the Major Influence physical plan included:

- Single-family detached residential was the primary land use; however, the commercial zone district was preserved for commercial and mixed uses. A distinct and clearly identifiable commercial area was maintained and reinforced as properties redeveloped.
- Residential development continued within the residential zone district as single-family detached units. Newly constructed homes were considered appropriate in scale to the Town's block and lot dimensions. The maximum size of homes was further controlled by limiting lot mergers. Additional residential zoning regulations and design guidelines further articulated desired residential scale and massing. A diversity of architectural styles continued to be encouraged. All vacant lots were built-out by 2013, assuming the current pace of development.
- The Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan was combined with additional opportunities to ensure its full implementation. Traffic and parking improvements were

achieved and people were encouraged to safely walk and bike.

The commercial subarea of the Major Influence physical plan was studied in greater detail for good reason. The commercial subarea had been the focus of the *Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan*. During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, it became clear that many opportunities existed to build upon the Pedestrian Plan, which was primarily focused on improvements within the right-of-way of SR 1. Essentially DelDOT was limited to only solving half of the puzzle. The Town had the ability, through the Comprehensive Plan and a proposed overlay district, to expand the improvements and solve the puzzle's second half. This scenario envisioned Fenwick Island working in partnership with DelDOT to implement an updated Pedestrian Plan. In this manner the Town can increase the likelihood the Pedestrian Plan will remain in DelDOT's budget.

The commercial subarea plan included the following elements. (It is important to stress that this plan represents a vision for the area and not necessarily the specifics of what can and/or should be put in place. Many of the elements will require further study and discussion through zoning code revisions and detailed design.)

- A safe bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly character is created along SR 1 with continuous sidewalks, outdoor dining and "dwell" opportunities.
- Traffic calming techniques are used along SR 1, such as reducing the width of travel lanes and minimizing the visual width of the highway by locating buildings and street trees closer to the road.
- Traffic flow and safety improvements include synchronized traffic signals and closing curb cuts.
- Locally generated vehicle trips are reduced and parking efficiency is maximized through a comprehensive shared parking strategy.
- The architectural and built environment character of the properties is enhanced, including signage and landscape improvements.





**LEGEND**

- |               |                      |                    |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| residential   | park                 | street tree        |
| institutional | parking/streets      | native vegetation  |
| commercial    | wetland/habitat edge | swale/planted area |

**NOTES:**

1. This drawing is conceptual in nature and intended for discussion purposes only.



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**major planning influence**  
 fenwick island comprehensive plan  
town of fenwick island | atlanta





- A successful streetfront retail environment with opportunities for small-scale shops, services, and restaurants is created along SR 1.
- Reinvestment in commercial properties and their ongoing upkeep and maintenance is encouraged. State and other agency investments are leveraged to advance community goals, including DeIDOT's planned pedestrian improvements project.
- The Town is a leader in resource and energy conservation through the implementation of storm water treatment practices

The proposed overlay district brings together a group of planning tools to achieve many of the desired goals articulated through the comprehensive planning process. Use of the overlay district allows the Town greater flexibility in promoting alternative development designs as commercial properties develop and redevelop over time. Currently, many Town code provisions serve as barriers to achieving the desired family-oriented, small town and quiet resort character along SR 1.

### Section 3 Municipal Development Strategy

#### Population and Demographics

Given the popularity of coastal Sussex County and Fenwick Island, the population of Fenwick Island is projected to increase; however, it is expected that population increases will be limited to seasonal residents that transition to full-time residents, and residents that move into new houses built on existing vacant lots. Demographics indicate that Fenwick Island is predominantly white, upper middle class, and over the age of 55, pointing to the Town's desirable living conditions among retirees. These same desirable living conditions attract large numbers of seasonal residents and visitors to Fenwick Island as well. While the permanent population is estimated by the Town to be 270 residents, it is estimated that the Town's bed base can accommodate over 5,000 people during peak summer seasons.

#### Housing

The rate of new home construction has not kept pace with Fenwick Island's significant population increase over the past several decades. This suggests that new construction is occurring on previously vacant lots, and that historically seasonal or part-time residents are transitioning to full-time

Fenwick Island residents. Likewise, as demand has outpaced supply, Fenwick Island has seen rapid increases in property values. At the current pace, it is estimated that Fenwick Island's vacant residential lots will be built out by roughly 2013. This full buildout condition will most likely slow population growth, but continue to fuel an increase in property values and demand as the market dictates.

#### Land Use and Annexation

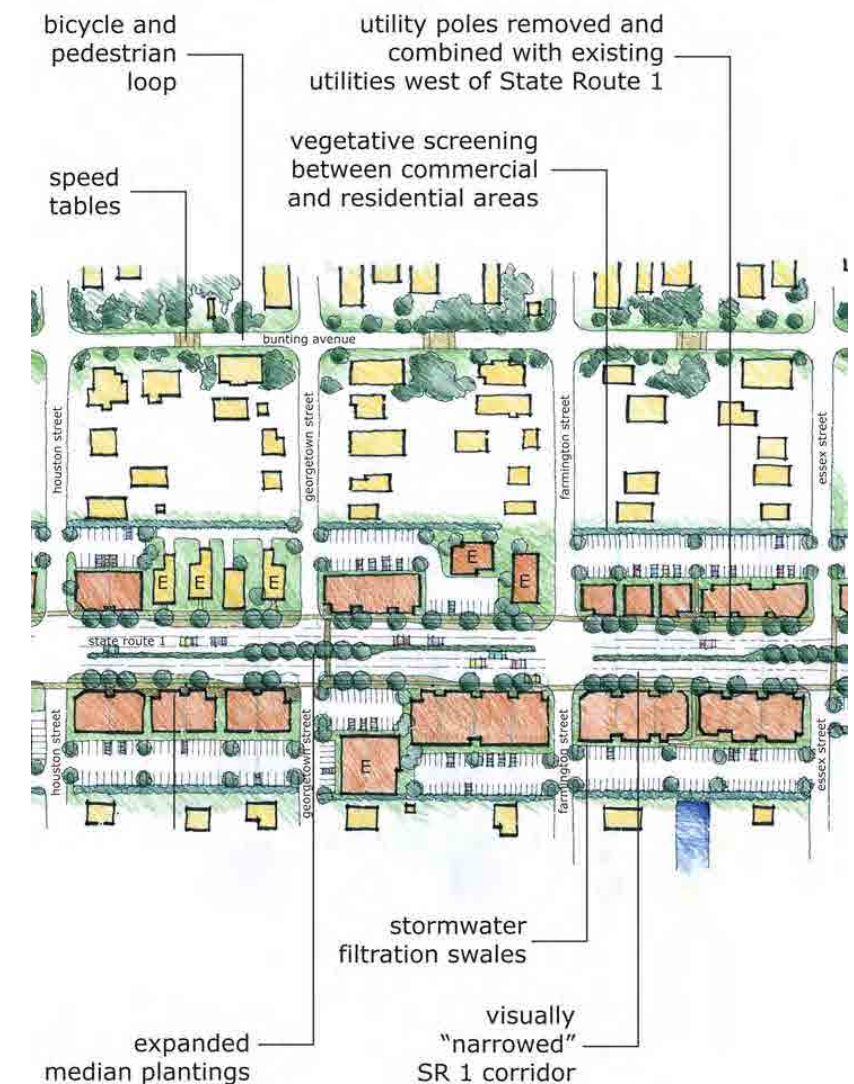
The Town contains two primary land uses, residential and commercial. Residential uses are organized around a commercial strip that fronts State Route 1 (SR 1). Other less prevalent land uses are institutional, office, utility/transportation, parks and open space, and vacant.

Residential land makes up most of Fenwick Island. Most residential uses are located on lots 50 feet wide by 100 feet long organized into distinct compact blocks 300 feet wide by 400 feet long. This strong organization of lots and blocks gives Fenwick Island a traditional community form. The resulting street grid makes the Town highly walkable.

The Town is nearly built out within its existing municipal boundary. There are just 56 vacant residential lots and 10 vacant commercial lots available for development. Given the Town's developmental trends, it is projected that the Town's vacant residential lots will be developed by 2013. Vacant commercial lots, which can also be developed with single-family detached residences, are today's highest and best use and will likely be developed with a mix of residential and commercial uses.

There is a town desire that SR 1, including the commercial area, be enhanced to become a more walkable and inviting area of town. As a result, an overlay district is proposed to include a majority of the properties located along SR 1. While there is a strong community voice to let market forces prevail, the Town's desire to create an improved commercial area can not be realized without a level of attention to the existing land use regulations and zoning code.

Although there is conflicting information, it is believed that the Town's boundary has remained the same since its incorporation in 1953. The driving force behind the incorporation was to protect the Town from outside development pressures. Town residents were not happy



with the pattern of development in adjacent areas to the south, especially Ocean City, Maryland.

Current residents are similarly concerned with today's development patterns in the unincorporated portions of Fenwick Island and along SR 54 to the intersection of SR 20 and the Bearhole Ditch. In recent years several large developments have been approved in the County, including Bayside, that town residents believe directly impact their community.

The community believes that the biggest advantage to the Town in an annexation is the ability to have ultimate control in future decisions. The Town, at this time, does not wish to pursue annexation but recognizes the importance of this tool and may choose to use this at a later date.

The community wishes to establish an Area of Concern encompassing the Little Assawoman Bay Watershed. An Area of Concern, as defined by the State Office of Planning Coordination, is an area created by a municipality where a formal review process is followed to ensure that the Town is notified of proposed land use applications for properties within the Area of Concern. The County is obligated to engage the Town in the review and discussion of potential developments.

#### *Redevelopment*

As a result of its popularity as both a tourist and residential destination, and the associated increase in property values that has followed, Fenwick Island has seen a significant amount of redevelopment over the past couple decades. Much of this redevelopment has occurred on residential lots, but there have been recent indicators that commercial properties may be redeveloped in the near future as well. In many instances, redevelopment projects have created new structures that often do not meld with the Town's cultural and historic character. The Town has taken steps to guide future redevelopment projects; however, it is suggested that additional guidelines and regulations be developed to help both residential and commercial redevelopment projects enhance Fenwick Island's community character and its atmosphere as a "quiet resort."

#### *Infrastructure*

The Town is an incorporated municipality chartered by the State of Delaware. The Town Charter states that all powers are vested in a seven-member Town Council with one member also serving as President and Mayor. Fenwick Island's first planning commission was recently appointed by Town Council. This seven-member board is initially responsible for the drafting and review of the comprehensive plan. The Town has also established a number of committees.

The Town benefits from a dedicated staff. Most town employees have been with the Town for a long period of time. This institutional knowledge and commitment is invaluable to a small organization. The Town also hired its first Town Manager, Anthony Carson, in March of 2007.

Emergency service is provided throughout Fenwick Island from a centralized center located in Georgetown. The Town participates in the regional system for emergency services. This Center is also located in Georgetown and is the headquarters for natural and technical disasters.

The Fenwick Island Police Department is located in the Town Hall and employs five full-time officers, a police chief and a police secretary. The police department provides 24 hours a day service, and performs home inspections during the winter months to make sure that unoccupied properties are overseen while owners are away. The police department is also responsible for parking enforcement and other municipal code regulations. The Delaware State Police and the Town have an agreement of shared responses between the entities.

The Town is served by the Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company, which is not affiliated with the Town or Bethany Beach. The fire company is an all-volunteer force that includes both volunteer and live-in firefighters stationed at two locations including Station 70 in Bethany Beach and Station 2 in Fenwick Island. Fenwick Island operates a paid, 30-person coed beach patrol consisting of 28 lifeguards, one first lieutenant, and a captain.

A recent reorganization of animal control services has left some gaps, according to town staff. As of July 2006, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Sussex Chapter no longer provides animal control services



but instead focuses on animal adoptions, the humane treatment of animals and the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats. The Marine Education, Research, and Rehabilitation Institute (MERR) based in Nassau, Delaware, responds to stranded marine mammals and sea turtles throughout the State.

Fenwick Island has no educational institutions within its municipal boundaries. Public education services are provided by the Indian River School District. The South Coastal Library in Bethany Beach is one of three county-operated branches in the Sussex County Library System and is Fenwick Island's closest major library. While no hospital services are available in Fenwick Island, there are several hospitals within a 40-mile radius of town, including Atlantic General Hospital in Berlin, Maryland and Beebe Hospital in Lewes, Delaware.

The Town indicated in 2007 that it has an interest in seeking out opportunities to increase its park and open space lands; however, funds are limited for purchases of land at current market rates. Possibilities may exist to acquire land through fundraising efforts, conservation easements, grants, transfer of development rights, and various means other than direct purchase.

Fenwick Island operates its own Public Works Department out of the Town Hall building on SR 1. The department has a full-time staff and is responsible for a number of services. The majority of residential solid waste pick-up is conducted by the Public Works Department. Some residents, including multi-family properties, contract with private haulers. While the Public Works Department handles recyclables at beach dune crossing locations, the Town instituted a voluntary curbside recycling program on October 1, 2007. Funding for the program was provided by the Town, and the existing centralized recycling bins were subsequently removed from Town Hall.

Primarily a surface open watercourse drainage system is operated throughout the Town, with the exception of underground pipe to facilitate road and driveway crossings and minimal piping within private easements.

Potable water in Fenwick Island is provided either by the Artesian Water Company or by a few remaining private wells. Artesian Water Company has the capacity to supply

water for two-hour fire protection for the Town at its buildout.

Wastewater service is provided by Sussex County's South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility. The facility was recently upgraded to handle a capacity of 9 million gallons per day with a peak capacity of 14 million gallons per day. Regional demand in July of 2006 hit a peak of 4.37 million gallons per day. Fenwick Island, unincorporated Fenwick Island and the areas adjacent to SR 54 are included in the Fenwick Island Sewer District. While the wastewater facility has adequate capacity for projected growth, several line upgrades were identified as a part of a recent study.

Fenwick Island faces several unique transportation-related challenges which promise to have a strong impact on the future planning decisions made by the Town. First, Fenwick Island is a popular seasonal destination, attracting large numbers of residents and visitors in the summer months, taxing a relatively small network of municipal roads and parking areas. Second, Fenwick Island is experiencing part of the surge in population growth of the coastal Sussex County area, including an increase in overall population and a transition from seasonal use to permanent use. Both of these factors increase vehicle miles traveled on the existing road infrastructure system. Similarly, an increase in population also increases pedestrian and bicycle use, which consequently raises the need for pedestrian and bicycle safety amidst heavy vehicular traffic.

In addition Fenwick Island is bisected by SR 1, the state's major regional transportation corridor stretching from north to south through town. This arterial road connects vehicular traffic not only within Fenwick Island, but also between the larger resort destinations of Rehoboth Beach to the north and Ocean City, Maryland, to the south.

Determining the appropriate level of transportation infrastructure is crucial to preserving the Town's character and quality of life. Understanding the Town's transportation needs, as well as the needs of the larger region, in a comprehensive manner will uncover multi-modal solutions and strategies for mitigating potential impacts.

The Town is potentially very walkable, given the compact form of its blocks and its narrow streets. The municipal streets have the potential to be successful pedestrian ways,



*Homes located in unincorporated Fenwick Island.*



The beach is a key asset.

where pedestrians and vehicles share the road. Conflicts between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles on Bunting Avenue are becoming more prevalent, especially during the summer season. The pedestrian network along SR 1 is not successful despite a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle lane. There are gaps in the sidewalk system, relatively narrow widths that do not accommodate pedestrians walking side-by-side or in passing directions, utilities and signs located within the sidewalks, and numerous parking lot curb cuts which create dangerous conflicts.

#### *Community Character-Built Environment*

Residents and visitors are attracted to Fenwick Island because of its unique built environment. The Town has a rich history dating back to the late 1600s and continuing through the establishment of the Town's block and lot configuration in 1953. For the most part, the Town's community form creates an easily negotiated system of narrow streets and a small-scaled pattern of development.

Fenwick Island's two primary land uses—residential and commercial—are organized in a compact and clearly identifiable traditional town pattern. Many communities strive to artificially create this pattern through the introduction of "New Urbanism" principles. New Urbanism is a recent urban design movement, codified in 1996, that seeks to employ a set of 27 planning and design principles to engender traditional town elements in new communities. Fenwick Island is fortunate to have the key elements that make up a traditional town.

The diverse styles of the residential architecture provide interest. The commercial area offers a mix of retail, services, and restaurants and eateries. There is an opportunity to enhance the entertainment shopping types of retail to create a unique experience. There are significant opportunities to reinforce the community's form through SR 1 improvements, additional zoning regulations and design guidelines.

The visitor bed base is at risk of being diminished by redevelopment and the loss of rental homes in the available pool. While most commercial uses serve both permanent residents and visitors, there are some uses that are more seasonal in nature and market. The loss of visitor accommodations may affect these businesses.

#### *Community Character—Natural Environment*

Since settlement began in Fenwick Island, residents and visitors have been attracted to its unique natural amenities. Fenwick Island markets itself as "the best beach in Southern Delaware." Unlike Ocean City, Maryland, to the south and Rehoboth Beach to the north, Fenwick is known for its quiet atmosphere, unique location between Little Assawoman Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, and its abundance of recreational opportunities from bird watching, to fishing, to simply relaxing on the beach. Today, Fenwick Island remains a popular tourist destination, seasonal resident destination, and place of full-time residence.

At the same time, the same resources that draw people to Fenwick Island face enormous pressure and the threat of destruction from human and natural forces. Over time, development activity has filled natural inlets to create developable land, dredged riparian areas to create waterways, reduced beaches to a relatively narrow strip of land, and introduced non-native vegetation that has replaced natural habitats. Natural habitats have also been reduced by bulkheading and bank armoring efforts. These efforts, though required by the Town to protect property from erosion in bay and riparian areas, have had unintended consequences by eliminating the natural flooding and erosion processes. Despite these conditions, there are ample opportunities to enhance, re-create, and protect the natural amenities that continue to draw people to the Town and support its economy.

In the winter of 2005, a significant beach replenishment project was completed to combat the natural beach erosion. The project included widening the beach, constructing a sizable dune system, and planting grasses to stabilize the dune line. The wider beach acts as a buffer to absorb wave energy during storm events and also provides a reservoir of sand that may be transported to an offshore bar. The offshore bar helps to reduce damage as the first line of defense. In addition to being a vital tourism amenity, the beach and dune network also helps to protect man-made structures during storm events. Pedestrian dune crossings were created at the ends of east to west streets nearest the beach, and fencing was erected to protect the remainder of the dunes from destructive foot traffic.

On the bayside of town, several vacant, undevelopable lots still exist near the end of Schulz Road and near the end of

Bay Street. These areas of land, though small, provide habitat similar to historic habitat patterns that would have been seen along the bayside of town. Residents in town have taken up efforts to protect these and similar areas and have formed the South Schulz Wetland Association and the Glenn Avenue Bird Sanctuary.

Most of the threats to the Fenwick Island ecosystem and its wildlife are caused by humans. Litter, especially plastic, not only obstructs the natural beauty of the area, but also is harmful to wildlife. Similarly, curious people, even if well intentioned, can cause serious harm to birds by disturbing nests.

Clean water is essential not only to wildlife and the fragile ecosystems surrounding Fenwick Island, but it is also essential to the town's residents and to the tourism economy. Unfortunately, the Inland Bays area has suffered from past neglect. DNREC and the Center for Inland bays have studied the waters and ecosystems of the Inland Bays area extensively. Both have developed significant research and made the results available to the public to guide future land use decisions. A variety of funding resources and programs are available to encourage positive changes, educate the public, restore damaged resources, and protect undamaged resources for future generations.

As a result of decades of development, very little undisturbed native vegetation currently exists within town limits. In beach and dune areas, ongoing restoration efforts have utilized native vegetation and beach grasses to restore and support the primary dunes. In areas throughout town, native vegetation has been planted by home and business owners. The recently proposed Tree Triage program was started with the intention of increasing tree coverage within the Town. Currently, less than one percent of the town's land surface is covered with tree canopy.

The overall health of the Inland Bays Ecosystem is an important issue to the residents of Fenwick Island. The community recognizes that submerged aquatic vegetation is the best living indicator of the nutrient conditions of the Little Assawoman Bay.

Fenwick Island is susceptible to two types of storms capable of producing serious damage. These storms are either hurricanes that occur predominantly in the summer and fall

months or nor'easters, usually with strong easterly or north easterly winds, that occur most often throughout the late fall and winter months. Fenwick Island is the only town in Delaware that lies entirely in the "100-Year Special Flood Hazard Area," meaning that any location in town is subject to a one percent chance of flooding each year. With water bodies on both sides of town, topographic elevations ranging from sea level to about 15 feet, and land that slopes generally less than one percent, the chance of flooding in Fenwick Island is often greater.

Much of the bayside of Fenwick Island was constructed around a unique series of canals. Running east to west, these canals provide recreational boat access to residences bordering the waterways. The canals are an important part of Fenwick Island's character but also create several unique challenges.

Protected lands in town include the beach area, lands located on Glenn Avenue and Schulz Road, and the wetlands bordering the Bay. In all, these protected areas account for approximately two percent of Fenwick Island's total land area. Just off of the bayside of town is Seal Island, which is another unique natural resource area owned by DNREC.

#### **Section 4 Implementation**

A Comprehensive Plan can only be as good as its direction for implementation. This plan contains 42 recommendations for addressing issues and achieving community goals. For this plan to be successful, a strategy for implementing these recommendations must be created. The strategy must provide clear and achievable direction. It must be rooted in the staff, volunteer, partnership and financial resources available to the Town. Primary responsibilities must be identified and understood. The Town is fortunate to have many dedicated citizens who have volunteered in this comprehensive planning effort and/or as members of the numerous committees and other volunteer efforts. The Town has also made a commitment to create a Comprehensive Plan by dedicating staff time and resources. An effective implementation strategy is one that builds upon these efforts.



*Canals are an important feature of the Town's character.*



#### 1.4 Priority Implementation Actions

The following are overarching themes that point to several of the main focus areas of this document. Specific goals and objectives, including proposed timelines for implementation actions, are addressed in Sections 3 and 4.

- Coordinate with DelDOT to implement the proposed Pedestrian Plan.
- Reconcile Town zoning code to promote goals for growth.
- Set a standard for environmental stewardship by “leading by example.”
- Strengthen interagency and intergovernmental coordination and relationships.
- Maintain Fenwick Island’s reputation as a “quiet resort” town.

## Section 2 Planning Process

### 2.1 Approach

The Town of Fenwick Island took a unique approach with the preparation of their Comprehensive Plan. The plan is a working document reflecting and responding to changing conditions as they occur. The plan married the attributes of a policy plan with important design and physical considerations to create a guiding framework for future development. A working group was used to help shape the plan and to take advantage of the expertise of the Town's many volunteer boards. The process to create the plan was divided into three distinct phases and was guided by a strong mission statement.

#### Working Document

The Town's leaders recognized that fostering a great community requires a working document that must be flexible to respond to changing conditions and opportunities. This document is not a dust-gathering tome but rather an easy-to-understand tool for future decision-making. It is intended to be used by the Town's Mayor and Council, Planning Commission and other volunteer boards, staff, full-time and seasonal residents, business owners and visitors. It is also intended to be referenced by State and County officials to understand how Fenwick Island envisions its future.

#### Physical Plan

This process of comprehensive planning was considered part community building and part design. It brought together the many different parts and pieces of Fenwick's natural and built environment to further foster a memorable place. This plan advances many of the design goals that the community has considered through previous efforts, such as the recently completed *Vision for Fenwick Island* process.

#### Working Group

The Town has a tremendous history of actively engaging its community members in volunteer efforts. When the plan was initiated, the Town had 14 volunteer boards that focus on specialized and diverse interests ranging from Building and Charter to Beautification. However, one volunteer board the Town had yet to create was its Planning Commission. In the absence of the Planning Commission, the Town created a Working Group to steer the planning

process. The group's membership drew from these various volunteer boards. In this manner the Town could rely on members to represent the volunteer board interests, and to serve as communication conduits between the planning process and the boards. In a parallel effort, the Town created its first Planning Commission. Once the Working Group completed their efforts, the draft plan was given to the Planning Commission for further refinement.

#### Three Phases

No matter how simple or complicated a comprehensive planning process is, or how long its duration, the process can be accomplished in three phases. The three phases used by Fenwick Island were:

*Phase One—Understanding What's Going On*

*Phase Two—Exploring and Imagining Futures*

*Phase Three—Deciding What to Do*

The Town found that this approach provided for the widest range of participation, the greatest opportunities for generating thoughtful and creative ideas, and the strongest likelihood for success. Each phase consisted of several steps described in more detail later in this section.

#### Mission Statement

A mission statement was created for the plan that was constantly evolving. As the touchstone for the plan's progress, the statement was revisited at each general public meeting. It was modified and honed to clearly articulate the common goal:

*"To be a quiet, family-oriented and walkable community that protects its natural beach and bay environment while including a desirable and sustainable primary residential area as well as a mixed residential and commercial use area per zoning."*

### 2.2 Public Engagement

A community based process is at the heart of this Comprehensive Plan. Through the Working Group meetings and homework, Planning Commission meetings, general and focused public meetings, planning advisors, the Town



Working group members staffing a general public meeting.

website and on-line message board, the local media and direct electronic and regular mailings, the Town was able to reach a broad cross-section of interested parties including:

- Full-time residents
- Part-time, or seasonal, residents
- Visitors
- Employees
- Business owners
- Town officials and staff
- County staff
- State staff

#### **Working Group**

The Working Group, described in the preceding section, was truly the workhorse of this process. This 12-member committee met regularly throughout the plan's preparation contributing over 1000 volunteer hours. The members took a genuine ownership in the plan's content and direction while providing valuable feedback on the plan elements as they were being developed. They reviewed public presentations of the plan's attributes with attendees. The group members also participated in one or more of the following subcommittees:

- Housing
- Population and demographics
- Redevelopment
- Community character—built environment
- Community character—natural environment
- Infrastructure

Each subcommittee did its "homework," met outside the regular Working Group meetings to discuss the assignment and generated recommendations for the larger discussion.

#### **Planning Commission**

The newly formed Planning Commission provided a more refined and detailed review of the draft Comprehensive Plan following the Working Group's stewardship earlier in the planning process. The Commission reviewed the draft document, including the Municipal Development Strategy topic-by-topic. After nine public meetings over the course of two months, the Planning Commission recommended the plan's adoption to the Mayor and Council. Along with the Working Group members, members of the Planning Commission were strong advocates for the plan during the

State and Town's review and adoption processes. The commission is comprised of members with varied expertise and will be the primary implementer of the plan once certified and adopted.

#### **General Public Meetings**

Four public meetings were held during the process to facilitate engagement and discussion. The first public meeting held early in the process introduced the State requirements for comprehensive planning, the Town's planning process and the roles of the various participants. The first meeting also summarized the results of recent planning efforts completed for the Town, including the *Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan* and the *Vision for Fenwick Island* reports. The issues and opportunities identified in these efforts were emphasized. Planning tools used by other resort communities to address similar issues and opportunities were also considered.

The second public meeting was held in an open house format and focused on the results of an existing conditions assessment and analysis effort. These results were envisioned in three-dimensions, and were presented and discussed using physical plans and street cross-sections. The physical plans illustrated a range of planning influence from a minor planning influence to a major planning influence.

The third public meeting focused on a discussion of the draft plan components including the Municipal Development Strategy goals and objectives. The physical plan representation of the municipal development strategy, including illustrations, the future land use plan and other graphic tools allowed participants to envision various futures and make informed decisions for the community.

The fourth public meeting was held by the Planning Commission and was focused on the refined draft of the Comprehensive Plan. These public meetings allowed the plan to evolve with the insight and perspective of all attendees.

#### **Focused Public Meetings**

Meetings with individuals and small groups, including Town staff, County planning and engineering staff, and State planning and transportation staff were also held. Bryan



Hall, Sussex County Planner for the State Planning Office served as an invaluable advisor to the planning process.

### Citizen Planning Advisors

Key community members were reliable citizen advisors during the planning process—Harry Haon and Richard Griffin. Although not members of the Working Group due to time constraints or other considerations, these community members provided important feedback on the planning process and the plan's content.

### Town Website and Message Board

The planning process used the Town's website for public engagement. Presentations from public meetings, meeting notes, and other work products were posted to the site. A message board facilitated comment and discussion for site visitors. The site also helped to advertise upcoming meetings and other project milestones. This was an important tool given the seasonal nature of the beach community. The website and message board were invaluable to engage these members of the public.

### Local Media

The local newspapers—the *Coastal Point* and the *Wave*—were also key components in the public engagement strategy. The planning team worked with reporters from each paper to brief them on the planning process, to provide information and graphics, to inform them of upcoming meetings and to ensure they had access to town officials and working group members. The two papers enabled interested citizens in the region, seasonal residents and visitors to track the progress of the plan.

### Direct Email and Mail

The preparation of the plan was also shaped by letters, emails and completed comment forms received by Town Hall.

## 2.3 Phase One—Understanding What's Going On

The first phase of the process is about figuring out what is going on in the community. It involved gathering existing conditions data from a variety of sources, reviewing previous planning efforts and current planning documents and gaining hands-on experience. This was also when the

Working Group became oriented to the process and its roles and responsibilities. The analysis of this extensive collection of existing conditions and the summary and communication of the information resulted in 'snapshots' of the community.

### Existing Conditions Snapshots

The snapshots are a synthesis of the information collected and analyzed, but perhaps most importantly, are a tool to communicate this information in an easily understood format (located in appendix). The snapshots were organized by planning topic—housing, population and demographics, redevelopment, community character—built environment, community character—natural environment, infrastructure, and land use/annexation. This enabled participants to understand the most important issues and opportunities by topic and how each topic is interrelated.

## 2.4 Phase Two—Exploring and Imagining

The second phase is when ideas were generated and possible options started to emerge. The planning team used an in-house charette to explore various scenarios and imagine potential solutions. (Note: A charette is an intense brainstorming session used by design professionals to generate ideas.) In the case of Fenwick Island's Comprehensive Plan, two distinct physical planning scenarios emerged representing the range of planning influence the Town could consider.

### Planning Influence Range Scenarios

Two physical plans were created to illustrate the range of planning influence the Town could consider as a direction for moving forward. Both physical plans used the same population growth projection and long-term horizon. Neither plan proposed annexing adjacent unincorporated lands. Both plans maintained the community's "quiet resort" atmosphere (Maps 8 and 9).

The Minor Influence physical plan represented the Town's recent planning direction and existing tools, with some new influences. The Town had recently amended its zoning code to address concerns regarding residential land use. Additional planning tools to further define residential development were assumed in this scenario. Key features of the Minor Influence scenario included:

**redevelopment overview**  
the first residential cabins began to dot the fenwick island landscape in the 1930's

improved access and infrastructure led to rapid growth through the 1990's

from 1990 to 2000, fenwick island's population increased sharply while construction of new housing units was almost flat

with aging structures and increasing land values, fenwick island is ripe for redevelopment

**residential redevelopment**  
there is no maximum lot size

Year	Permits Issued	New Construction	Major Remodel Addition	Demolition/ Move	Small Projects
2001-2002	181	15	10	8	128 (4 commercial)
2003-2004	154	16	10 (1 commercial)	8	108 (5 commercial)
2005-2006	137	23	11 (1 commercial)	12	95 (5 commercial)
2007-2008	124	19	12 (1 commercial)	12 (1 commercial)	89 (8 commercial)
2009-2010	101	11 (2 commercial)	6	8	86

since 2001, 50 major residential remodel projects and 46 residential demolition/ house relocation projects have been completed

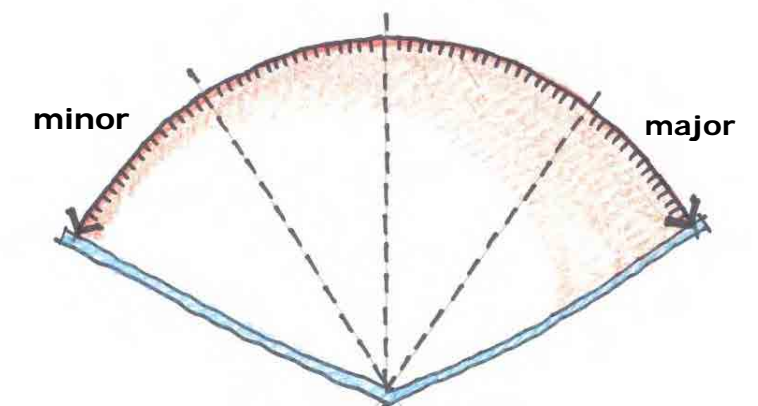
increasing property values and current housing design trends are spurring residential redevelopment

the majority of new homes are considerably larger than more historic structures, often maximizing lot coverage and property values

new floor area cap limits new homes to 7500 sf or 70% of total lot area, whichever is less

draft redevelopment overview  
fenwick island comprehensive plan

Snapshot of redevelopment information.



Range of planning influence

- Single-family detached homes continued to be built within the commercial zone district on one-half of the vacant properties. One-third of the commercial properties are redeveloped with residential uses.
- Residential development within the residential zone district continued as single-family detached unit types. In most cases, the scale of newly constructed homes was considered more appropriate; however, some took advantage of the ability to build 7,500 square-foot homes by combining lots. Older beach cottages were replaced during residential redevelopments. All vacant lots were built-out by 2013, assuming the current pace of development.
- Businesses decreased in number and the opportunity for a sustainable commercial area was significantly hindered. The *Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan* was partially implemented due to budget constraints. Only certain elements of the plan—planted medians, synchronized lights and limited stretches of sidewalk—were constructed. Other aesthetic and landscape improvements on commercial properties occur infrequently and voluntarily. Commercial properties did not redevelop with commercial or mixed uses because of barriers in the zoning code. The appendix contains a typical cross-section of SR 1, illustrating these improvements.

The Major Influence physical plan represented a shift in the Town's current planning direction and introduced new planning tools to achieve identified opportunities (Map 9). Key features of the Major Influence scenario included:

- Single-family detached residential was the primary land use; however, the commercial zone district was preserved for commercial and mixed uses. A distinct and clearly identifiable commercial area was maintained and reinforced as properties redeveloped.
- Residential development continued within the residential zone district as single-family detached units. Newly constructed homes were considered appropriate in scale to the Town's block and lot dimensions. The maximum size of homes was further controlled by limiting lot mergers. Additional residential zoning regulations and design guidelines further articulated desired residential

scale and massing. A diversity of architectural styles continued to be encouraged. All vacant lots were built-out by 2013, assuming the current pace of development.

- The *Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan* was combined with additional opportunities to ensure its full implementation. Traffic and parking improvements were achieved and people were encouraged to safely walk and bike. The appendix contains a typical cross-section of SR 1, illustrating these improvements.

## 2.5 Phase Three—Deciding What to Do

The third phase was when everything that was learned during the first two phases was used to hone in on the preferred physical plan and the Comprehensive Plan was assembled.

### Preferred Scenario

After a series of public meetings, the Major Influence physical plan was determined to be the preferred scenario. It best met the intentions of the community mission statement but was recognized as an "ideal" vision towards which the community could aspire. It was understood that it would take time and further discussions to enable its implementation. In addition to the features described above, the preferred scenario included the following.

#### *Population and Demographics*

The population was projected to grow through the transition of seasonally occupied homes to homes used year-round. There was also a small number of vacant lots which were projected to build-out with residential uses, further adding to the permanent population.

#### *Housing*

The Town maintained its character as a primarily residential community, consisting mostly of single-family detached homes. The current stock of multi-family and single-family attached units was expected to remain. A small number of multi-family units could be added to the Town's inventory as commercial properties developed and redeveloped with a mix of uses—residences located above stores, restaurants and other commercial uses.

#### *Land Use and Annexation*

The existing municipal boundary did not change in the preferred scenario. The general pattern of land uses—commercial uses fronting SR1 and residential uses on the majority of remaining properties—also continued. The recent trend of vacant commercial properties developing with single-family detached homes was mitigated through incentives for property owners to develop commercial or mixed-use uses.

#### *Redevelopment*

Commercial properties were redeveloped over time under a new overlay zone district. As properties aged and owners considered redevelopment, the district offered an alternative to the current highest and best use of single-family detached homes. The district combined solutions to traffic, parking, and aesthetic concerns with incentives for commercial or mixed-use redevelopment. (More detail on the proposed overlay district is included in the Commercial Core Subarea description.)

The redevelopment of older beach cottages was mitigated through new historic and cultural resource preservation measures and residential design guidelines. Incentives were created to preserve the cottages as a part of residential redevelopments. The design of new residences was also influenced to minimize their bulk and mass, along with other considerations.

#### *Infrastructure*

This scenario also included additional improvements to SR 1 for pedestrian and bicycle safety, through an updated Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan. When these improvements were combined with the benefits of the overlay zone district, traffic and parking conditions were also improved. Eliminating curb cuts along SR 1, improving parking efficiencies, reducing vehicle miles traveled for local trips and locating new buildings closer to SR 1 effectively calmed traffic. This created a more comfortable and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle experience. (The Commercial Core Subarea description below includes more information on proposed SR 1 improvements.)

Additional parks located within town ensured that one is always located within a reasonable walking distance. The existing Town Park was expanded to include additional amenities. Town Hall was also expanded in its current

location to include additional space for staff and community purposes. The details of these community facilities will be determined during the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

The DART stops remained in their existing locations near Essex Street but were improved to include seating and shelter. Shuttles from several inland developments continue to stop at the State Park facilities north and south of town. Traffic and parking improvements have been made to ease previous design and operational issues.

#### *Community Character—Built Environment*

The compact and clearly identifiable traditional form of the Town was maintained. The street grid and system of blocks and lots was a valuable asset that was reinforced in the preferred plan. Some development patterns that compromised this pattern, such as combined lots, and other improvements, such as the widening of streets over time, were mitigated. The role of SR 1 was changed from a barrier between the east and west portions of town to an important civic space with a boulevard design.

Residential design guidelines affected the design of new homes to help them fit into the town's traditional form and reinforce the block and lot rhythm. The historic pattern of cottages located a consistent distance from the street was re-established. The size and height of homes continued to be regulated but with more detail to encourage creative and diverse designs. Site improvements and landscapes were also influenced by the design guidelines. Pervious materials were still encouraged as well as other sustainable or green practices, such as minimizing the use of exterior lighting, irrigation, fertilizers and pesticides.

The character of the commercial area was greatly improved by the overlay district and the pedestrian plan. A sustainable and diverse mix of commercial uses existed and was supported by town residents and visitors. Additional retail businesses were added to the mix, improving the entertainment shopping opportunities. As more property owners became full-time residents more businesses tended to stay open year-round. Incentives and physical improvements resulted from the overlay district, and the Pedestrian Plan encouraged property owners to reinvest in their properties. (More detail is included in the Commercial Core Subarea plan and description.)



*Community Character—Natural Environment*

The Town's most important assets—its beach and bay—were preserved and enhanced through the community's leadership. Fenwick Island emerged as the leading environmental steward among the state's coastal communities. Beach replenishment continued as needed by using methods that were even more environmentally sensitive. The Tree Triage Program was fully implemented with street tree and other plantings installed throughout town. On the bayside, the additional vegetation cleansed storm water before it reached the bay. On the oceanside, the additional vegetation created important wildlife habitat. Other new sustainable, or "green," practices initiated by the Town gained wide acceptance by residents, visitors, businesses and contractors. The community's actions created a model for establishing a "green infrastructure" network.

**Commercial Subarea Plan**

These model community actions were carried further into the commercial subarea of the preferred scenario (Maps 10-12). This area was studied in greater detail for good reason. The commercial subarea had been the focus of the *Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan*. During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan it became clear that many opportunities existed to build upon the Pedestrian Plan, which was primarily focused on improvements within the right-of-way of SR 1. Essentially DeIDOT was limited to only solving half of the puzzle. The Town had the ability, through the Comprehensive Plan and a proposed overlay district, to expand the improvements and solve the puzzle's second half. This scenario envisioned Fenwick Island working in partnership with DeIDOT to implement an updated Pedestrian Plan. In this manner the Town can increase the likelihood the Pedestrian Plan will remain in DeIDOT's budget.

According to DeIDOT, the single greatest hurdle for implementation of the Pedestrian Plan was its cost, the bulk of which was allocated to real estate acquisition. With a proposed overlay district, methods to significantly reduce the acquisition costs were put in place. The Town used its ability to grant additional development rights and its municipal bonding capacities to provide incentives for commercial property owners to dedicate needed property. The Town also used its ability, in coordination with the property owners, to create a detailed subarea plan that

reduced the need for property acquisition. With this new found partnership, the Town overcame what once was the single greatest hurdle to the Pedestrian Plan.

The commercial subarea plan included the following elements. (It is important to stress that this plan represents a vision for the area and not necessarily the specifics of what can and/or should be put in place. Many of the elements will require further study and discussion through zoning code revisions and detailed design.)

- A safe bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly character is created along SR 1 with continuous sidewalks, outdoor dining and "dwell" opportunities.
- Traffic calming techniques are used along SR 1, such as reducing the width of travel lanes and minimizing the visual width of the highway by locating buildings and street trees closer to the road.
- Traffic flow and safety improvements include synchronized traffic signals and closing curb cuts.
- Locally generated vehicle trips are reduced and parking efficiency is maximized through a comprehensive shared parking strategy.
- The architectural and built environment character of the properties is enhanced, including signage and landscape improvements.
- A successful streetfront retail environment with opportunities for small-scale shops, services, and restaurants is created along SR 1.
- Reinvestment in commercial properties and their ongoing upkeep and maintenance is encouraged.
- State and other agency investments are leveraged to advance community goals, including DeIDOT's planned pedestrian improvements project.
- The Town is a leader in resource and energy conservation through the implementation of storm water treatment practices

**Overlay District**

The proposed overlay district brings together a group of planning tools to achieve many of the desired goals articulated through the comprehensive planning process. Use of the overlay district allows the Town greater flexibility in promoting alternative development designs as commercial properties develop and redevelop over time. Currently, many Town code provisions serve as barriers to achieving the desired family-oriented, small town and quiet resort character along SR 1.

Use of the overlay district offers a number of important benefits for the community, for residents, for property owners, for visitors and for business owners. Success of the overlay district depends on close cooperation between the Town and the property owners. It requires a champion to initiate the overlay district, fight to ensure it is done right and is followed through to completion. The best champions are multi-headed, representing both public and private interests. Combining the State's, County's and Town's planning, coordination, infrastructure and public financing capabilities with the private sector's entrepreneurial savvy, retailing know-how, development expertise and private capital creates the environment necessary for the community to realize its articulated goals.

Overlay districts are used successfully in other resorts and small towns to achieve goals similar to those articulated in this plan. Success is measured in tangibles such as increases in retail and restaurant sales. Business owner and/or tenant investments are evidenced in higher valuations for remodel building permits. A key success measurement is that property redevelopments and private sector reinvestments surpass public investments. Improvements in parking and local traffic conditions are determined through parking and traffic studies. Intangible evidence of success includes a more attractive and comfortable environment and places where people can meet and spend time.



*This portion of the Commercial Subarea Plan illustrates several potential improvements to SR 1 and adjacent properties.*

## Section 3 Municipal Development Strategy

### 3.1 Demographics and Population

*Important Note: The data and statistics in this section were derived from the 2000 US Census, the Town of Fenwick Island, and the Delaware Population Consortium among other sources. While this information is regarded as the primary source, it is important to note that Fenwick Island is a unique resort destination comprised of full-time residents, seasonal residents, and seasonal visitors. Thus, population numbers vary throughout the year. Similarly, with a small full-time resident population base, any change in population numbers has a potentially large effect on trend predictions because of small sample sizes and potentially increased margins of error.*

#### Total Population

The 2000 US Census reported a total population of 342 full-time residents in Fenwick Island. According to census information, from 1990 to 2000 Fenwick Island's population increased 84 percent from 186 to 342. In contrast, Sussex County grew from 113,847 people in 1990 to 157,430 in 2000, an increase of 38 percent. Similarly, the State of Delaware grew from a population of 669,069 in 1990 to 786,448 in 2000, an increase of 18 percent.

In the period from 1990 to 2000, Fenwick's growth rate was more than double the County's, and more than four times the State's growth rate. While the entire region continues to grow, Fenwick Island's remarkable growth rate exhibits the desirable living conditions of the coastal Sussex County area. Fenwick is currently a very popular retirement and tourist destination, but as growth continues in the region, housing, cultural, and environmental resources will face mounting pressure.

The Town estimates its primary resident population as 270 residents in 2006, according to tax records. This number is significantly lower than the census information provided in 2000. It is not believed that Fenwick Island lost residents over this time period. Rather, it is thought that the 2000 US Census information may have included populations outside of the Town's municipal boundaries.

#### Varying Seasonal Populations

The Town is unique among most Delaware towns in that it is heavily influenced by its role as a resort community.

Seasonal population fluctuates greatly, and many residences are vacation homes with property owners living elsewhere, and thus are not counted as part of Fenwick Island's year-round permanent population.

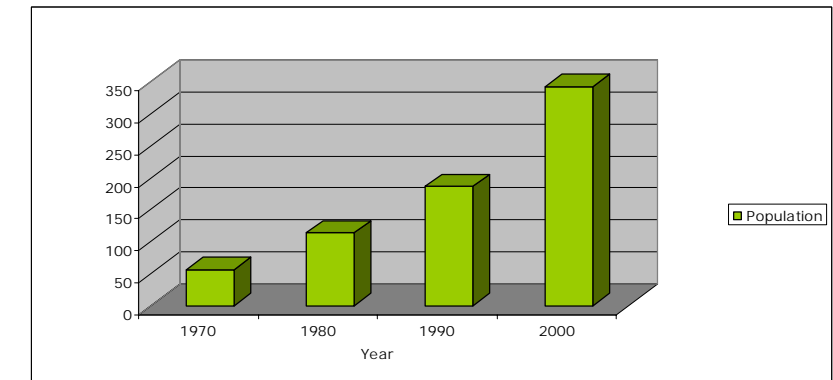
Based upon information provided by the Town, the number of people residing in or staying in town at a given time can be estimated. The Town lists its full-time population in 2006 as 270 residents, a number that forms a base population for "off-season" months. During the peak summer season, the number of people staying in town is significantly higher and is often dictated by the Town's "bed base" or the number of beds that can accommodate overnight guests or residents with each bed equating to one person. There are 676 homes in Fenwick Island, with an average of 3.5 bedrooms per home. If two adults stay in each bedroom during peak summer periods, the Town is accommodating up to 4,732 people in residential units. In addition, the three motels in town have a total of 159 rooms, with an average of two double beds per room. With four people per room, it is estimated that an additional 636 people may be able to stay in overnight accommodations, bringing Fenwick Island's total peak season bed base to over 5,300 people.

#### Population Projections

When dealing with small permanent populations such as Fenwick Island's, population projections are potentially unreliable because of a large margin of error. With this in mind, three methods of projection were determined to demonstrate potential population projection scenarios over the next several decades. The following information is derived from US Census information, and adjusted to reflect information provided by Town sources.

The first method—Scenario 1: Trend Projection of Decadal Growth—uses an average percentage of population increase specifically for Fenwick Island based on actual percentages for the past three decades starting in 1970 according to the US Census, but using the Town's current population estimate as a base line. The second method—Scenario 2: Portion of Projected Sussex County Growth—uses Fenwick Island's portion of Sussex County's overall population increase over the past three decades according to the US

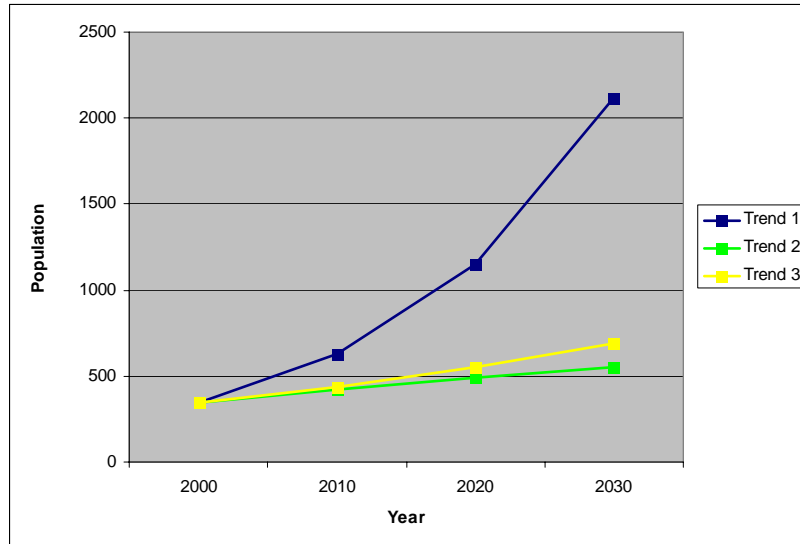
Figure 1: Fenwick Island Total Population



Source: 2000 US Census



**Figure 2: Fenwick Island Population Projection Scenarios**



Source: US Census 2000, Delaware Population Consortium

Census, while using the Town's current population estimate as a base line. This number will generate a more conservative population projection than the prior method. Finally, the third method—Scenario 3: Transition from Seasonal to Full-Time Residents and Vacant Lands Buildout—demonstrates the population increase based on the transition of seasonal to full-time residents plus the increase in additional residential units through full build out of the existing municipal area. There are approximately 636 occupied residential lots in Fenwick Island and approximately 66 remaining buildable lots that are currently vacant. It is estimated that Scenario 3 represents the most likely growth scenario.

**Table 1: Fenwick Island Population Projection Scenarios**

Growth Scenario	2000	2010	2020	2030
Scenario 1: Trend Projection of Decadal Growth	342	628 (+83.7%)	1,154 (+83.7%)	2120 (+83.7%)
Scenario 2: Portion of Projected Sussex County Population	342	422 (+23.4%)	492 (+16.6%)	549 (+11.6%)
Scenario 3: Transition of Seasonal to Full-time Residents Plus Increase in Population due to New Construction (through build out)	342	434 (+26.9%)	555 (+27.9%)	694 (+25.0%)

Source: US Census 2000, Delaware Population Consortium

**Racial Composition**

The table below exhibits the racial composition of Fenwick Island compared with Sussex County and the State according to the 2000 US Census. Fenwick Island's population is comprised mainly of white, non-minority citizens—a trend common among many of Delaware's coastal resort towns. While this information does not specifically imply the need for policy changes on behalf of the Town, it is an important element of the overall town profile.

**Table 2: Racial Composition by Place**

Race	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
White	99.4%	80.3%	74.6%
Black	0%	15.0%	19.0%
Other	.6%	4.7%	6.4%

Source: US Census 2000

**Age**

The population of Fenwick Island tends to be older than the relative populations of Sussex County and the state. Almost 40 percent of Fenwick Island's residents are over the age of 65, a percentage that is more than double that of both State and County averages. Similarly, Fenwick Island's percentage of children and young adults is less than a quarter of the percentage of children and young adults in Sussex County and Delaware. Both of these facts point to the belief that Fenwick Island is a popular destination for retirees.

**Table 3: Age Groups by Place**

Age Range	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
0-17 years	NA	22.5%	24.8%
18-64 years	NA	59.0%	62.3%
65+ years	NA	18.5%	12.9%

Source: US Census 2000

Fenwick Island's low percentage of children suggests a lower requirement of educational, day care, and child-related amenities than State and County needs might reflect. Similarly, the percentage of people of prime working age, namely 18 to 55 years old, is relatively low compared to surrounding and inland towns, suggesting that Fenwick Island may have a small labor pool to pull from to fill service and employment needs. The majority of Fenwick Island's population—almost 65 percent—are over the age of 55. This number is more than triple State and County average percentages, and suggests that Fenwick Island has a higher need for senior services and amenities as compared with neighboring towns.

**Table 4: Fenwick Island Population Age Profile**

Age	Number	Percentage of Total Population
under 5	4	1.20%
5 to 14 years	13	3.80%
15 to 24 years	13	3.80%
25 to 34 years	16	4.60%
35 to 44 years	22	6.40%
45 to 54 years	53	15.50%
55 to 64 years	86	25.10%
65 to 74 years	84	24.60%
75 to 84 years	46	13.50%
85+	5	1.50%
<b>Total</b>	342	100.00%
<b>Median Age</b>	60.9	

Source: US Census 2000

### Education

The table below illustrates information comparing the educational attainment of Fenwick Island's population compared to state and county averages. Over 90 percent of Fenwick Island's residents hold a high school diploma, a number that is 10 to 15 percent higher than State and County averages respectively. Similarly, 42 percent of Fenwick Islanders hold a college degree, a number 10 to 20 percent higher than State and County averages, respectively.

**Table 5: Educational Attainment**

Highest Achieved Level	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
No High School	1.3%	7.0%	5.0%
Some High School	8.4%	16.5%	12.4%
High School Diploma	22.3%	35.6%	31.5%
Some College	26.1%	18.2%	19.5%
Associate Degree	4.2%	6.1%	6.6%
Bachelor's Degree	22.6%	10.1%	15.6%
Graduate or Professional Degree	15.2%	5.9%	7.9%

Source: US Census 2000

### Income and Poverty

The level of education attainment in Fenwick Island correlates with the tendency of residents to maintain a relatively high median income as compared with the State and County. On average, residents of Fenwick Island make an average of \$20,000 per year more than the majority of

Sussex County residents. Interestingly though, poverty levels among Fenwick Island's population are generally only slightly lower than State and County averages with the exception of youth up to the age of 17.

**Table 6: Median Household Income by Place**

Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
\$58,333	\$39,208	\$47,381

Source: US Census 2000

**Table 7: Fenwick Island Resident Income Sources**

Households	Number	Percent
With Earnings	114	63.3
Mean Earnings (dollars)	60,116	
With Social Security Income	97	53.9
Mean Social Security Income (dollars)	12,999	
With Supplemental Security Income	2	1.1
Mean Supplemental Security Income (dollars)	4,700	
With Public Assistance Income	3	1.7
Mean Public Assistance Income (dollars)	3,100	
With Retirement Income	74	41.1
Mean Retirement Income (dollars)	25,161	

Source: US Census 2000

**Table 8: Poverty Status by Age Group and Place**

Age Group	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
All ages	8.5%	10.5%	9.20%
0-17 years	0%	15.3%	12.30%
18-64 years	9.1%	9.4%	8.30%
65+ years	7.1%	8.4%	7.90%

Source: US Census 2000

As exhibited, Fenwick Island has a lower poverty level among children as compared to State and County averages; however, poverty status among adults and seniors is similar in percentage to Sussex County and Delaware averages. A high percentage of Fenwick Islanders receive Social Security and retirement incomes, but these averages correlate with Fenwick Island's higher numbers of residents over the age of 55. With the Town's small size, it may not be feasible to provide public services and facilities to lower income residents; however, this does not preclude the idea that such amenities should be identified by the Town and supported on a regional level.

**Summary**

Given the popularity of coastal Sussex County and Fenwick Island, the population of Fenwick Island is projected to increase; however, it is expected that population increases will be limited to seasonal residents that transition to full-time residents, and residents that move into new houses built on existing vacant lots. Demographics indicate that Fenwick Island is predominantly white, upper middle class, and over the age of 55, pointing to the Town's desirable living conditions among retirees. These same desirable living conditions attract large numbers of seasonal residents and visitors to Fenwick Island as well. While the permanent population is estimated by the Town to be 270 residents, it is estimated that the Town's bed base can accommodate over 5,000 people during peak summer seasons.

**Demographics and Population Recommendations**

*Issue:* It is difficult to determine the Town's demographics and population given its small size and seasonal character.

*Goal:* Create a method by which the Town can estimate its permanent and seasonal population, including peak seasonal population. This method should also enable the Town to better understand community demographics.

*Objectives:*

- 1.1 Use the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates as a starting point for determining the Town's demographics.
  - Supplement the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates with Town-derived information.
  - Coordinate with the US Census Bureau, prior to the 2010 census taking, to reduce the potential for error to the extent possible.
- 1.2 Update the estimates on an annual basis using a standard method.
  - Incorporate this information into future updates of the Comprehensive Plan.

*Issue:* Population increases which mirror growth trends in Fenwick Island since 1970 are unlikely due to the limited supply of undeveloped land.

*Goal:* Accommodate population growth within the existing and redeveloped housing stock and the future build out of undeveloped lots.

*Objectives:*

- 1.3 Maintain current orderly growth pattern.
- 1.4 Influence peak seasonal population through limits on occupants per bedroom for rental properties.
  - Town code currently allows up to 12 occupants per rental property regardless of unit type or size. (Chapter 100-Licensing)

*Issue:* In the future, there may be a concern that the Town's existing infrastructure may not keep pace with planned population growth and a potential increase in demand for services from residents and visitors.

*Goal:* Ensure that the planned growth in population is closely tied to infrastructure and service improvements, if needed.

*Objectives:*

- 1.5 Mitigate potential impacts of planned population growth through improving efficiencies in the existing infrastructure and services.
  - Capacity improvements should be a last resort and considered as a part of a capital improvements program.

*Issue:* Population increase over what exists today could negatively impact the Town's quiet resort character.

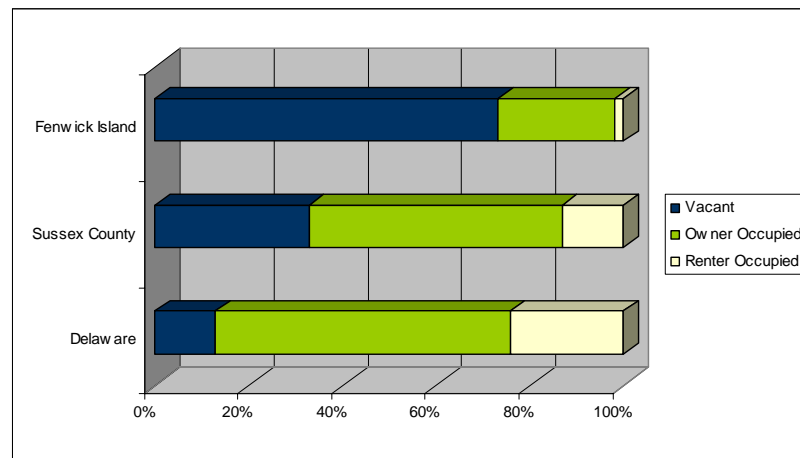


*Goal:* Commit to identify ways in which planned growth can be accommodated without compromising the Town's character.

*Objectives:*

1.6 Balance the potential impacts of planned growth with the potential benefits of additional community members.

**Figure 3: Ownership and Vacancy Rates**



Source: US Census 2000

### 3.2 Housing

#### General Housing Issues

The 2000 US Census indicates that Fenwick Island had a total of 692 residential housing units, up 24 units from the 1990 Census figure of 666, and an increase of approximately 3.5 percent. Interestingly, during this same period of time, the population of Fenwick Island increased by 83 percent.

Also, the Town records indicate some slightly different numbers. As of 2006, the Town estimates that there were 676 residential housing units in town, up 31 units from 2001. This number is lower than US Census estimates, although it is believed that the Census counted mobile home units, located outside of the municipal boundaries, as part of the 2000 estimates. The Town, however, still notes that between 2001 and 2006 housing units increased by 46 percent, only half of the pace of increasing population.

In both cases the disparity between the increase in the number of new housing units and the significantly higher increase in population may be the cause and effect of a number of trends. First, the figure below exhibits the proportions of vacant, owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing in Fenwick Island, Sussex County and Delaware. The graph shows that the majority of housing within Fenwick Island is considered “vacant.” At 73.3 percent, Fenwick Island has a significantly higher vacancy rate than both the State (12.9%) and the County (32.8%). This high vacancy rate can be attributed to the high rate of seasonal, recreational, or occasional-use housing which the US Census includes under its “vacant” classification. Of the 488 units listed in the estimate as vacant, 481 are also classified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

With population increasing at a much faster rate than the construction of new units, the disproportion seen between these two growth rates indicates that many seasonal homes are becoming permanent residences.

While full-time residents contribute to a more active year-round economy, there are several side effects of disproportionate population growth to housing growth. First, the increase in full-time residents will create increased demand on public utilities, schools, health care, and services provided by the Town. Second, the disproportion

of housing demand to housing supply will tend to increase both real estate values and rental costs, thus making “attainable” housing for local employees and young families harder to find.

Of Fenwick Island’s 692 residential units (according to the U.S. Census, the Town is predominately comprised of single family units which account for 95 percent of the overall housing stock (including both attached and detached units). This percentage is significantly higher than the percentage of single family units making up the housing stock of Sussex County (64.1%) and the State (70%). The dominance of single family units in Fenwick Island speaks to the Town’s overall character as a low-density, primarily residential community. This type of development pattern is similarly seen in neighboring coastal Sussex County towns.

**Table 9: Type of Housing Units**

Housing Type	Fenwick Island	%	Sussex County	%	Delaware	%
Single Family, Detached	613	88.6%	55171	59.3%	191688	55.9%
Single Family, Attached	44	6.4%	4504	4.8%	48340	14.1%
* Multi-Family	15	2.2%	8986	9.7%	64128	18.6%
Mobile Homes	0 (20)	2.9%	23817	25.6%	38281	11.2%
Other	0	0%	595	0.6%	635	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>93070</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>343072</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: US Census 2000

Note: Mobile home units are an estimate error and are located outside Fenwick Island’s municipal boundary.

\* For the purpose of this table, multi-family housing units are defined by U.S. Census Bureau data as a structure comprised of two or more housing units.

#### Age of Housing Stock

Table 9 compares the age of Fenwick Island’s housing stock to the ages of both Sussex County’s and Delaware’s overall housing inventory. It can be assumed that because of difficult living conditions and lack of access and infrastructure, Fenwick Island remained largely undeveloped into the early 1900s and experienced a significantly lower construction rate than both the County and the State through the 1930s. However, as the Town’s popularity

increased into the 1940s, the percentage of new house construction began to exceed the State and County percentages, and continued to do so through the late 1980s. During that period, Fenwick Island was essentially built out within its municipal boundaries. In the past decade, the new home construction pace has slowed to 14.9 percent, less than both the State and County percentages according to the 2000 US Census. It can be assumed that this slow down is attributed to a lack of buildable area remaining within Town boundaries. Similarly, it could be anticipated that a slower building rate than earlier decades will prevail into the future unless additional non-developed land is annexed into the current municipal area.

**Table 10: Age of Regional Housing Stock**

Year Built	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
1939 or earlier	4.20%	8.20%	10.70%
1940 to 1959	19.90%	11.00%	19.50%
1960 to 1979	34.10%	28.10%	30.90%
1980 to 1989	26.90%	23.70%	17.10%
1990 to 2000	14.90%	28.90%	21.20%

Source: 2000 US Census

Another possible scenario suggests that developers will be looking to acquire older, low-density properties in order to replace them with larger structures and higher density configurations, thus maximizing the value and return on investment of the lot. Examples of this practice can be seen in town in the form of large structures built to the maximum size allowed by zoning. While this practice raises home values and positively contributes to the economy, it begins to change the scale of historic town development patterns while also changing the overall community character. The 2000 US Census notes that approximately 25 percent of Fenwick Island's housing stock was constructed before 1960, making these houses eligible for consideration as historic structures. In 2007, the Town estimated this same number at 16 percent. While the US Census may have been slightly inaccurate, this decrease in older homes may also be a sign that redevelopment of residential lots is replacing aging structures. A historic structures inventory

has not been completed by the State Historic Preservation Office.

**Housing Value**

The value of Fenwick Island's housing stock speaks to its relatively higher income, upper middle to upper class population. In 2000, the US Census listed Fenwick Island's median house value at \$278,600, more than twice the average for both the County and the State. Property values have continued to jump dramatically in the past seven years. At the end of the 2006 tax year, the Town estimates that current prices for houses in Fenwick Island varied from \$500,000 for bayside houses without water access to more than \$3 million for oceanfront houses

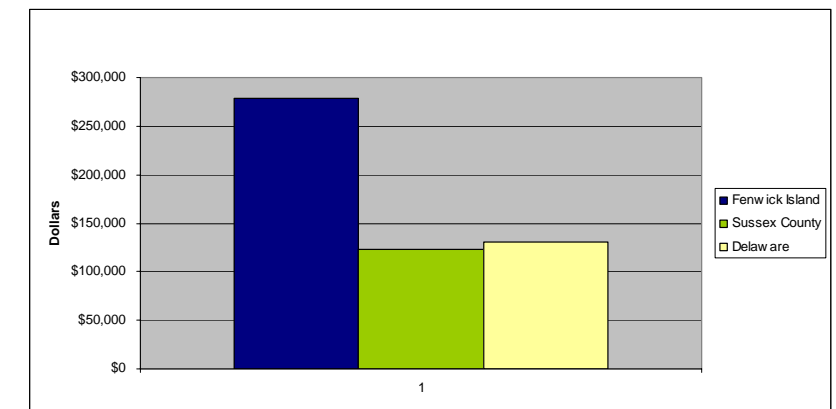
The Town estimates that in 2007, interior bayside homes were selling for approximately \$500,000 to \$600,000; bayside canal frontage homes were selling for approximately \$850,000; and bay frontage homes were selling for just under \$2 million. On the oceanside of town, prices were even higher. It was estimated that oceanside homes near Coastal Highway were selling for approximately \$1.2 million; ocean block homes were selling for almost \$2 million; and ocean front homes were selling for upwards of \$3 million.

Figure 2 exhibits the proportions of vacant, owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing between Fenwick Island, Sussex County, and Delaware as exhibited in the 2000 US Census. The graph shows the majority of housing within Fenwick Island as "vacant." At 73.3 percent, Fenwick Island has a significantly higher vacancy rate than both the State (12.9%) and the County (32.8%). This high vacancy rate can be attributed to the high rate of seasonal, recreational, or occasional use housing which the US Census includes under its "vacant" classification. Of the 488 units listed in the 2000 Census as vacant, 481 were also classified as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

**Ownership and Vacancy Rates by Place**

In 2007, the Town also estimated full-time residences versus seasonal residences based on trash pick-up service. The Town reported that 676 homes were contracted for year-round service in 2006, though only 144 homes utilized trash service year-round. During that same year, 204 rental homes utilized the service seasonally, and 328 homes only had trash picked up during the summer months. While

**Figure 4: Median House Value**



Source: 2000 US Census



the numbers derived from this breakdown vary from the US Census numbers, the information continues to indicate that Fenwick Island is comprised of a majority of units owned by seasonal or part-time residents.

**Summary**

Over the past several decades, Fenwick Island’s population has increased at a faster rate than new homes have been built. This suggests that new construction is occurring on previously vacant lots, and that historically seasonal or part-time residents are transitioning to full-time Fenwick Island residents. Likewise, as demand has outpaced supply, Fenwick Island has seen rapid increases in property values. At the current pace, it is estimated that Fenwick Island’s vacant residential lots will be built out by roughly 2013. This full buildout condition will most likely slow population growth, but continue to fuel an increase in property values and demand as the market dictates.

**Housing Recommendations**

*Issue:* The majority of the Town’s housing stock was built before 1980, according to the US Census. The Town’s housing stock is older than that of Sussex County but is very similar in age to housing found in the entire state. The older homes are likely to be redeveloped to better meet current trends in residential design.

*Goal:* Ensure that, as existing residences are redeveloped, the design of new residences is in keeping with the Town’s desired community character.

*Objectives:*

- 2.1 Strengthen the existing residential zoning code provisions.
  - Build on the recent floor area ratio and lot area coverage amendments to further articulate mass and scale.
  - Maintain the 30-foot maximum building height but consider amending how height is determined (measured from crown of street, highest point of building).
- 2.2 Review residential design standards.

- Amend code or create stand-alone guiding document that is administered by Planning Commission or Building Committee.

*Issue:* Single-family detached housing units comprise approximately 90 percent of the Town’s housing stock. The composition of housing types within the County and State is more diverse with approximately 50 percent of the total units being single-family detached.

*Goal:* Preserve the single-family detached unit type as the dominant residential type. This unit type contributes to the Town’s character as a family-oriented community and sets Fenwick Island apart from the other resort towns.

*Objectives:*

2.3 Maintain the single-family detached use as the permitted use within the residential zone district.

*Issue:* The significant majority of residential units are occupied seasonally. This reinforces the Town’s history as a resort community. National trends indicate that as baby boomers reach retirement age they seek out resort communities for their primary homes. Currently, approximately 40 percent of Fenwick Island’s population is between the age of 45 and 65. If Fenwick Island follows current national trends, it can be assumed that the population of the Town will increase with the transition of seasonal residences to full-time residences occupied by the baby boomer generation.

*Goal:* Plan for a possible increased demand in services, and a reduction in rental tax income, as the permanent population increases.

*Objectives:*

- 2.4 Review the Town's existing services and potential demand increases to determine year-round needs.
- Police protection
  - Trash and recycling
  - Road and drainage maintenance

*Issue:* The median home price doubled in Fenwick Island since the 2000 U.S. Census. This high cost of housing in town makes it very difficult for town staff, emergency service providers and employees of local businesses to live close to their place of employment. This will likely become a serious issue for employee retention and recruitment in the future.

*Goal:* Participate in the preparation of a comprehensive strategy to provide attainable housing outside of the Town's existing residential area. High land costs relative to land costs in other areas of Sussex County and the lack of developable land preclude the Town's ability to provide a significant number of attainable housing units within its municipal limits.

*Objectives:*

- 2.5 Cooperate with regional efforts to provide attainable housing.
- Work with other like-minded resort towns such as Bethany Beach (which has identified in their Comprehensive Plan the desire to work cooperatively) and the County to identify potential solutions.
  - Research how other seaside communities have provided for attainable housing.

- 2.6 Explore methods of providing employee-occupied rental units on commercial properties and/or participate in a regional attainable housing program.
- Collaborate with local businesses to evaluate the need for attainable housing.

- Maintain the current code provision allowing one residential unit per commercial building. Consider amending code to allow additional units on upper floors, but keeping within the 30-foot height limit.
- Facilitate a small number of these units, such as the planned unit within the Bethany Beach Fire District Substation, for emergency service providers.

*Issue:* Approximately 16 percent of the Town's housing stock was built before 1960, making several houses eligible for historic structure review.

*Goal:* Residential structures are an important contribution to the Town's character. Residences constructed before 1960, if deemed to have historical significance, should be preserved.

*Objectives:*

- 2.7 Complete a Historic and Cultural Resources Inventory.
- Create a Cultural Resource and Historic Commission.
  - Work with the State Historic Preservation Office to update inventory review for state and local significance of potential town resources.



Home located on Bunting Avenue.



Homes located in the bayside residential areas.

### 3.3 Land Use and Annexation

#### Existing Land Use

The Town of Fenwick Island contains two primary land uses, residential and commercial. Residential uses are organized around a commercial strip that fronts State Route 1 (SR 1). Other less prevalent land uses are institutional, office, utility/transportation, parks and open space, and vacant. The existing land uses are illustrated on Map 5.

Residential land makes up most of Fenwick Island. Most residential uses are located on lots 50 feet wide by 100 feet long organized into distinct compact blocks 300 feet wide by 400 feet long. This strong organization of lots and blocks gives Fenwick Island a traditional community form. The resulting street grid makes the Town highly walkable.

There are two distinct residential neighborhood characters. The residential area on the oceanside of SR 1 is more regularly organized in the block and lot town form. Bunting Avenue and the relationship houses have to the street is unique within town. The character of the landscape is also distinct in that it is a more naturalized landscape with very few pockets of manicured lawn. Black pine and other drought tolerant species, such as bayberry, are prevalent in this neighborhood.

The second distinct neighborhood is the bayside of SR 1 north of Atlantic Street. This bayside residential area is characterized primarily by the traditional town lot size but has more variety as some lots have been combined in the past and other lots have irregular shapes based on the topographic conditions. A natural and man-made system of waterways, lagoons and canals are a significant feature of this neighborhood. Although the street widths are the same as those found in the oceanside neighborhood the street character changes dramatically. Houses are set back from the street in varying dimensions and are all the more obvious than in other parts of town because there are far fewer trees located adjacent to the street. The landscape is typically manicured with lawns and other ornamental plantings.

Commercial land makes up the majority of lots facing SR 1. These lots are typically 150 feet in depth on the west side and 130 feet deep on the east side, and vary in width up to the block width of 300 feet. The commercial block width is

derived from the residential lot 50-foot width module and equals an aggregation of six residential lots. The commercial district includes a few distinct strip retail centers and several freestanding buildings. The commercial area is primarily served by the automobile with numerous curb cuts on SR 1 and the adjacent side streets, and parking located to the front of the businesses. The Fenwick Village is unique in that it is internally oriented and has its parking located to the side of the shopping center.

Institutional land uses are found in discrete locations along SR 1. The Town Hall, located at Bayard Street, is the community's center and is immediately adjacent to the Town Park. Two churches are also located in town along SR 1. A wastewater lift station is located adjacent to the Town Park on Cannon Street.

The Town Park is the only developed park in Fenwick Island. The public beach is located along the Town's eastern boundary and extends to two State Parks located north and south of town. Seal Island, located just outside the Town's municipal boundary, is used by residents for sailing events and is a popular bird-watching area. There are also two protected natural wildlife areas in town—including the Schulz Road Wetlands and the Glenn Avenue Bird Sanctuary.

#### Future Land Use

The Town is nearly built out within its existing municipal boundary. There are just 56 vacant residential lots and 10 vacant commercial lots available for development. Given the Town's development trends, it is projected that the Town's vacant residential lots will be developed by 2013. Vacant commercial lots, which can also be developed with single-family detached residences, are today's highest and best use and will likely be developed with a mix of residential and commercial uses.

There is a town desire that SR 1, including the commercial area, be enhanced to become a more walkable and inviting area of town. As a result, an overlay district is proposed to include a majority of the properties located along SR 1. While there is a strong community voice to let market forces prevail, the Town's desire to create an improved commercial area cannot be realized without a level of attention to the existing land use regulations and zoning code.



Other land use changes are illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan, Map 7. Since this is a view of the Town at its buildout, the vacant land use classification is not used.

### Annexation

The Town's boundary has remained the same since its incorporation in 1953. The driving force behind the incorporation was to protect the Town from outside development pressures. Town residents were not happy with the pattern of development in adjacent areas to the south, especially Ocean City, Maryland.

Current residents are similarly concerned with today's development patterns in the unincorporated portions of Fenwick Island and along SR 54 to the intersection of SR 20 and the Bearhole Ditch. In recent years several large developments have been approved in the County, including Bayside, that town residents believe directly impact their community.

Areas outside of incorporated Fenwick Island are identified on the County's zoning plan as Environmentally Sensitive Areas. This designation acknowledges that the County recognizes the Inland Bays as a major resource and one that must be protected from insensitive development. These areas are required to receive special design considerations for preserving water quality and open space. The majority of vacant lands are zoned Agricultural Residential (AR-1). This zone districts allows residential development up to 2 units/acre. Residential planned communities and village-style developments are encouraged to provide opens space and habitat while not increasing the underlying density. Infrastructure improvements within this area are focused on upgrading wastewater systems to protect the Inland Bays from excessive amounts of nutrients.

The unincorporated area is served by existing major utilities. The South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility covers the Fenwick Island Regional Sewer District encompassing both the unincorporated area under discussion and the Town. Recent improvements to the facility increased its capacity to accommodate future buildout, as identified on the County's 2003 Future Land Use Plan. The Artesian Water Company provides potable water to this area and also has the capacity to serve future developments as contemplated in the County's 2003 Future

Land Use Plan. The County is currently in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan. In conversations with County planners the potential development anticipated for this area is not expected to be increased through the plan update.

The unincorporated area is served by the Town police service through an agreement with the State Police. This agreement provides that the Fenwick Island Police Department will respond provided the Delaware State Police are unable to dispatch personnel within a reasonable response time.

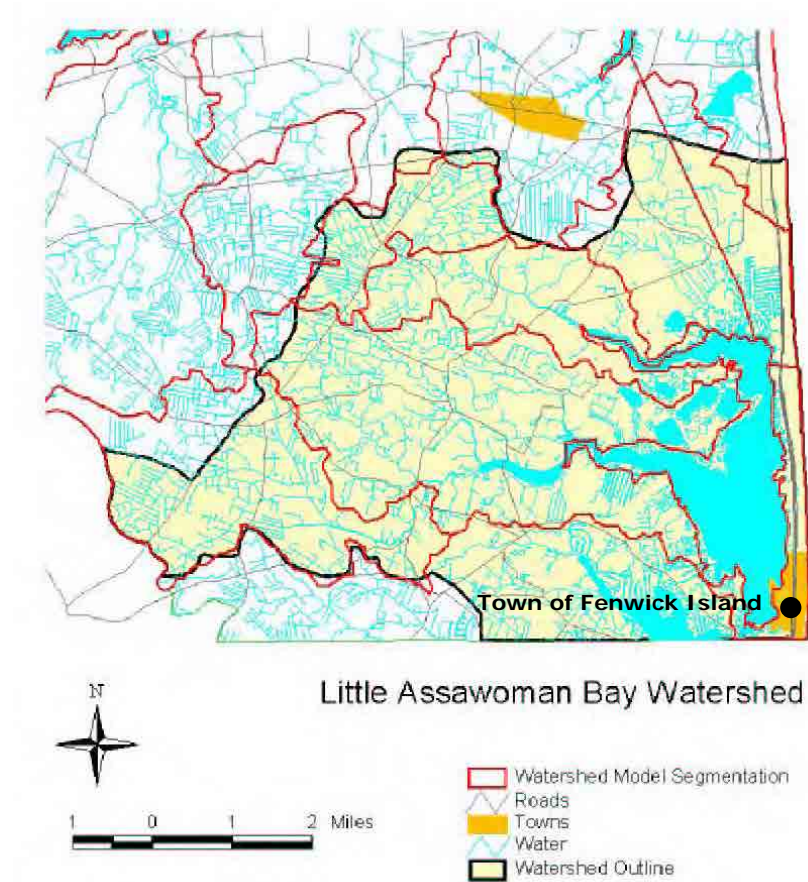
When considering the annexation of these adjacent areas, the community discussed a cursory review of potential costs and benefits. From a taxation consideration, there is no tax advantage to County residents if they are annexed by the Town as their rates are much lower. In addition to County taxes, town taxes would also be due for those annexed. The property tax rate in the County is \$.4016 per \$100 of total assessed value for residential and commercial property, while the Town's is nearly five times that at \$1.92 per \$100 of total assessed value for residential and commercial property. In addition, the Town charges a rental receipt tax calculated at 7.5 percent of the rental charge for most single-family residences and 3 percent for hotel/motel rooms. A Realty Transfer Tax of 3 percent is also levied on all conveyed property.

From a town services consideration, the Town already provides a certain level of police protection through the agreement with the State. Increased level of police service would be provided to the unincorporated areas if they were annexed. The Town also provides trash service to most residential properties which would be extended to the annexed area. The Town's Public Works Department is responsible for municipal road and storm water system maintenance, and again it is expected that this service would be extended into any annexed area. The potential cost of providing these services was not calculated as a part of this cursory review.

Another consideration for annexation is the Town's fiscal condition. The latest Town budget information (as of the end of January 2007) indicates that the Town is fiscally sound. It is on track to meet or exceed its budgeted revenue goals by the end of its fiscal year on July 31.



Homes located in unincorporated Fenwick Island.



Source: Center for Inland Bays

Revenue receipts at the end of January were at 84 percent of the year-end goal. Expenditures are broken out by Police Department, Lifeguard, Public Works, Administration and General. The total expenditures as of the end of January are 47 percent of the total budget. Town staff indicates that this fiscal condition is a trend that is expected to continue.

Given these considerations, the community believes that the biggest advantage to the Town in an annexation is the ability to have ultimate control in future decisions. The Town, at this time, does not wish to pursue annexation but recognizes the importance of this tool and may choose to use this at a later date.

The community wishes to establish an Area of Concern encompassing the entire Little Assawoman Bay Watershed area to the north, west, and south of the municipal limits of Fenwick Island. An Area of Concern, as defined by the State Office of Planning Coordination, is an area created by a municipality where a formal review process is followed to ensure that the Town is notified of proposed land use applications for properties within the Area of Concern. The County is obligated to engage the Town in the review and discussion of potential developments.

**Land Use and Annexation Recommendations**

*Issue:* The Town is concerned with the current and potential impacts from approved and proposed developments in unincorporated Sussex County.

*Goal:* The Town wants to have a stronger role in reviewing and discussing land use applications proposed for properties located in the Little Assawoman Bay Watershed.

*Objectives:*

- 3.1 Reinforce the determination of an Area of Concern.
  - Work with the State and County to define and prioritize the specific actions to be taken within the area of concern

surrounding Fenwick Island in the Little Assawoman Bay Watershed.

- 3.2 Work with Sussex County as their Comprehensive Plan is updated.
  - Encourage the County to include additional incentives to property owners to pursue better design that promotes and preserves the local environment.
  - Encourage the County to create stricter sign and lighting ordinances.

*Issue:* The Town is nearly built-out within its existing municipal boundaries. The community has also determined that the current size of the Town reinforces its desired quiet resort character.

*Goal:* Continue the general pattern of land uses as they exist today.

*Objectives:*

- 3.3 Reinforce the current general land use pattern of commercial and public uses along SR1 and residential use throughout the remainder of town.
  - Explore mixed-use development within the commercial area.
  - Work to identify and establish public open space.
  - Maintain the current use of only single-family detached dwellings within the residential area.



### 3.4 Redevelopment

#### Overview

The first residential cottages began to dot Fenwick Island in the 1930s, and with infrastructure and access improvements, development of the Town has increased ever since. Like the entire coastal Sussex County region, Fenwick Island continues to see growth rates that surpass the County and State rates of population increase.

As a result of its popularity as both a tourist and residential destination, and the associated increase in property values that has followed, Fenwick Island has seen a significant amount of redevelopment over the past couple decades. Much of this redevelopment has occurred on residential lots, but there have been recent indicators that commercial properties may be redeveloped in the near future as well.

#### Residential Redevelopment

In the past decade, housing demand has outpaced supply and the number of vacant lots available for development is decreasing. This trend has raised property values and has led many land and homeowners to maximize the value of their land and the return on their property investment.

In some cases, aging structures have been replaced with new homes that use lot coverage and square footage allotments in ways that speak to the historic development patterns. In other cases, beach cottages which were once the essence of Fenwick Island's community character have been replaced by large homes that maximize lot area coverage, building height and allowable square footage.

During the recent Visioning effort and proposed code amendments discussion, residents expressed concern with the size of new homes that have been constructed in town. It was noted in a memo from former Councilman Harry Haon that "over a third of the more than 100 new houses built have been over 4,000 square feet in total area, with three houses over 5,500 square feet. In a number of instances, these homes have been built out to the full limits of the current front, rear, and side lot setbacks. Houses of this size are two to three times, or more, the size of many of Fenwick Island's existing residential structures."

As a result of these discussions, the Town implemented floor area and lot area restrictions in an effort to better

control house sizes. The new floor area provisions cap house size at 7500 square feet, or 70 percent of the total lot area, whichever is less. While the desire to maximize financial gain through redevelopment is certainly understandable, the impact of redevelopment projects on Fenwick Island's overall character can be detrimental. Redevelopment projects should continue to be closely monitored for their consideration of community character and impact on cultural and historic resources, and additional building design restrictions may be a tool to further preserve community character through redevelopment.

Given rising property values and the age of the Town's housing stock, it is anticipated that residential redevelopment will continue. Many residents have expressed their ideas that the market should control real estate values, but that they also value their small town atmosphere and "quiet resort" environment. It should be an outcome of future land use decisions to balance these community goals.

#### Commercial Redevelopment

Fenwick Island's commercial core forms the heart of town. It is bisected by SR 1, giving it maximum exposure to vehicular traffic. The commercial area is comprised mainly of dining, lodging and small retail establishments that cater to local residents and visitors. Many of the Town's commercial uses draw from the larger coastal town and inland region.

Architecturally, the commercial district is dominated by strip-style development that caters to vehicles, with parking fronting the street and large signs intending to attract the attention of drivers along SR 1. Several residents commented that they would like to see commercial development with better "curb appeal" and development styles that are more in tune with Fenwick Island's overall character as a "quiet resort" town.

Unlike the residential areas of Fenwick Island, the commercial core has not witnessed a significant amount of redevelopment. However, as structures age, the commercial area will be prime for redevelopment. Some key parcels in town, including the former Libby's Restaurant site and the Sands Motel, are currently available for sale. The commercial zone district allows for commercial and/or residential development. With the market success of



Residential redevelopment adjacent to a smaller, original structure.



Commercial development along SR 1.





The Sands Motel is for sale and prime for redevelopment.

residential properties in the area, several previously vacant lots within the existing commercial area have been developed as single-family detached residential units. There have been mixed reactions to this type of residential development within the commercial core. Some believe that the market should be the determining factor of development types, while others believe that the commercial core should be kept intact and enhanced with interesting and unique commercial uses.

Many in town also voiced their concerns that the existing commercial core is not a safe, welcoming environment for pedestrians and bicyclists. Opportunities exist through redevelopment to close curb cuts, improve crosswalks, synchronize stop light timing and create better, more welcoming streetscape patterns to promote pedestrian and bicyclist safety.

Fenwick Island has a unique opportunity to mold the image of the commercial core into one that better represents Town goals. The Town is off to a positive start with beautification projects, median enhancement projects, and pedestrian and bicycle improvement projects. Before redevelopment of this area begins in earnest, Fenwick Island has the opportunity to create a strategy that looks at these enhancements in a holistic way.

#### Summary

Within the past decade, property values have increased dramatically in Fenwick Island, spurring residential redevelopment and potential commercial redevelopment. In many instances, redevelopment projects have created new structures that often do not meld with the Town's cultural and historic character. The Town has taken steps to guide future redevelopment projects; however, it is suggested that additional guidelines and regulations be developed to help both residential and commercial redevelopment projects enhance Fenwick Island's community character and its atmosphere as a "quiet resort".

#### Redevelopment Recommendations

*Issue:* As structures age, vacant properties are developed and property values increase, there is an increasing demand to redevelop residential and commercial properties.

*Goal:* Leverage the trend towards redevelopment to achieve desired community benefits, such as an improved SR 1 corridor and more sensitively designed residences.

#### *Objectives:*

- 4.1 Consider an optional overlay district for the SR 1 commercial area.
- Create design standards for architecture, site and landscape considerations.
  - Create maintenance standards and mechanisms to ensure long-term success.
  - Encourage property owner participation through incentives.
  - Leverage new development activity to fulfill goals of creating a safer and more aesthetically pleasing pedestrian environment.
  - Create signage guidelines that complement an overall Town signage plan.

*Issue:* The Town participated with DeIDOT to prepare a pedestrian plan for SR 1. The plan includes elements that enhance pedestrian safety but does not take into account other opportunities that could result from commercial redevelopment. This effort was completed before the Town adopted its Comprehensive Plan.

*Goal:* Use the Comprehensive Planning process to update the pedestrian plan to incorporate a broader range of Town goals and to employ a variety of mechanisms to enable the plan's implementation.

#### *Objectives:*

- 4.2 Provide direction to DeIDOT regarding an update of the proposed Pedestrian Plan.

*Issue:* The community is at risk of losing potential historic and cultural resources as redevelopment becomes more prevalent.

*Goal:* Certain structures, such as the older beach cottages, are an important component of the Town's character and should be considered in redevelopment scenarios.

*Objectives:*

4.3 Create incentives to preserve the older beach cottages and other historic and cultural resources.

*Issue:* The larger community is also at risk of losing potential historic and cultural resources as redevelopment becomes more prevalent in unincorporated Fenwick Island.

*Goal:* Potential resources that contribute to the Town's character, but are located outside the municipal boundary, should be protected and enhanced.

*Objectives:*

4.4 Establish intergovernmental agreements to enable joint planning for the area surrounding incorporated Fenwick Island.

- Create a historic overlay district with incentives to protect and enhance the Fenwick Island Lighthouse in any potential redevelopment.
- Initiate redevelopment by engaging the property owners in a collaborative and open planning process.

4.5 Cooperate with Sussex County to work with the State Historic Preservation Office to review and update its list of potential resources in both unincorporated and incorporated Fenwick Island.

*Issue:* Redevelopment generates significant amounts of debris and waste from the demolition of existing structures and other property improvements. This debris and waste typically makes its way to the local landfill.

*Goal:* Minimize impacts to the environment by encouraging the salvaging, reuse and recycling of existing structures and improvements.

*Objectives:*

4.6 Create green building guidelines that provide resources, methods and strategies to property owners, architects, and builders.

- Determine incentives for structures to be moved and reused on-site or in new locations as a first priority.
- Prepare a list of agencies and non-profits, such as Habitat for Humanity, which can salvage furniture, cabinets, appliances and fixtures and other intact building materials before demolition.
- Sort building materials during demolition for those that can be recycled and used on site or transported for off-site recycling.
- Ensure that hazardous building materials are disposed of properly.

4.7 Create design guidelines for architecture that employ green building considerations.

4.8 Create design guidelines for site and landscape improvements that employ green building considerations.

4.9 Develop an improved sidewalk and parking plan that reduces vehicle miles traveled.

### 3.5 Infrastructure

#### Town Governance

The Town is an incorporated municipality chartered by the State of Delaware. The Town Charter states that all powers are vested in a seven-member town council with one member also serving as President and Mayor. Fenwick Island's Town Council meets on the fourth Friday of each month and elections are held annually. The Town Charter and Municipal Code, including the Subdivision Regulations and Zoning and Building Ordinances, contain the rules which direct land use planning and development activities.

Fenwick Island's first Planning Commission was recently appointed by Town Council. This seven-member board is initially responsible for the drafting and review of the Comprehensive Plan. The Town has also established a number of committees including: the Board of Adjustment; Board of Elections; Audit Committee; Beach Committee; Budget Committee; Building Committee; Charter and Ordinance Committee; Commercial Liaison Committee; Emergency Management Committee; Environmental Committee; Beautification, Park and Recreation Committee; Pension Committee and Town Planning Committee.

The government offices, as well as the police and public works departments are located in the Town Hall building complex on the bayside of SR 1 between Bayard and Cannon Streets. The existing Town Hall was recently upgraded with a 60 kilowatt automated generator system purchased with Department of Homeland Security funds.

The Town recently completed a study to determine space and programming needs for town administration and other services. The study, completed in November 2005, recommended additional space to house current and planned needs. The proposed Town Hall renovation includes some new elements including a conference room and a multi-purpose room, additional office space including space for the Town Manager and the Beach Patrol, and public safety improvements such as women's and men's locker rooms and equipment storage. There is money earmarked in the Town's budget for either the planning and design of a new Town Hall or for road improvements. Additionally, the Town will continue to explore the relocation of its Public Works Department to land that may be more suitable than its present location in town.

The Town benefits from a dedicated staff. Most town employees have been with the Town for a long period of time. This institutional knowledge and commitment is invaluable to a small organization. The Town also hired its first Town Manager in March of 2007.

#### Community Services

##### *911 Service*

Emergency service is provided throughout Fenwick Island from a centralized center located in Georgetown. House numbers and mailbox numbers were recently updated to the standard postal service numbers instead of the older rural route delivery format.

##### *Emergency Operations Center*

The Town participates in the regional system for emergency services. The Emergency Operations Center is located in Georgetown and is the headquarters for natural and technical disasters. The Center is a member of the Delmarva Emergency Task Force which meets quarterly to address the needs of the entire peninsula. There are no formal interagency agreements between Ocean City, Maryland and the Town; however, a system is in place to share information.

As of October 2006, communities are required to be in compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to receive funding available through the Department of Homeland Security. The Town is in compliance and this allows the Town to be a part of a unified approach to incident management and to better work with other jurisdictions to respond to natural disasters and emergencies. According to town staff, while the framework exists for a unified approach there is still a need to marry many the fragmented plans that exist within the region.

The Delaware Department of Transportation's Transportation Management Team is in the process of creating evacuation route plans for the region. SR 1 and 54 are the most proximate routes to Fenwick Island.

According to town staff, there is also a need to evaluate current town personnel, training and equipment to ensure the Town's ability for emergency response.



#### *Police*

The Fenwick Island Police Department is located in the Town Hall and employs five full-time officers, a police chief and a police secretary. The police department provides 24 hours a day service, and performs home inspections during the winter months to make sure that unoccupied properties are overseen while owners are away. The police department is also responsible for parking enforcement and other municipal code regulations.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island*

No members of the Town's force currently live in town. Town staff believes the difficulty of finding housing within town will become an issue for employee retention and recruitment.

The Delaware State Police and the Town have an agreement of shared responses between the entities. The Town police respond to calls in the immediate area such as unincorporated Fenwick Island and along SR 54. A grant is in place to help cover added expenses incurred by the Fenwick Island Police Department for this service; however, reimbursement is not always guaranteed. The State of Delaware also mandates a Statewide Mutual Aid Law by which the Fenwick Island Police Department responds to calls outside of the Town's municipal area and receives outside assistance if necessary.

A State Police substation has been planned for the intersection of SR 54 and 20 as a requirement for the approved Bayside community. This new substation could minimize the need for Town police response outside the municipal boundaries if adequate staff and equipment is housed at the facility.

#### *Fire and Rescue*

The Town is served by the Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company, which is not affiliated with the Town or Bethany Beach. The fire company is an all-volunteer force that includes both volunteer and live-in firefighters stationed at two locations, including Station 70 in Bethany Beach and Station 2 in Fenwick Island. It consists of over 60 members and a Ladies Auxiliary of over 20 members. There is a statewide Mutual Aid Compact between the Delaware fire and rescue services to assist each other. There is no requirement to reimburse the services.

The district's boundary covers approximately 16 square miles stretching from south of the Indian River Bridge, along the Atlantic Ocean south to the Maryland state line, west to the Fenwick Island Bridge, and north to the South Shore Marina at the Indian River Bridge. The Company is well equipped to provide extensive fire and rescue services including fire fighting, hazardous waste containment and disposal, emergency medical response, vehicle extraction, and search and rescue.

The Company relies on state funding and private donations. It has difficulty recruiting and retaining volunteers. In an effort to incentivize their program, a residential unit is being included within the substation located behind Town Hall. The current ambulance service provider, Millville Volunteer Fire Department, has notified the Town that it will discontinue service to the area beginning January 2009.

*Source: Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company, Town of Fenwick Island*

#### *Animal Control*

A recent reorganization of animal control services has left some gaps, according to town staff. As of July 2006, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) Sussex Chapter no longer provides animal control services but instead focuses on animal adoptions, the humane treatment of animals and the spaying and neutering of dogs and cats. The SPCA is dependent solely on private donations. In its place, the Kent County SPCA is handling stray animals for Sussex County. Other organizations such as the Tri-state Bird Rescue and Bethany Town Cats provide some animal control services. There are no intergovernmental agreements between Delaware and Maryland to provide animal control services on beach.

The Marine Education, Research, and Rehabilitation Institute (MERR) based in Nassau, Delaware responds to stranded marine mammals and sea turtles throughout the State. The MERR Institute is authorized by the National Marine Fisheries Service and the State of Delaware to be the official stranding respondents for the Marine Mammals and Sea Turtles of Delaware. MERR also conducts research on marine species and conducts education and outreach programs for school and groups.

*Source: Marine Education, Research, and Rehabilitation Institute*



The Town Park is an important civic space.

#### *Fenwick Island Beach Patrol*

Fenwick Island operates a paid, 30-person coed beach patrol consisting of 28 lifeguards, one first lieutenant, and a captain. The beach patrol is on duty along the Fenwick Island beachfront weekends from Memorial Day to the first week in June, full-time through Labor Day, and then weekends through approximately the second weekend in September. Normal operating hours are from 10am to 5pm.

They are also contracted by the State to patrol the unincorporated beaches. There is a town concern that an increase in beach population will stretch the capabilities of the present patrol to provide safe conditions.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island*

#### *Educational Services*

Fenwick Island has no educational institutions within its municipal boundaries. Public education services are provided by the Indian River School District. Professional training services and post-secondary educational services are available through the Delaware Technical and Community College at their Georgetown campus located approximately 27 miles to the northwest.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island*

#### *Library*

The South Coastal Library in Bethany Beach is one of three county-operated branches in the Sussex County Library System and is Fenwick Island's closest major library. It houses 34,000 titles with a circulation of 108,000 items per year. Also nearby is the Selbyville Public Library, located in the historic home of Senator John G. Townsend, Jr. Both libraries provide access to not only their own collections, but also to the Delaware Library Catalog.

While Fenwick Island does not host an official library, the Town Hall does have a small "bring one, take one" library system in place where books can be borrowed in exchange for a new book added to the shelf.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island, South Coastal Library, Selbyville Public Library*

#### *Health Care*

While no hospital services are available in Fenwick Island, there are several hospitals within a 40-mile radius of town:

Atlantic General Hospital (AGH) in Berlin, Maryland, 17 miles south of Fenwick Island is a 162-bed acute and trauma care facility with 163 physicians. The hospital has satellite care offices in Berlin, Ocean City, Ocean Pines, Pocomoke City, and Snow Hill.

The Beebe Medical Center in Lewes, approximately 25 miles to the north, provides inpatient, outpatient, emergency, and diagnostic services. Beebe is a 158-bed, not-for-profit seaside community hospital that specializes in cardiovascular, oncology, women's health, and orthopedics.

The medical center also operates the Beebe Health Campus on SR 24, the 89-bed Lewes Convalescent Center, Beebe Lab Express, Wound Care and Diabetes Management Services, Sleep Disorders Center, Gull House Adult Activities Center, Home Health Agency, a Nursing School, and satellite imaging and lab services throughout Sussex County.

*Source: Beebe Medical Center*

The 126<sup>th</sup> Street Medical Center is located on Coastal Highway in Ocean City, Maryland approximately 2.5 miles south of Fenwick Island. It is open year-round with limited off-season hours from September 21<sup>st</sup> to Memorial Day.

The Beebe Medical Center Seasonal Emergency Center is located 9 miles north of Fenwick Island in Millville. There is also small year-round medical center affiliated with Dr. Borodulia's office—the Fenwick Medical Center—located on SR 1 at Georgetown Street.

#### *Parks and Recreation*

Historically, parks and recreation needs in Fenwick Island were handled by two different committees, the Parks and Recreation Committee and the Beautification Committee. The Parks and Recreation Committee was originally charged with the task of developing a small community park for gatherings and activities. The fruits of this effort are exhibited in the Town's park, just to the north of Town Hall. Constructed with State grant money, the park and pavilion are the focal points for a variety of town activities and events including the holiday tree lighting, summer musical events, Memorial Day ceremony, and a summer reading program for children. The park also features a Butterfly

Garden developed by the Barefoot Gardeners Club, a shuffleboard area, children's playground equipment, a basketball court, and a volleyball setup.

The two committees were combined in August 2006 to form the current eleven-member Beautification, Parks and Recreation Committee. Since its inception, this new committee has purchased new playground equipment for the Town using state grant money and money raised through a brick purchasing fundraiser. These bricks now form a walkway within the park.

Recently, the Beautification, Park and Recreation Committee replaced the old Fenwick Island sign north of town along SR 1 and added a new flagpole in the park.

The Town indicated in 2007 that it has an interest in seeking out opportunities to increase its park and open space lands; however, funds are limited for purchases of land at current market rates. Possibilities may exist to acquire land through fundraising efforts, conservation easements, grants, transfer of development rights, and various means other than direct purchase.

#### *Public Works*

Fenwick Island operates its own Public Works Department out of the Town Hall building on SR 1. The department has a full-time staff and is responsible for a number of services including, but not limited to: landscape maintenance, sign maintenance, beach maintenance, road maintenance, town vehicle and facilities maintenance, drainage system maintenance and repair, and trash collection.

A five-year road improvement plan is in place, which will be mostly paid for with town funds, with the remainder to be covered by the State.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island*

#### *Trash and Recycling*

The majority of residential solid waste pick-up is conducted by the Public Works Department. Some residents, including multi-family properties, contract with private haulers. It is estimated that 455 tons of refuse were handled in 2000 by the Public Works Department and 518 tons were transported in 2006. The Town noted that it is approaching its limit with manpower and equipment for trash pick-up based on the most recent numbers.

On October 1, 2007, the Town instituted a voluntary curbside recycling program. Funding for the program was provided by the Town, and most of the existing centralized recycling bins were subsequently removed from Town Hall. Only the aluminum recycling bin remains and is operated by the Fenwick Island Lions Club as a fundraising mechanism.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island*

#### *Signage*

The Public Works Department maintains existing town owned signs within Fenwick Island's municipal boundaries but outside of the SR 1 right of way. The Fenwick Island Department of Public Safety coordinates with DeIDOT to maintain signs within the right of way.

#### **Utilities**

##### *Storm Drainage*

The oceanside of Fenwick Island drains via a surface open water course system with approximately five feet of fall between the ocean front and SR 1. The drainage system for SR 1 is the only primarily closed drainage system in town. This system picks up most of the storm water from the oceanside of town and outfalls within drainage easements to the canals at Virginia/West Virginia Avenue, and South Carolina, Essex, Farmington, James, and Georgetown Streets.

Fenwick Island operates a primarily surface open water course drainage system throughout town, with the exception of underground pipe to facilitate road and driveway crossings and minimal piping within private easements. Of the 40,000 linear feet of drainage in town, only 6,500 linear feet are piped. Due to relatively flat topography, smooth bore pipe is usually used with a desired 1/16" of fall per linear foot of pipe. The Public Works staff is trained in best management practices for drainage based upon Total Maximum Daily Load strategies to reduce point source drainage in favor of open water courses that allow infiltration and purification before returning water to ground sources and Little Assawoman Bay.

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining the town's drainage system and often maintains the SR 1 drainage system when needed. Many recent improvements to the Town's drainage system were part of Fenwick Island's Five Year Road Drainage Improvement Plan. This plan identified existing drainage issues. Approximately 95



*The centralized recycling area at Town Hall has been replaced by a Town-funded curbside recycling program.*





The Town's Five-Year Road Damage Improvement Plan addresses drainage concerns.

percent of the drainage improvements were paid for using Municipal Street Aid Funds from the State of Delaware.

Source: Town of Fenwick Island

#### Water

Potable water in Fenwick Island is provided either by the Artesian Water Company or by a few remaining private wells. Artesian Water Company currently operates a 16-inch HDPE main on the eastern shoulder of SR 1 from the northern town boundary south to Maryland Avenue where the main is routed west. The water main was installed with 36 inches of cover. Side streets and properties west of SR 1 are fed by 8-inch mains on the cross streets. A water main has also been installed west of SR 1 between James Street and Lewes Street.

Source: Town of Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan - 2002

Artesian Water Company has the capacity to supply water for two-hour fire protection for the Town at its buildout. Water supply can be provided at 1500 gallons per minute for commercial properties and 500 gallons per minute for residential properties. Capacity also exists to serve densities higher than what exists currently in town. Artesian Water Company can also serve all properties along and accessed by SR 54 under the County's current zoning and future land use plan. For redundancy, an emergency backup agreement exists with the Town of Bethany Beach.

Source: Artesian Water Company - 2007

The Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996 mandate that the State develop a Source Water Assessment and Protection Program (SWAPP) to better protect public drinking water. This program is administered by DNREC and requires that areas most important to providing public water be delineated, potential sources of contamination be identified and the extent of threat from these sources be determined. While communities of less than 2,000 population are not required to implement source-water protection measures, they are strongly encouraged to do so. Town residents have agreed that protecting the community's water supply is an important consideration.

#### Wastewater

Wastewater service is provided by Sussex County's South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility. The facility was recently upgraded to handle a capacity of 9 million gallons per day with a peak capacity of 14 million gallons per day.

Regional demand in July of 2006 hit a peak of 4.37 million gallons per day. Fenwick Island, unincorporated Fenwick Island and the areas adjacent to SR 54 are included in the Fenwick Island Sewer District.

Source: South Coastal Regional Wastewater Facility - 2007

The sanitary sewer is conveyed by 8-inch and 12-inch gravity lines along both sides of the right-of-way for most of SR 1. The gravity lines start at the Maryland line to the south and Lewes Street to the north, both flowing to a pump station located on Cannon Street. Flows from outside the Town limits enter the system via 6-inch and 2.5-inch force mains along the northern limit of town. Depths vary from about four feet at the terminal ends to 10-15 feet at Cannon Street. From Cannon Street, a 10-inch PVC force main conveys wastewater along the west side of SR 1 to Maryland Avenue.

While the wastewater facility has adequate capacity for projected growth, several line upgrades were identified as a part of a recent study. Within the Town, the 8-inch gravity line is determined to be potentially over capacity. Along SR 54, the entire length of line is also determined to be potentially over capacity.

Source: Fenwick Island Sanitary Sewer District: SR 54 Sewer Study - 2006, Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan - 2002

#### Additional Utilities

Aboveground and some underground utilities are operated by Comcast (cable and internet), Verizon (phone), the Delaware Department of Transportation, and Delmarva Power (electric). Underground utilities are operated by Artesian Water. Above ground utility poles are operated by Delmarva Power and are located on the west side of SR 1. These poles were installed between 1997 and 1998 and are 24"-36" in diameter. They were constructed within the SR 1 right of way maintained by the State, and thus Fenwick Island had little to no say in their placement or visual impact. Delmarva Power recently completed an underground utility demonstration project on West Essex Street. It is part of Delmarva Power's long range plan to underground all utilities. It was determined that sleeved underground utilities were not affected by groundwater, but rather, cost was the prohibiting factor for locating utilities underground.

All utility companies are required to obtain a Utilities Placement Permit from the Town prior to installation or construction. Permit requests are reviewed by the Public Works Department for compliance and compatibility with existing conditions.

All utility providers except Comcast pay real estate taxes to the Town for their utility locations. Comcast pays franchise fees.

## Transportation

### Overview

Fenwick Island faces several unique transportation-related challenges which promise to have a strong impact on the future planning decisions made by the Town. First, Fenwick Island is a popular seasonal destination attracting large numbers of residents and visitors in the summer months, taxing a relatively small network of municipal roads and parking areas. Second, Fenwick Island is experiencing part of the surge in population growth of the coastal Sussex County area, including an increase in overall population and a transition from seasonal use to permanent use. Both of these factors increase vehicle miles traveled on the existing road infrastructure system. Similarly, an increase in population also increases pedestrian and bicycle use, which consequently raises the need for pedestrian and bicycle safety amidst heavy vehicular traffic.

In addition Fenwick Island is bisected by SR 1, the state's major regional transportation corridor stretching from north to south through town. This arterial road connects vehicular traffic not only within Fenwick Island, but also between the larger resort destinations of Rehoboth Beach to the north and Ocean City, Maryland, to the south.

Determining the appropriate level of transportation infrastructure is crucial to preserving the Town's character and quality of life. Understanding the Town's transportation needs, as well as the needs of the larger region, in a comprehensive manner will uncover multi-modal solutions and strategies for mitigating potential impacts.

### Roadway Infrastructure

Fenwick Island is bisected by State Route 1 (SR 1), also known as Coastal Highway, the primary north to south connector for the region extending north to Dover and south

to Maryland. Within the municipal boundary of Town, streets are arranged in a general grid pattern running east to west and north to south. West of SR 1, streets run generally parallel to a series of natural and manmade waterways. Just south of town, SR 54, or Lighthouse Road, intersects with SR 1 and offers a regional connector to the west.

### State Route 1

State Route 1 (SR 1) is a four-lane arterial road extending almost the entire length of the State. It originates at the state line just south of Fenwick Island and runs north parallel to the ocean until it reaches Rehoboth Beach. Here, it turns inland and northwest continuing toward Dover. Approximately one mile of SR 1 bisects the Town. In today's configuration SR 1 acts as a divider between the oceanside and bayside portions of town.

The table below illustrates recent DeIDOT traffic counts for the stretch of SR 1 through Fenwick Island from the Maryland state line to Fenwick Island's southern municipal boundary (.1 miles) and from the southern municipal boundary to the northern municipal boundary (1.13 miles). The numbers shown are representative of vehicles per day (vpd) based on annual average daily traffic (aadT) counts.

**Table 11: Traffic Counts by Place Along SR 1**

Road Section	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
MD line to S. Fenwick line	11066	10333	10450	11116	11068
% change	NA	-	7.10%	1.10%	6.40%
S. Fenwick Line to N. Line	NA	11118	10868	11227	11360
% change	NA	NA	-	2.30%	3.30%

Source: DeIDOT

There is not a strong correlation between the rate at which the Town's population is increasing and the increase in vehicle counts. Rather, the results of the traffic counts are a bit inconclusive. In particular, the traffic counts indicate a drop in traffic between 2001 and 2002 of over 7 percent. It is important to note that travel throughout the country was reduced during this time period because of the economic slump caused by the September 11 terrorist attacks. Similarly, construction of SR 54 road improvements during



SR 1 has been improved to include medians and crosswalks.



Beach parking at street ends is enforced through a parking permit program during summer.

this same time period may have had an effect on average traffic counts. There are some trends, however, that can be derived from the results above, both of which indicate an increase in traffic.

#### *Municipal Streets*

In addition to SR 1, Fenwick Island has approximately 5.5 miles of improved municipal local streets and .4 miles of unimproved streets serving mostly residential areas.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island Parking Study - 1999*

#### *Parking*

The most recent parking count in Fenwick Island, conducted in 2004, estimated that approximately 300 on-street parking spaces were the maximum number of spaces available along the Town's public roads. There are currently no public parking lots in Fenwick Island and parking is prohibited along the entire length of SR 1. The majority of town streets are restricted to parking on one side only.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island Parking Study - 1999*

Property owners are issued three parking permits per household per year. A summer parking permit is required for visitors to park on town streets between May 15 and September 15 between the hours of 9am to 4pm. Visitors can purchase permits for daily, weekend, weekly, monthly and summer rates.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island*

#### *Public Transportation*

During the summer season, DelDOT operates DART bus service, Bus Route 208, through Fenwick Island with a stop near Essex Street. The service runs from Rehoboth Beach to Ocean City, MD, and buses are equipped with bike racks. No east-west connections between Fenwick Island and the inland areas exist.

*Source: <http://www.beachbus.com/>*

#### *Private Shuttles*

Several inland developments provide shuttle service for their residents as conditions of their land use approvals. The shuttles pick up and discharge passengers at the Fenwick Island State Park parking area immediately across SR 1 from SR 54. Recent proposals to improve the existing entry and parking area at the larger State Park facility north of town are still in the planning stages of the State Parks Department.

#### *Pedestrian Ways and Amenities*

The Town is potentially very walkable, given the compact form of its blocks and its narrow streets. The municipal streets have the potential to be successful pedestrian ways, where pedestrians and vehicles share the road. Conflicts between pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles on Bunting Avenue are becoming more prevalent, especially during the summer season.

The pedestrian network along SR 1 is not successful despite a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle lane. There are gaps in the sidewalk system, relatively narrow widths that do not accommodate pedestrians walking side-by-side or in passing directions, utilities and signs located within the sidewalks, and numerous parking lot curb cuts which create dangerous conflicts. A recent study completed by DelDOT identified potential pedestrian improvements within SR 1's right-of-way. The Town implemented the median enhancements which addressed two Town goals—improving pedestrian safety and enhancing the streetscape. The new medians provide refuge for pedestrians crossing SR 1 and clearly mark the pedestrian zone for vehicles.

Marked pedestrian crossings are limited on the side streets along SR 1 and, where crossings currently exist, they are often faded or have been removed from paving repair. At a limited number of intersections, traffic and pedestrian crossing signals exist, although the time of the crossing cycle is not always adequate for families or large groups. There are also very few handicapped accessible curb ramps in town.

DelDOT is including the pedestrian improvements project in its "Proposed 2008-2013 Sussex County Transportation System Improvements" budget. Included in the current budget for 2008 are the project's design and engineering phase, real estate acquisition in 2009 and construction in 2010 and 2011. This is ideal timing for the Town's Comprehensive Planning process to better inform and coordinate the project's programming and design.

*Source: Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan - 2002*

#### *Bicycle Amenities*

SR 1 has continuous shoulders measuring approximately 11 feet in width. Both shoulders are marked as bike lanes



through Town, except for the southbound shoulder from Maryland Avenue to SR 54. It is at this point where the lane is used exclusively for right turns onto SR 54. The shoulders are also used as vehicle deceleration and acceleration lanes for the Town's side streets. Conflicts between bicycles and vehicles at these intersections, as well as at the numerous curb cuts, create safety issues. Conflicts between different users, such as recreational cyclists, road cyclists, pedestrians and joggers, also exist.

The DART bus system is equipped with bike racks and offers free bike transportation along its routes to encourage multi-modal transportation.

Source: Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan - 2002

### Infrastructure Recommendations

*Issue:* Residents are concerned that traffic and growth in adjoining areas could negatively impact safety.

*Goal:* Prioritize planning and actions that create a pedestrian and bicycle friendly environment throughout town.

*Objectives:*

- 5.1 Take proactive steps to improve roadway safety.
- Evaluate and pursue traffic control solutions.
  - Address summer traffic issues.
    - Shoulder riding.
    - Close curb cuts.
    - Traffic calming measures throughout the community
  - Prioritize law enforcement practices to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety.
  - Implement solutions to improve summer traffic flow.
    - Light synchronization.
  - Work closely with DeIDOT to add and/or enhance sidewalks to improve safe pedestrian flow along both sides of SR 1.

5.2 Promote a safety-oriented culture.

- Place appropriate signage stating the Town's priority on safety.
- Provide regular communications emphasizing actions to promote and enhance safety.
- Target summer guests with reminders to support safe behavior and practices while vacationing.

5.3 Fold the transportation goals of DeIDOT's Pedestrian Plan into comprehensive improvements for the SR1 corridor through an Overlay District.

- Leverage Pedestrian Plan budgeted monies from DeIDOT to achieve multiple Town goals.
- Combine Town initiated efforts, such as code changes and subarea plans, into the detailed designs of the Pedestrian Plan.
- Overcome the proposed Pedestrian Plan's largest hurdle—real estate acquisition—by modifying the plan to work within the existing SR1 right of way.
- Ensure that the proposed Pedestrian Plan remains in the current DeIDOT capital budget.

*Issue:* The level, pace and type of growth in adjoining areas could negatively impact the Town's desired "quiet resort" atmosphere.

*Goal:* Implement measures to control the impact on infrastructure demand from growth outside Town limits.

*Objectives:*

- 5.4 Enact appropriate regulations and ensure an adequate enforcement capability.
- Work with communities who are required to provide drop-offs at the beach to provide efficient service to designated beach front areas.
  - Work with the State Parks Department to complete entrance and shuttle circulation, drop off and pickup improvements at the

		Fenwick Island State Park parking area north of Town.			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure active enforcement of parking regulations.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify potential recreation uses and programs.</li> <li>• Locate sites for new facilities.</li> </ul>
5.5	Establish strong intergovernmental relationships to manage recreational desires of non-residents without impact to the Town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively to ensure that State beaches adequately manage growth from surrounding areas.</li> <li>• Establish transportation practices that do not impede traffic flow on SR 1 or burden Fenwick Island with additional parking requirements.</li> <li>• Create a provision for recreation on adjacent waterways that is compatible with the desired Town character.</li> </ul>	5.8	Identify funding sources to acquire, improve and maintain new recreational amenities.	
				<i>Issue:</i>	As population grows and shifts from seasonal to year-round the existing infrastructure may reach and exceed capacity.
				<i>Goal:</i>	Manage demand on infrastructure to ensure ongoing capacity to meet community needs.
				<i>Objectives:</i>	
5.6	Establish strong intergovernmental and interagency relationships to ensure that the aquifer system is protected and that a backup plan for potential contamination is in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with DNREC, the County and the Artesian Water Company to establish a plan for system redundancy.</li> <li>• Ensure that the recommendations from the public water assessment are put in place and supported by local land use codes.</li> <li>• Identify and mark conduits that drain to the Little Assawoman Bay.</li> <li>• Coordinate with State agencies to install green technology filters on storm drains on SR 1.</li> </ul>	5.9	Establish plans and manage their implementation to maintain appropriate service levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustain adequate size and capabilities of professional ocean rescue personnel to maximize beach safety.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate size, enforcement capability and priorities of police department to sustain desired Town character.</li> <li>• Maintain ability to ensure safety of pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles within Town limits, including beach access points.</li> <li>• Establish plans to continuously monitor demand, capacity and targeted service levels.</li> <li>• Develop and plan for utility infrastructure.</li> <li>• Collaborate with all utility providers for undergrounding of wires and cables.</li> </ul>
	<i>Issue:</i>	Ensure that the relatively high quality of life is sustained and thoughtfully enhanced.		<i>Issue:</i>	While the Town is a strong participant in County and regional emergency services, there is still work to be done to ensure a coordinated and effective emergency response.
	<i>Goal:</i>	Take opportunistic approach to enhance "quiet resort" compatible recreation.		<i>Goal:</i>	The Town will be a leader in incorporating the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
	<i>Objectives:</i>				
5.7	Develop a plan to determine and prioritize recreational improvements.				

*Objectives:*

- 5.10 Support the Emergency Operations Center to better coordinate the diverse jurisdictional plans.
- Consider initiating earlier evacuations.
  - Consider mandatory evacuations, including a system for notifying renters and visitors.
  - Explore evacuation incentives for renters and visitors including “sunshine insurance.”
  - Ensure appropriate shelters are in place.

- 5.11 Evaluate the Town’s policies, staff and equipment preparedness for emergency response and determine recommendations.
- Additional personnel/specialized training.
  - Additional equipment identified or as needed by Town emergency services.

*Issue:* The Town has had some success in promoting sustainable and green practices. There are still opportunities for improvement in solid waste and recycling.

*Goal:* Develop a solid waste and recycling program that encourages broad participation and ownership.

*Objectives:*

- 5.12 Support the Recycling Committee’s efforts in considering the expansion of the existing recycling program.
- Make recycling as user-friendly as possible by promoting curbside service, if practical.
  - Promote the use of curbside container bins to include space for trash and recycling containers.
  - Coordinate with rental property managers to promote the program and to ensure that trash and recycling materials are contained or removed immediately.

*Issue:* The Town currently has only one Town-owned park but has the desire to acquire additional land for parks and open space. Town budget requirements and high current market rates, however, prohibit the direct purchase of existing land for such a use.

*Goal:* Develop a long term plan for preserving, protecting, and in some cases, acquiring critical open space throughout Town.

*Objectives:*

- 5.13 Create an open space master plan for acquiring or protecting these lands.
- Create a public information process to determine which open space lands the public wishes to see preserved.
    - Research funding and preservation options through grants, conservation easements, fundraising, etc. and create a long term acquisition and preservation plan.
    - Utilize citizen participation for maintenance of open space land. This participation could come from garden clubs, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, or other organizations geared toward civic-minded endeavors.





The first cottages began to appear in the 1930s.



An original cottage.

### 3.6 Community Character-Built Environment

#### Historic Overview

The first traces of settlement on the land now known as Fenwick Island can be traced to colonial times. On March 23, 1680, Lord Baltimore granted an area of land known as “Fishing Harbor” to Col. William Stevens, who later conveyed the land to Thomas Fenwick in 1692. Though Thomas Fenwick lived in Sussex County for quite some time, he never resided on the island. It is believed that Fenwick Island’s name hails from William Fasset, the husband of Thomas Fenwick’s daughter, Mary, who claimed Fenwick Island for himself.

Between 1750 and 1751, the Trans–Peninsular line was laid out by surveyors to denote the boundary between land claimed by the Penn family to the north and land claimed by the Calvert family of Maryland to the south. The first survey stone was set on a tract of land later purchased for the Fenwick Island Lighthouse and is considered the “oldest standing man-made object on the coast between the Indian River and Ocean City.”

With the exception of tales of pirates patrolling the waters of Little Assawoman Bay throughout the late 1600s into the mid-1700s, human habitation on Fenwick Island was quite limited. By the mid-1800s, increasing numbers of shipwrecks near the shoals to the east of Fenwick Island garnered the attention of the US Lighthouse Board. The United States Congress authorized the construction of a new lighthouse on Fenwick Island in 1856, and in 1858, the government purchased a ten-acre tract of high land to build the 87-foot tall lighthouse and a two-story keeper’s dwelling.

Two families lived in the keeper’s house in relative isolation throughout the late 1800s. Improvements on the island were mostly limited to a bridge to the mainland constructed in 1880 and new keeper’s house in 1881. The first bridge was destroyed by the strong ocean currents. A second bridge to the mainland was built in 1892, a third built in 1934, and eventually the current bridge was constructed in 1958.

The first cottages began to dot Fenwick Island in the early 1930s. These first cottages were of simple wood-frame construction with no running water or electricity and many were built on state land. The State of Delaware recognized the “squatting” and in 1941 offered cottage owners the opportunity to buy lots from the State at a price of \$200 for beachfront lots and \$100 for interior lots.

An aerial photo taken in 1937 shows the first cottages on the beach strand. Access is provided from early alignments of SR 1 and SR 54. The beach strand extends in a series of dunes to SR 1. The bayside area is undeveloped and is comprised of back bay marshes, wetlands and drainages.

An aerial photo taken in 1968 illustrates a more developed Fenwick Island. The natural drainages are improved to become the canal system with dredged material used to fill in low lying areas. The Town’s street grid is established and the hierarchy of blocks and lots is evident on the oceanside of SR 1. Most of the lots on the oceanside are developed, as are many of the bayside lots. The bayside area south of South Carolina Street was recently improved for development. Highway-oriented commercial development, including the Sands Motel, is also evident.

*Source: Delaware Geological Survey DataMIL*

With increasing development and commercialism approaching from the south of Town, the residents sought to incorporate the land to protect it from surrounding development pressure. The Act to Incorporate the Town was passed in July of 1953.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island Website*

Today, with modern infrastructure and utility upgrades, Fenwick Island has become a town that prides itself on its reputation as being one of the “Quiet Resorts,” which, along with Bethany Beach and South Bethany to the north of Fenwick Island, remain quieter and less populated than nearby Ocean City, Maryland, located to the south.



Source: Delaware Geological Survey DataMIL (1936)



Source: Delaware Geological Survey DataMIL (1968)



Source: Delaware Geological Survey DataMIL (2002)

Aerial photographs illustrate the development of Fenwick Island and adjacent areas at three points in time—1936, 1968 and 2002.



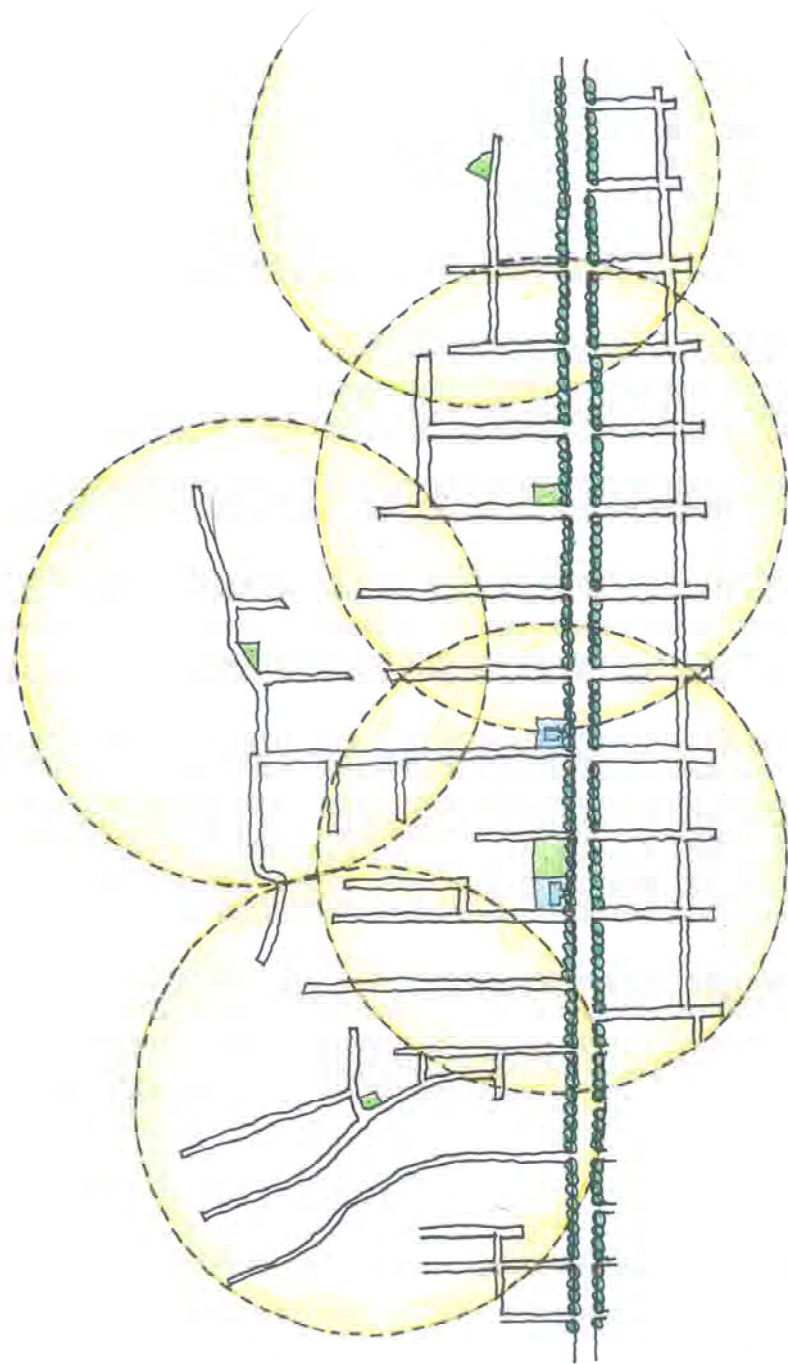


Figure 5: Civic Spaces Diagram



Figure 6: Streets, Lots and Buildings

### Community Form

Fenwick Island is made up of two primary land uses residential and commercial. The residential areas are generally organized around a central commercial core fronting SR 1 between James Street to the north and Delaware Avenue to the south. Single-family detached residential uses stretch east and west of the commercial area before reaching Little Assawoman Bay to the west and the Atlantic Ocean beach strand to the east.

These primary land uses are organized in a compact and clearly identifiable traditional town pattern. Many communities strive to artificially create this pattern through the introduction of “New Urbanism” principles. New Urbanism is a recent urban design movement, codified in 1996, that seeks to employ a set of 27 planning and design principles to engender traditional town elements in new communities. Fenwick Island is fortunate to already have the key elements that make up a traditional town. These elements are a hierarchy of gridded streets and a system of blocks and lots. The relatively narrow dimension of the municipal streets and the small scale of the blocks make the Town inherently pedestrian-friendly. However, interventions since the Town was originally laid out, including the widening of SR 1 and the combining of lots, have compromised Fenwick Island’s town pattern.

Another key element for reinforcing a traditional town pattern is to create neighborhoods within the Town. Parks and open spaces are important principles that can be used to create neighborhoods. Fenwick Island has one park located adjacent to Town Hall. The beach strand along the Town’s eastern boundary is the major recreational area during the summer. There are opportunities for additional park and open spaces to create a system of civic spaces. Each civic space should be located within an easily walkable distance. Figure 5 illustrates the Town’s potential for additional civic spaces located within five walking radii.

The role of SR 1 in town is as a high-level transportation corridor and an effective barrier between the east and west portions of Town. In traditional towns the primary transportation corridor serves an important civic purpose as a main street or boulevard. These streets can accommodate high volumes of traffic while still providing spaces for people to shop, dine, stroll and congregate. By employing certain design tools, such as widening and



planting the median, locating buildings closer to the street, establishing a rhythm of street trees, incorporating sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities and locating parking to the side and rear of buildings, SR 1 can be made less expansive.

The use of small-scale buildings that reflect the block and lot pattern is another key element that reinforces a traditional town. The older cottages and how they were placed within their lot is more in keeping with the historic 50-foot lot width. Along with their consistent setback from the street, almost a build-to line rather than a minimum setback, establishes a rhythm of structures that echoes the rhythm established in the block and lot layout. As development in town has strayed from these principles—with combined lots, larger structures and buildings set far from the street—this rhythm is being lost.

#### **Residential Architectural Character**

The residential areas are characterized by a mix of architectural styles. Small beach cottages were built during the early years and modified over time to reflect changing use patterns and style trends. Later homes—one- to one and one half-stories with simple rectangular forms—were constructed between 1950 and 1980. The 1980s and 1990s saw the construction of many two- to three-story custom homes with articulated forms reflecting the post-modern and neo-traditional architectural styles. Many homes constructed more recently include commissioned designs, but more frequently are designer/contractor homes built for the speculative market.

Older homes built before 1960 are eligible for review by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Currently no structure within town is listed on the State or National Registers. The SHPO has not conducted a recent review of the Town; however, a review of nearby Bethany Beach was completed in 2002. A strong concern of residents is the loss of the older structures as properties are redeveloped. The Town could pursue an inventory review and/or establish incentives for the preservation of these older structures.

Residential building heights vary but recently constructed homes maximize the allowed 30-foot building height. The result is often a mansard-style flat roof to allow three stories. Building regulations that result from the Town's adoption of the Flood Insurance Rate Map, as a part of the

National Flood Insurance Program, require that the elevation of the building's lowest floor be elevated to at least the 100-year flood plain level. This also affects the Town's architectural character. There are also varying design results from how maximum building height is measured—from the crown of the fronting street to the top of the roof. There is general agreement that the 30-foot maximum building height is still appropriate and should be maintained. However, it should be reviewed more carefully as to its unintended design consequences.

The recently adopted zoning code amendments limiting allowed floor area and lot coverage is a strong step towards addressing concerns regarding residential architectural design. Limiting the maximum house size to 7,500 square feet or .70 floor area ratio, whichever is less, sets parameters on the fundamental design considerations of bulk and scale. Additional parameters can be set to further direct residential design including mass and fenestration. Design guidelines that provide recommendations on primary and secondary massing; lot coverage; roofs; porches and decks; windows and doors; architectural details and materials; and streetscape, site and landscape can continue to alleviate concerns about future residential design.

Built site elements are also evident within the residential areas. Detached garages, storage buildings, and boat houses are a part of the historic development of Town. In some instances these buildings have been improved and retrofitted for use as living space.

The locations and design of utilities, signs, trash enclosures, exterior lighting and other smaller site elements also contribute to the overall residential character. Improving views by burying overhead utilities, visually screening pedestals and mitigating noise from heating and air conditioning units (HVAC) to the extent possible is recommended. Strengthening Town ordinances which manage trash and recyclables storage and pickup practices are encouraged, especially for properties in the rental pool. A review of the outdoor lighting regulations to identify opportunities to encourage good lighting design while reducing potential nuisances should be undertaken. A comprehensive review of the Town's signage plan—identity, directional, informational, and traffic signs—should be taken to ensure that all signs represent the Town's brand and that redundant or unnecessary signs are removed. In most



*Accessory buildings incorporated into a residence.*



The Seaside Country Store is an example of iconic architectural character.

cases, sensitive and appropriate site design, as directed by good design guidelines, will eliminate most of these issues.

#### **Commercial Architectural Character**

The commercial area of Town generally consists of one- to two-story masonry structures oriented towards SR 1. The earliest buildings were constructed in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Several buildings of architectural significance exist. While they may or may not be eligible for historic resource inventory, they are iconic and contribute to the Town's diverse architectural character. Examples include: Warren's Station (located between Indian and Houston Streets), the Sands Motel (located between James and Indian Streets), the Fenwick Medical Center and Seaside Country Store (located between Georgetown and Farmington Streets), and the Fenwick Village (located between West Virginia Avenue and Maryland Avenue).

The early businesses, such as the current Sands Motel and the former Libby's Restaurant, catered to the seasonal resident population and summer visitors. Today's businesses also realize a relatively strong off-season market as the population of full-time residents has increased and part-time residents and tourists visit more frequently during the spring, fall and winter. Many of the Town's businesses remain open for much if not all of the year and draw shoppers and diners from the larger region.

#### *Accommodations*

The economy of resort communities is dependent on the quality of their bed base, or accommodations. The Town has three hotel/motels—the Sands Motel (37 rooms), the Fenwick Islander (62 rooms), and the Seaside Inn (60 rooms)—with a total of 159 rooms. The hotel/motels offer mid-priced accommodations at less than \$200/night during the peak season. There is mixed opinion in town regarding the importance of maintaining or expanding upon the present bed base.

Many single-family detached homes are also available for short-term and seasonal rental. There are approximately 200 homes available in the rental pool last year, according to Town rental license records. They range from older beach cottages to very new homes. The newer homes, with a full range of amenities such as air conditioning and full kitchens, rent most quickly according to local realtors. The most popular rental house type and location is the single-

family detached home located on the oceanside. The next preferred location is bayside with water access. During the peak summer weeks, nearly all rental properties are occupied.

Many summer renters come back to Fenwick Island repeatedly. Oftentimes these families span multiple generations and include extended family members. According to local realtors, the reason many choose to vacation in Fenwick Island over other resort communities is because they can park their car and leave it for the week. Shops, restaurants and the beach are all within an easy walking distance. They also appreciate the quiet Town character.

#### *Arts, Entertainment and Recreation*

Fenwick Island's primary recreational draws are the beach and the bayside water access. There are no commercial recreation activities located within the Town. Entertainment is limited by Town regulations. While the Town sponsors live music, non-Town related live music is allowed only in conjunction with restaurants to help maintain the Town's quiet character. Unique shops provide shopping entertainment and contribute to the Town's interesting atmosphere. Opportunities can be taken in the proposed SR 1 improvements to build upon these successes.

#### *Restaurants and Eateries*

The Town has numerous restaurants and eating establishments which draw from the local population and also the coastal region. Seafood, Greek, and Italian restaurants are examples of establishments that have a regional draw. The Town also has a diverse mix of restaurants serving breakfast and lunch. Other eateries provide quick food served informally throughout the day and night. Many of these restaurants and eateries are open most of the year.

#### *Retail*

Women's apparel is a primary component of the Town's retail environment. Other specialty retail stores include sports equipment shops (bicycle, surfing, and fishing), and book sellers. These types of retail are found in areas with a leisure-oriented population. A growing component of the retail mix is home furnishings/improvements. These stores include mattress retailers, paint stores, blinds and window coverings and electrical supply. The presence of this retail

segment corresponds with the extent of residential construction. Many of these businesses are open most of the year.

#### *Professional Services*

Communities with a large number of professional services tend to have strong growing or stable year-round economies, depending on the service focus. Fenwick Island has a small portion of professional services geared towards the real estate and construction industry. A consideration about why there are not more services located in town is probably due to the high real estate values and lease rates compared to inland locations. Personal services, such as hair and nail salons and day spas, are more prevalent. There is a medical center providing health services and a bank for banking services. The Town lacks a post office and other professional services that are typically found in mature communities. As the year-round population increases these services may find the demand to locate in town. However, the high real estate prices and lease rates are likely to discourage the presence of these uses.

#### **Built Environment Summary**

Residents and visitors are attracted to Fenwick Island because of its unique built environment. The Town has a rich history dating back to the late 1600s and continuing through the establishment of the Town's block and lot configuration in 1953. For the most part, the Town's community form creates an easily negotiated system of narrow streets and a small-scaled pattern of development. The diverse styles of the residential architecture provide interest. The commercial area offers a mix of retail, services, and restaurants and eateries. There is an opportunity to enhance the entertainment shopping types of retail to create a unique experience. There are significant opportunities to reinforce the community's form through SR 1 improvements, additional zoning regulations and design guidelines.

The visitor bed base is at risk of being diminished by redevelopment and the loss of rental homes in the available pool. While most commercial uses serve both permanent residents and visitors, there are some uses that are more seasonal in nature and market. The loss of visitor accommodations may affect these businesses.

#### **Built Environment Recommendations**

*Issue:* The Town's rich history is not apparent to residents and visitors.

*Goal:* Incorporate the Town's history into all elements of its built environment.

#### *Objectives:*

- 6.1 Inventory historic and cultural resources.
- 6.2 Develop a comprehensive signage program that draws, in part, upon and reinforces Town history.

*Issue:* The character of the Town's built environment is being compromised by some recent development patterns.

*Goal:* Allow zoning code provisions to preserve and reinforce the Town's community form.

#### *Objectives:*

- 6.3 Ensure that houses are reasonably sized.
  - Consider additional regulations and design guidelines to further meet community goals.
  - Review current regulations for unintended consequences.
- 6.4 Develop additional standards for site development.
  - Improve visual screening opportunities.
  - Strengthen outdoor lighting regulations.
  - Create landscape design guidelines.
  - Improve parking and driveway standards.





The beach is a key asset.

### 3.7 Community Character-Natural Environment

Since settlement began in Fenwick Island, residents and visitors have been attracted to its unique natural amenities. Fenwick Island markets itself as “the best beach in Southern Delaware.” Unlike Ocean City, Maryland to the south and Rehoboth Beach to the north, Fenwick is known for its quiet atmosphere, unique location between Little Assawoman Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, and its abundance of recreational opportunities from bird watching, to fishing, to simply relaxing on the beach. Today, Fenwick Island remains a popular tourist destination, seasonal resident destination, and place of full-time residence.

At the same time, the same resources that draw people to Fenwick Island face enormous pressure and the threat of destruction from human and natural forces. Over time, development activity has filled natural inlets to create developable land, dredged riparian areas to create waterways, reduced beaches to a relatively narrow strip of land, and introduced non-native vegetation that has replaced natural habitats. Natural habitats have also been reduced by bulkheading and bank armoring efforts. These efforts, though required by the Town to protect property from erosion in bay and riparian areas, have had unintended consequences by eliminating the natural flooding and erosion processes. Despite these conditions, there are ample opportunities to enhance, re-create, and protect the natural amenities that continue to draw people to the Town and support its economy.

#### Beaches

The beach areas of Fenwick Island are one of the Town’s biggest tourism assets. From State Line Beach to the south and north to the boundary of Fenwick Island State Park, the entire eastern edge of Town is maintained as a public beach. The beach area is regionally accessible via the DART bus system, and locally accessible by foot via dune crossings at the end of west to east streets throughout town. Beachgoers are kept safe by the Fenwick Island Beach Patrol, and the beaches are kept clean by both the Beach Patrol and the Department of Public Works.

The beaches have historically faced development pressure from human encroachment, though, more recently development boundaries and property lines have halted

development along the beachfront. The biggest threat to the beaches today exists from the forces of nature. It is estimated by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources (DNREC) that the beaches in the Fenwick Island area erode at a rate of four feet per year, one of the highest erosion rates along the entire Atlantic Coast. Geologists estimate that sea levels have been on the rise since the continental ice sheet began to melt 14,000 years ago. In fact, it is estimated that sea level was 440 feet below its present location 14,000 years ago. Today these same ancient processes continue to act on Fenwick Island’s beaches, but it is thought that global climate changes are accelerating nature’s erosion forces.

*Source: Surfriider Foundation – State of the Beach Report, 2006*

In the winter of 2005, a significant beach replenishment project was completed to combat the natural beach erosion. According to a 2004 report published by DNREC, this is the primary method by which the State restores dry beach lost to erosion. The project was successful in part because of State support to secure federal funding. Beach replenishment projects will continue to be supported by the State as long as the total benefits outweigh the economic costs. When determining the potential for a project, the Town’s economy, tax base and real estate value are considered and weighed against the project’s costs.

The project included widening the beach, constructing a sizable dune system, and planting grasses to stabilize the dune line. The wider beach acts as a buffer to absorb wave energy during storm events and also provides a reservoir of sand that may be transported to an offshore bar. The offshore bar helps to reduce damage as the first line of defense. In addition to being a vital tourism amenity, the beach and dune network also helps to protect man-made structures during storm events. Pedestrian dune crossings were created at the ends of east to west streets nearest the beach, and fencing was erected to protect the remainder of the dunes from destructive foot traffic.

Although widely used, the beach replenishment method has certain negative impacts. If not properly designed and constructed the improvements can be temporary. The process of borrowing and placing sand can disrupt biological communities. Marine habitat is significantly altered as dredging removes sand deposits, increases water temperature and creates turbidity. Less mobile animals,

such as the mollusk, are affected when sand is placed in the surf zone. Existing bird nesting areas can also be disrupted as dunes are created.

Another method to protect the beach and used on a smaller scale by DNREC is strategic retreat. Through the Beach Preservation Act (1972 and 1983), a building line is established that is used to delineate a seaward boundary for construction activities. Beyond this boundary is a protected dune zone. The building line in town is 100 feet landward of the seaward most 10-foot elevation contour. As properties redevelop, new construction is to be located behind the building line. This requirement is not applied when properties are remodeled.

### Wildlife

Though Fenwick Island is known for its quaint town and beautiful beaches, its living resources cannot be overlooked. Little Assawoman Bay, along with Indian River Bay and Rehoboth Bay, make up the Inland Bays Ecosystem. Little Assawoman Bay averages three to eight feet deep, and is comprised of a mix of both fresh and salt water. This unique environment offers a wide array of habitats that support many species of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, beavers, osprey, bald eagles, and numerous species of shellfish.

*Source: Center for the Inland Bays*

On the bayside of Town, several vacant, undevelopable lots still exist near the end of Schulz Road and near the end of Bay Street. These areas of land, though small, provide habitat similar to historic habitat patterns that would have been seen along the bayside of town. Residents in town have taken up efforts to protect these and similar areas and have formed the South Schulz Wetland Association and the Glenn Avenue Bird Sanctuary.

Most of the threats to the Fenwick Island ecosystem and its wildlife are caused by humans. Litter, especially plastic, not only obstructs the natural beauty of the area, but also is harmful to wildlife. Similarly, curious people, even if well intentioned, can cause serious harm to birds by disturbing nests. Pollution from development can also disrupt the natural balance of these fragile estuarine ecosystems and species. Inappropriate boating practices, such as traveling outside channels and/or at excessive speeds, not maintaining engines and marine sanitation devices, also

adversely affect the environment. In all, the ecosystems and wildlife surrounding Fenwick Island are dependent upon the Town for protection and preservation. Local efforts, as well as intergovernmental coordination and coordination with regional, state, and federal environmental agencies can help to monitor these ecosystems, keep them clean and viable, and educate the public about their importance.

### Water Quality

Clean water is essential not only to wildlife and the fragile ecosystems surrounding Fenwick Island, but it is also essential to the Town's residents and to the Town's tourism economy. Unfortunately, the Inland Bays area has suffered from past neglect. Phytoplankton blooms caused by over-application of fertilizers from area farming operations have clouded the water. Failing septic systems and holding tanks in the Little Assawoman Bay area have resulted in excessive amounts of nitrogen in the ground water. Excessive phosphorous discharges from area sewage treatment plants have led to the domination of invasive macro algae which grows and collects along shore lines. The decay of these algae blooms depletes the water of oxygen and causes fish kills.

*Source: Center for the Inland Bays*

These practices and others can lead to poor water quality, the closure of beaches and shellfish growing areas, the loss of wildlife habitat, and adverse economic impacts to the essential tourism economy of Fenwick Island. The good news is that regional entities, such as the Center for Inland Bays, work to promote awareness of the damaging effects of certain activities and promote educational outreach to repair the effects of past neglect.

DNREC and the Center for Inland bays have studied the waters and ecosystems of the Inland Bays area extensively. Both have developed significant research and made the results available to the public to guide future land use decisions. A variety of funding resources and programs available to encourage positive changes, educate the public, restore damaged resources, and protect undamaged resources for future generations.

Under Section 303(d) of the 1972 Federal Clean Water Act (CWA), states are required to identify all impaired waters and establish total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) to restore their beneficial uses. A TMDL defines the amount of non



*Undeveloped bay edge provides wildlife habitat.*

point and point source pollutants a water body can absorb on a daily basis without violating State water quality standards. A Pollution Control Strategy (PCS) provides the regulatory framework for achieving the TMDL reductions necessary for meeting the State water quality standards.

The Town of Fenwick Island is located within the low TMDL nutrient reduction area of the Little Assawoman watershed. The TMDL for the low nutrient reduction area of the Little Assawoman Bay watershed requires a nutrient reduction of 40% for total nitrogen and total phosphorus from baseline conditions. Additionally, the TMDL for bacteria requires a 40% (17% for marine waters) reduction from baseline conditions.

#### **Vegetation**

As a result of decades of development, very little undisturbed native vegetation currently exists within town limits. The bayside of Fenwick Island's northern boundary is comprised tidal riparian vegetation, consisting of sedges and rushes, interspersed by small upland areas consisting of species such as black pine, prickly pear, creeping junipers, bayberry, and native grasses. Pockets of both upland and riparian vegetation can also be found on some larger bayside properties. Though limited, very small pockets of upland vegetation can still be found on some oceanside properties.

In beach and dune areas, ongoing restoration efforts have utilized native vegetation and beach grasses to restore and support the primary dunes. In areas throughout Town, native vegetation has been planted by home and business owners. Overall, the oceanside of Fenwick Island is characterized by vegetation that is more natural in appearance with black pines as canopy, bayberry shrubs as understory, and native grasses and prickly pear as groundcover with perennial/annual planting beds surrounding and interspersed. On the bayside of Town, the general landscape character is more manicured in appearance with ornamental, deciduous trees combined with a few black pines for canopy, ornamental shrubs and bayberry shrubs as understory, and manicured lawns highlighted by perennial/annual planting beds for groundcover.

Interesting to note, the recently proposed Tree Triage program was started with the intention of increasing tree

coverage within the Town. Currently, less than one percent of the Town's land surface is covered with tree canopy. With available grant monies, the Town could purchase trees for planting on both private and public lands. The program recognizes the value of trees to filter impurities before water enters the groundwater, to prevent erosion through an extensive root system, and to improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide.

The overall health of the Inland Bays Ecosystem is an important issue to the residents of Fenwick Island. The community recognizes that submerged aquatic vegetation is the best living indicator of the nutrient conditions of the Little Assawoman Bay. These grasses require relatively clear water with low nutrient levels. Often found below low tide lines to about three to six foot depths, they play an important role in the overall bay environment by providing food and habitat for waterfowl, fish, shellfish, and invertebrates. In addition, this vegetation protects shorelines from wave action erosion and filters and traps sediment that can cloud water and bury bottom-dwelling organisms such as oysters. Since the late 1970's, DNREC has operated a restoration program to grow and reproduce eelgrass, just one of the many types of grasses found within the watershed. More recently, the Town has begun to work with the Center for Inland Bays to provide and create the Oyster Grow Program that reintroduces oysters into the watershed. The oysters, in turn, help to filter the waters of the bays for nutrients and sediment allowing for improved habitat and bay grasses.

#### **Flood Plain and Storm Threats**

Though normally a calm and tranquil environment, Fenwick Island is susceptible to two types of storms capable of producing serious damage. These storms are either tropical (hurricanes) that occur predominantly in the summer and fall months or extra-tropical (nor'easters), most often with strong easterly or north easterly winds, that occur most often throughout the late fall and winter months.

According to DNREC, no hurricane has made direct landfall in Delaware, though severe, damaging storms have been known to occur frequently. Two major storms of note, the Hurricane of 1933 and the March storm of 1962 caused considerable damage up and down the Delaware coast. The March storm of 1962, a nor'easter, caused \$21.8 million or \$134.8 million in today's dollars, and seven deaths in



coastal Delaware areas. Interestingly, 75 percent of Fenwick Island's houses have been built since that time, and its population has increased by over six times its 1962 population. These figures increase the potential for property damage and potential loss of human life exponentially. These types of storms have occurred historically and will occur again.

*Source: Heinz Center - 2000*

Fenwick Island is the only town in Delaware that lies entirely in the "100-Year Special Flood Hazard Area," meaning that any location in town is subject to a one percent chance of flooding each year. With water bodies on both sides of town, topographic elevations ranging from sea level to about 15 feet, and land that slopes generally less than one percent, the chance of flooding in Fenwick Island is often greater.

*Source: Town of Fenwick Island Flood Information Guide*

The Town is a member of the National Flood Insurance Program (NIFIP) and maintains a Class 8 Community Safety Rating. This rating, obtained through various floodplain management activities, provides the residents of Fenwick Island with a ten percent discount on flood insurance.

*Source: National Flood Insurance Program and Town of Fenwick Island*

Adding to the flooding threat in town is the fact that much of the natural flood plain has been developed. Marsh and wetland areas that would have historically taken on and stored flood waters have now been filled, forcing flood waters to other places and resulting in increased flood damage and higher flood velocities.

Nationally, development standards and forecasting technology have improved. Fenwick Island is partially protected by systems of dunes along its Atlantic Coast that provide a protective barrier for beach areas and inland development.

#### **Canals and Channels**

Construction on the bayside has resulted in the creation of a series of canals. The majority of these canals run east to west and provide recreational boat access to residences bordering the waterways. These canals are an important part of Fenwick Island's character, but also create several unique challenges. First, homeowners must bulkhead their properties to prevent erosion. Second, the relatively still water of the canals tends to have lower water quality levels

than the adjacent bay. Over time, these channels and canals have filled with silt, making water depths more shallow and boat navigation more difficult. Town officials have met with State officials to discuss the channels and canals to be included in upcoming DNREC dredging projects. No definitive resolution has yet been reached. One proposal of note includes the idea of dredging the channels and using the by-products of the dredging to raise the level of Seal Island. This idea has both environmental merits and consequences that are currently being debated.

#### **Protected Lands**

Over 25 percent of the Inland Bays area of Sussex County is protected from development. This land is held by local and state governments, conservancy groups such as the Center for Inland Bays, the Delaware Natural Society, and the Delaware Wildlife Society, and in agricultural preservation districts. In town, the protected lands, other than the beach area, are located on Glenn Avenue, Shulz Road and the wetlands bordering the bay. In all, these protected areas account for approximately 2 percent of Fenwick Island's total land area.

#### **Seal Island**

Just off of the bayside of Town is Seal Island, which is another unique natural resource area owned by DNREC. The island has felt the effects of significant wildlife and human impact over the past several decades and there is a strong interest in restoring the island. Seal Island should be improved and then preserved and protected as an important natural, cultural, and wildlife resource for the area.

#### **Natural Environment Summary**

Fenwick Island's natural amenities are the draw that brings both residents and tourists to the Town. These amenities, especially drinking water, wildlife species, and natural ecosystems are susceptible to and threatened by development and human activity. Fenwick Island's unique location between the Atlantic Ocean and Little Assawoman Bay makes it a unique destination, but also leaves it vulnerable to natural forces such as beach erosion and strong coastal storms capable of causing flooding, property damage, and potential loss of life. The Town has already made important strides toward protecting its natural assets; however, the Town cannot act alone as its natural amenities are part of a much bigger, regional natural system.

Intergovernmental coordination, as well as coordination with local, state, and federal organizations, is the key to success on a regional scale.

**Natural Environment Recommendations**

*Issue:* Fenwick Island is a unique coastal community because it is located entirely within the 100-year floodplain. This unique location has residents concerned that the natural environment is not well protected or maintained, and is not free from pollution.

*Goal:* Establish Fenwick Island as the leader in environmental stewardship among the Delaware coastal communities. Promote, protect and improve the environmental integrity of the Little Assawoman Bay Watershed Area.

*Objectives:*

7.1 Educate all residents, visitors, town employees, businesses and contractors as to the area’s special environmental protection, preservation and restoration needs.

- Distribute informative posters and brochures.
- Encourage attendance at environmental workshops/activities.
- Establish regulations that are based on successful environmental practices.

7.2 Provide “leadership-by-example” in all Town government activities that impact the environment by reducing the Town’s Ecological Footprint through methods such as incorporating green business practices.

7.3 Preserve, protect and restore the dunes, beach and ocean.

- Encourage participation in beach cleanups and vegetation plantings.
- Partner with State, County, and other jurisdictions to research better alternatives to standard beach replenishment methods.

7.4

- Continue to take a strong role in intergovernmental and interagency efforts to protect and enhance the area.
- Improve and enforce beach rules even during lifeguard off-duty hours and off-season months to provide maximum protection.

Preserve, protect and restore the bay and canals.

- Partner with State, County, and other jurisdictions to research and encourage possible alternatives to standard bulk heading practices at the water’s edge to prevent erosion and silting.
- Expand and encourage methods of water cleansing, such as oyster farming and Better Management Practices (BMP) in land use.
- Enact strict regulations to prevent run off of non-biodegradables, trash, lawn clippings, fertilizers, etc. to other properties, canals and bay waters.
- Time-limit “grandfathering” for environmental compliance.
- Partner with State, County and other jurisdictions to pursue the “Clean Marina” program and other regional efforts for the Little Assawoman Bay with surrounding communities.
- Seek opportunities to partner with the Center for the Inland Bays, including mapping, assessing and protecting the extent of submerged aquatic vegetation.

*Issue:*

Fenwick Island expects a long-term trend of continued new construction, redevelopment and significant renovations.

*Goal:*

Improve building codes for residential, commercial and government structures to support “green” living designs.

*Objectives:*

7.5 Influence design, materials, methods, energy systems and on-going operations to promote resource efficiencies.

*Issue:* Other considerations in the built environment adversely affect the Town's natural environment. Visual clutter, noise, light and other pollutants need to be minimized and mitigated

*Goal:* Strengthen existing regulations designed to reduce and mitigate these concerns.



## Section 4 Implementation

A Comprehensive Plan can only be as good as its direction for implementation. This plan contains nearly 50 recommendations for addressing issues and achieving community goals. For this plan to be successful, a strategy for implementing these recommendations must be created. The strategy must provide clear and achievable direction. It must be rooted in the staff, volunteer, partnership and financial resources available to the Town. Primary responsibilities must be identified and understood. The Town is fortunate to have many dedicated citizens who have volunteered in this comprehensive planning effort and/or as members of the numerous committees and other volunteer efforts. The Town has also made a commitment to create a Comprehensive Plan by dedicating staff time and resources. An effective implementation strategy is one that builds upon these efforts.

### 4.1 Implementation Strategy

#### Step 1: Set Initial Priorities

Identify as high priorities those recommendations that are considered to be critically important. Also include as high priorities those recommendations that must be completed prior to completion of critically important recommendations. And finally include those recommendations that are currently underway and identified as critically important to continue.

#### Step 2: Identify Resources

After the initial priorities are identified it is time to understand the resources that are available to help implement each recommendation. It is important to note that all recommendations involving changes to the laws of Fenwick Island will include input from the Town-appointed Charter and Ordinance Committee. The experiences of other coastal resort communities, including those in Delaware, will be valuable resources as recommendations move towards implementation. Resources will certainly include town staff members who can implement certain recommendations with direction from Town Council and Town Manager. Resources will also include volunteers serving on the various boards and committees. The Town has relied and benefited from the hard work of volunteers in

the past to accomplish solutions. The Comprehensive Plan now provides the framework for focusing these various efforts towards achieving the high priorities. Financial resources must be identified so that consultants with specialized experience can be retained and funding can be made available for capital expenditures. Financial resources should not only include town funds but also grants and other monies available through potential partners. Partnering with like-minded governments, agencies, non-profits and organizations also provides information resources in addition to funding.

#### Step 3: Maximize Leveraging

Once high priority recommendations are identified and available resources determined, the last step is to leverage these available resources to the maximum extent possible. Many of the high priority recommendations include single solutions that accomplish multiple goals. Identifying these recommendations as the highest priority allows the Town to get the most value from the effort and funding spent in order to implement the recommendations.

### Recommendations Summary

Each recommendation from the Municipal Development Strategy contained in Section 3 is listed below. A three-tier priority system is employed:

IO—Immediate or on-going current to first year timeframe  
ST—Short-term with a one to two-year timeframe  
LT—Longer-term with a two to five-year timeframe

For each recommendation, the resources available for implementation are identified by primary responsibility and partnering opportunities.

#### 1.0 Demographics and Population

*Recommendation 1.1*—Use the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates as a starting point for determining the Town's demographics.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination

Population Consortium

Delaware Economic Development Office

US Census Bureau, Local Coordinator

Local Real Estate Brokers

*Recommendation 1.2*—Update the estimates on an annual basis using a standard method.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Population Consortium  
Delaware Economic Development Office  
Local Real Estate Brokers

*Recommendation 1.3*—Maintain the current orderly growth pattern.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: Sussex County  
TOFI Planning Commission

*Recommendation 1.4*—Influence peak seasonal population through limits on occupants per bedroom for rental properties.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: Bethany-Fenwick Chamber of Commerce  
Local Real Estate Brokers

*Recommendation 1.5*—Mitigate potential impacts of planned population growth through improving efficiencies in existing infrastructure and services.

Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: Sussex County  
Artesian Water Company  
DeIDOT

*Recommendation 1.6*—Balance potential impacts of planned population growth with potential benefits of additional community members.

Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Planning Commission

## 2.0 Housing

*Recommendation 2.1*—Strengthen the existing residential zoning code provisions.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Sussex County  
TOFI Charter and Ordinance Committee  
TOFI Building Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

*Recommendation 2.2*—Review residential design standards.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Sussex County  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

*Recommendation 2.3*—Maintain the single-family detached use as a permitted use within the residential zone district.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Sussex County  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

*Recommendation 2.4*—Review the Town's existing services and potential demand increases to determine year-round needs.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee  
Other State, County, or town organizations as necessary

*Recommendation 2.5*—Cooperate with regional efforts to provide attainable housing.

Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Delaware State Housing Authority  
Sussex County  
Bethany Beach

*Recommendation 2.6*—Explore methods of providing employee-occupied rental units on commercial properties and/or participate in a regional attainable housing program.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Delaware State Housing Authority  
TOFI Commercial Liaison Committee

*Recommendation 2.7*—Create a Cultural Resource and Historic Commission.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: State Historic Preservation Office  
State Office of Planning Coordination

### 3.0 Land Use and Annexation

*Recommendation 3.1*—Reinforce the determination of an Area of Concern.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: Sussex County  
State Office of Planning Coordination  
Center for Inland Bays

*Recommendation 3.2*—Work with Sussex County as its Comprehensive Plan is updated.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: Sussex County  
State Office of Planning Coordination

*Recommendation 3.3*—Reinforce the current general land use pattern of commercial and public uses along SR 1 and residential use throughout the remainder of town.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Sussex County  
TOFI Planning Commission

### 4.0 Redevelopment

*Recommendation 4.1*—Consider an optional overlay district for the SR 1 commercial area.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Commercial Liaison Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

TOFI Parks, Recreation and Beautification Committee  
Bethany Beach Chamber of Commerce

*Recommendation 4.2*—Provide direction to DelDOT regarding and update of the proposed Pedestrian Plan.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: DelDOT  
State Office of Planning Coordination

*Recommendation 4.3*—Create incentives to preserve older beach cottages and other historic and cultural resources.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Historic Preservation Office  
TOFI Cultural Resource and Historic Commission

*Recommendation 4.4*—Establish intergovernmental agreements to enable joint planning for the area surrounding incorporated Fenwick Island.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: Sussex County  
Adjacent Property Owner(s)  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)  
Town of South Bethany  
Town of Bethany Beach  
Town of Selbyville  
Town of Millville  
Town of Ocean View  
Town of Ocean City, MD

*Recommendation 4.5*—Cooperate with Sussex County to work with the State Historic Preservation Office to review and update its list of potential resources in both unincorporated and incorporated Fenwick Island.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: Sussex County  
State Historic Preservation Office  
TOFI Cultural Resource and Historic Commission

*Recommendation 4.6*—Create green building guidelines, methods and strategies.

Timeframe: ST



Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission  
Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
Department of Natural Resources and  
Environmental Control

*Recommendation 4.7*—Create design guidelines for architecture that employ green building considerations.  
Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission  
Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Building Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

*Recommendation 4.8*—Create design guidelines for site and landscape improvements that employ green building considerations.  
Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission  
Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Building Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

*Recommendation 4.9*—Develop an improved sidewalk and parking plan that reduces vehicle miles traveled.  
Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission  
Partners: DeIDOT  
TOFI Commercial Liaison Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)  
Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce

### 5.0 Infrastructure

*Recommendation 5.1*—Take proactive steps to improve roadway safety.  
Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council  
Partners: DeIDOT  
TOFI Public Works Department  
Fenwick Island Police Department

*Recommendation 5.2*—Promote a safety-oriented culture.  
Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council  
Partners: DeIDOT  
DNREC  
Bethany-Fenwick Chamber of Commerce

Local Real Estate Brokers  
Local Hotels/Motels  
TOFI Planning Commission  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee  
Fenwick Island Police Department  
Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company

*Recommendation 5.3*—Fold the transportation goals of DeIDOT's Pedestrian Plan into comprehensive improvements for the SR 1 corridor through an Overlay District.  
Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission  
Partners: DeIDOT  
TOFI Building Committee  
TOFI Board of Adjustment  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)  
State Office of Planning Coordination

*Recommendation 5.4*—Enact appropriate regulations and ensure adequate enforcement capability.  
Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Town Council  
Partners: DeIDOT  
DNREC  
Delaware State Police  
Fenwick Island Police Department

*Recommendation 5.5*—Establish strong intergovernmental relationships to manage recreational desires of non-residents without impact to the Town.  
Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Town Council  
Partners: State Parks  
Department of Natural Resources and  
Environmental Control  
Sussex County  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee

*Recommendation 5.6*—Establish strong intergovernmental and interagency relationships to ensure aquifer system protection and the establishment of a backup system.  
Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Town Council  
Partners: Artesian Water Company  
Department of Natural Resources and  
Environmental Control

Sussex County

*Recommendation 5.7*—Develop a plan to determine and prioritize recreational improvements.

Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
State Parks  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee

*Recommendation 5.8*—Identify funding sources to acquire, improve and maintain new recreational amenities.

Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
DNREC  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee

*Recommendation 5.9*—Establish service plans and manage their implementation.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company  
Fenwick Island Police Department  
Delaware State Police  
Delaware Emergency Management Agency

*Recommendation 5.10*—Support the Emergency Operations Center to better coordinate the diverse jurisdictional plans.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Delmarva Emergency Task Force  
Sussex County  
Worcester County  
Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company  
Fenwick Island Police Department

*Recommendation 5.11*—Evaluate the Town's preparedness for emergency response.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Staff

Partners: Bethany Beach Volunteer Fire Company  
Fenwick Island Police Department  
Delaware State Police  
Delaware Emergency Management Agency

*Recommendation 5.12*—Support the Recycling Committee's efforts in considering the expansion of the existing recycling program.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: DNREC  
Recycling Contractor(s)

*Recommendation 5.13*—Create an open space master plan for acquiring and/or protecting these lands.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: DNREC  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee

## **6.0 Community Character-Built Environment**

*Recommendation 6.1*—Inventory historic and cultural resources.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility:

Partners:

*Recommendation 6.2*—Develop a comprehensive signage program that draws upon and reinforces town history.

Timeframe: LT

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
DelDOT  
TOFI Commercial Liaison Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)  
TOFI Parks, Recreation and Beautification Committee  
Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce

*Recommendation 6.3*—Ensure that houses are reasonably sized.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission

Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Charter and Ordinance Committee  
TOFI Building Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)

*Recommendation 6.4*—Develop additional standards for site development.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Planning Commission  
Partners: State Office of Planning Coordination  
TOFI Building Committee  
Planning/Design Consultant(s)  
Fire Marshall and Local Fire Chiefs

### **7.0 Community Character-Natural Environment**

*Recommendation 7.1*—Educate all those residing, visiting and doing business within the Town as to the area's special environmental protection, preservation and restoration needs.

Timeframe: ST

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: Bethany-Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce  
DNREC  
TOFI Environment Committee  
TOFI Cultural and Historic Commission

*Recommendation 7.2*—Provide "leadership-by-example" in all town government activities by reducing the Town's Ecological Footprint.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: TOFI Environment Committee  
Center for Inland Bays

*Recommendation 7.3*—Preserve, protect and restore the dunes, beach and ocean.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: Department of Natural Resources and  
Environmental Control  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
TOFI Parks/Recreation/Beach Committee

*Recommendation 7.4*—Preserve, protect and restore the bay and canals.

Timeframe: IO

Primary Responsibility: Town Council

Partners: Department of Natural Resources and  
Environmental Control  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
Center for Inland Bays  
Delaware Nature Society  
TOFI Environment Committee

### **Organized by Timeframe**

#### **IO—Immediate or on-going**

*Recommendation 1.1*— Use the US Census and Delaware Population Consortium estimates as a starting point for determining the Town's demographics.

*Recommendation 1.3*—Maintain the current orderly growth pattern.

*Recommendation 1.4*—Influence peak seasonal population through limits on occupants per bedroom for rental properties.

*Recommendation 2.1*—Strengthen the existing residential zoning code provisions.

*Recommendation 2.3*—Maintain the single-family detached use as a permitted use within the residential zone district.

*Recommendation 2.4*—Review the Town's existing services and potential demand increases to determine year-round needs.

*Recommendation 3.2*—Work with Sussex County as its Comprehensive Plan is updated.

*Recommendation 3.3*—Reinforce the current general land use pattern of commercial and public uses along SR 1 and residential use throughout the remainder of town.

*Recommendation 5.1*—Take proactive steps to improve roadway safety.

*Recommendation 5.2*—Promote a safety-oriented culture.

*Recommendation 5.11*—Evaluate the Town's preparedness for emergency response.

*Recommendation 5.12*—Support the Recycling Committee's efforts in considering the expansion of the existing recycling program.

*Recommendation 7.2*—Provide "leadership-by-example" in all town government activities by reducing the Town's Ecological Footprint.



*Recommendation 7.3*—Preserve, protect and restore the dunes, beach and ocean.

*Recommendation 7.4*—Preserve, protect and restore the bay and canals.

**ST—Short term**

*Recommendation 1.2*— Update the estimates on an annual basis using a standard method.

*Recommendation 2.2*—Review residential design standards.

*Recommendation 2.6*—Explore methods of providing employee-occupied rental units on commercial properties and/or participate in a regional attainable housing program.

*Recommendation 2.7*—Create a Cultural and Historic Commission.

*Recommendation 3.1*—Reinforce the determination of an Area of Concern.

*Recommendation 4.1*—Consider an optional overlay district for the SR 1 commercial area.

*Recommendation 4.2*—Provide direction to DeIDOT regarding and update of the proposed Pedestrian Plan.

*Recommendation 4.3*—Create incentives to preserve older beach cottages and other historic and cultural resources.

*Recommendation 4.4*—Establish intergovernmental agreements to enable joint planning for the area surrounding incorporated Fenwick Island.

*Recommendation 4.5*—Cooperate with Sussex County to work with the State Historic Preservation Office to review and update their list of potential resources.

*Recommendation 4.6*—Create green building guidelines, methods and strategies.

*Recommendation 4.7*—Create design guidelines for architecture that employ green building considerations.

*Recommendation 4.8*—Create design guidelines for site and landscape improvements that employ green building considerations.

*Recommendation 4.9*—Develop an improved sidewalk and parking plan that reduces vehicle miles traveled.

*Recommendation 5.3*—Fold the transportation goals of DeIDOT's Pedestrian Plan into comprehensive improvements for the SR 1 corridor through an Overlay District.

*Recommendation 5.4*—Enact appropriate regulations and ensure an adequate enforcement capabilities.

*Recommendation 5.5*—Establish strong intergovernmental relationships to manage recreational desires of non-residents without impact to the Town.

*Recommendation 5.9*—Establish service plans and manage their implementation.

*Recommendation 5.10*—Support the Emergency Operations Center to better coordinate the diverse jurisdictional plans.

*Recommendation 5.13*—Create an open space master plan and a process for acquiring and/or protecting these lands.

*Recommendation 6.1*—Inventory historic and cultural resources.

*Recommendation 6.3*—Ensure that houses are reasonably sized.

*Recommendation 6.4*—Develop additional standards for site development. (ST/Planning Commission)

*Recommendation 7.1*—Educate all residing, visiting and doing business within the Town as to the area's special environmental protection, preservation and restoration needs.

**LT—Longer term**

*Recommendation 1.5*—Mitigate potential impacts of planned population growth through improving efficiencies in existing infrastructure and services.

*Recommendation 1.6*—Balance potential impacts of planned population growth with potential benefits of additional community members. (LT/Town Council)

*Recommendation 2.5*—Cooperate with regional efforts to provide attainable housing.

*Recommendation 5.6*—Establish strong intergovernmental and interagency relationships to ensure aquifer system protection and the establishment of a backup system.

*Recommendation 5.7*—Develop plan to determine and prioritize recreational improvements.

*Recommendation 5.8*—Identify funding sources to acquire, improve and maintain new recreational amenities.

*Recommendation 6.2*—Develop a comprehensive signage program that draws, in part, upon and reinforces town history. (LT/Planning Commission)

## 4.2 Intergovernmental Coordination

Intergovernmental coordination is critical to the successful implementation of this plan's recommendations. Not only is coordination with the State of Delaware, Sussex County and the neighboring municipalities of Ocean City, Maryland, and Bethany Beach required but it sets in motion the formation of relationships and ultimately partnerships that will be necessary for implementation.

Several recommendations include establishing intergovernmental agreements. These are:

*Recommendation 2.5*—Cooperate with regional efforts to provide attainable housing. (LT/Town Council)

*Recommendation 3.1*—Reinforce the determination of an Area of Concern. (ST/Planning Commission)

*Recommendation 4.5*—Establish intergovernmental agreements to enable joint planning for the area around the Fenwick Island Lighthouse. (ST/Planning Commission)

*Recommendation 5.5*—Establish strong intergovernmental relationships to manage recreational desires of non-residents without impact to the Town. (ST/Town Council)

*Recommendation 5.6*—Establish strong intergovernmental and interagency relationships to ensure aquifer system protection and the establishment of a backup system. (LT/Town Council)

*Recommendation 5.10*—Support the Emergency Operations Center to better coordinate the diverse jurisdictional plans. (ST/Staff)

Relevant documents were reviewed and analyzed for applicability to the Town for opportunities for consideration. Such documents included any updated materials in support of the update of the Sussex County Comprehensive Plan, the updated DelDOT / Sussex County Transportation Plan, the updated Bethany Beach Comprehensive Plan and the Office of State Planning Coordination's Strategies for Policies and Spending. The details of each document are contained within Section 3 – Municipal Development Strategy.

To further support the development of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town expanded upon the Future Land Use and Area of Concern elements within this document to be compatible with the State's Strategies for Policy and Spending. This State document identifies and categorizes lands within the state that are most supportive of future growth. These categories include Level 1 (the most appropriate area for development); Level 2 (appropriate for development); Level 3 (where long-term growth is expected); and Level 4 (areas which should not be developed). Fenwick Island recognizes that much of the Town is within the Level 1 and Level 2 areas, as illustrated on Map 3. The Town requests that the area within the Town boundaries be redesignated as Level 1. This proposed designation is illustrated on Map 4. The Town recognizes the regional impact of future development to the local community. Due to these influences the Town has identified its Area of Concern for the community as the Little Assawoman Watershed which includes a mix of all State Investment Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. In addition, this area is defined by the Sussex County Comprehensive Land Use Plan as an environmentally sensitive developing area which the County feels is an area of ecological importance. Based upon this information, the Town does not propose to grow outside of its current boundaries.

## Glossary

**Annexation:** To append, attach, or incorporate a given area into a larger existing political unit.

**Area of Concern:** An area created by a municipality where a formal review process is followed to ensure that the Town is notified of proposed land use applications for properties within the Area of Concern. The County is obligated to engage the Town in the review and discussion of potential developments.

**Attainable Housing:** Housing affordable to essential workers and first responders.

**Bed Base:** Number of beds available for residents and overnight visitors including those in residences, hotels and motels. (Method used to estimate population.)

**Best Management Practices (BMPs):** Common sense practices designed to limit negative effects on the environment. These methods focus on improving water quality, limiting soil erosion and decreasing pollution on existing and proposed development.

**Carrying Capacity:** The maximum number of individuals that can be supported by a given environment without causing detrimental effects on that environment.

**Cultural Resources:** Tangible and intangible assets that help make a given community special. These resources range from events, organizations, historical elements, districts, people and specific sites.

**Dwell Opportunity:** Improvements and amenities that cause users to spend time in a public and/or semi-public space with a spin-off benefit of increasing commercial revenue. These typically include comfortable seating, outdoor food and beverage, window shopping and people watching.

**Energy Star Rating:** A system that qualifies certain products as better for the environment. These products use less energy, save money and limit negative effects on the environment.

**Essential Workers:** Workforce to support Town of Fenwick Island life, safety and public welfare needs, such as Town employees and first responders.

**First Responders:** Professional individuals who provide immediate support in response to an incident. First responders are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, including emergency response providers as defined in section 2 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002. i.e. Firefighters, EMS, Police Officers, Coast Guard, etc.

**Full-time Population:** Residents with permanent address in a given area.

**Grandfathering:** An approved exemption from a new regulation or code.

**Green Building Practices:** Methods of planning, design and construction that promote sustainable/environmentally sensitive buildings, landscapes, construction practices and maintenance techniques.

**Highest and Best Use:** The most reasonable and probable use that supports the highest present value. Alternatively, that use, from among reasonably probable and legal alternative uses, found to be physically possible, appropriately supported, financially feasible, and which results in highest land value (as defined by *"Real Estate Appraisal Terminology"*).

**Historic Resources:** Tangible and intangible assets of historical value. These resources range from events, organizations, historical elements, districts and specific sites.

**Incentives:** Motivators that attract individuals to comply with certain guidelines. Incentives can be utilized to attract developers and ensure they comply with certain development guidelines as required by a governing body.

**Infill:** A development pattern that entails the redevelopment of previously disturbed sites within an existing town fabric.



**Intergovernmental Coordination:** Partnerships and coordination between government agencies from the federal, state and local levels.

**LEED Guidelines:** The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings. LEED gives building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance. LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality (as defined by the US Green Building Council). Applies to sites, landscapes and buildings.

**Leverage:** The practice of using available resources and/or tools to maximize the potential benefits derived from a given action. Examples include financial leveraging such as seed money used to obtain matching grants, code leveraging such as a single land use provision that addresses multiple issues and action leveraging such as providing leadership-by-example which spurs others to take action.

**Mixed-Use Development:** Development or project that contains a variety of uses on a single parcel or lot. Typically the uses include a mix that is compatible in use patterns and provides activity throughout the day and evening. Most frequently consists of retail, food and beverage, and entertainment uses at the ground level of a building(s) and office and residential uses at the upper levels.

**Multi-Family:** Unit(s) considered as apartments and/or townhomes and associated with other uses within a building, such as other similar residential units, office, retail, food and beverage and entertainment. As in a mixed-use development described above.

**Multi-modal Transportation:** A system of transportation that provides multiple options and alternative solutions for the movement of people. The system relieves individual automobile congestion by offering mass transportation options, which include expanded bus services, express

buses, light rail, carpooling, non-motorized path systems and pedestrian corridors.

**Off-season:** A period in a community when the influx of visitors is significantly lower than other periods of the year.

**One-hundred Year Special Flood Hazard Area:** An area that is subject to partial or complete inundation from tidal waters or from rapid accumulation of rainfall or runoff expected to occur on average once every one-hundred years, or has a one percent chance of occurring each year. The result can be loss of property, danger to life, damage to structures, injury to people, disruption of public and private activities and services, burdensome public expenditures for flood protection and relief, and impairment of the tax base, all of which adversely affect the public health, safety and general welfare (as defined by FEMA).

**Open Space:** Undeveloped land or public land reserved for parks, non-motorized paths, recreation, natural uses and/or preservation from any future development.

**Overlay District:** Additional zoning provisions placed over a specific area in addition to the underlying zone district. An overlay district enables planning flexibilities to encourage more creative designs and developments.

**Point Source Discharge:** Any discernible confined and discrete conveyance including but not limited to a pipe, ditch, channel, or conduit from which pollutants are or may be discharged (as defined by EPA).

**Redevelopment:** Rebuilding a declining or otherwise outdated residential, commercial, or public area or site that was developed in the past.

**Right of Way:** Public or private land dedicated as easements for roads, highways and utilities.

**Seasonal Population:** An annual influx of people who reside or visit an area for a short period of time, typically in the high or tourist season.

**Single Family:** Unit suitable to accommodate the use of one family.

**Single Family Attached:** Fireproof party wall units suitable to accommodate the use of two or more families, i.e. duplex or town home.

**Single Family Detached:** A separate unit suitable to accommodate the use of one family.

**Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL):** A calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards, and an allocation of that amount to the pollutant's sources (as defined by the EPA).

**Traffic Calming:** A design measure used to slow vehicle traffic such as raised crosswalks, reduced lane widths, street trees, and buildings located close to the street.

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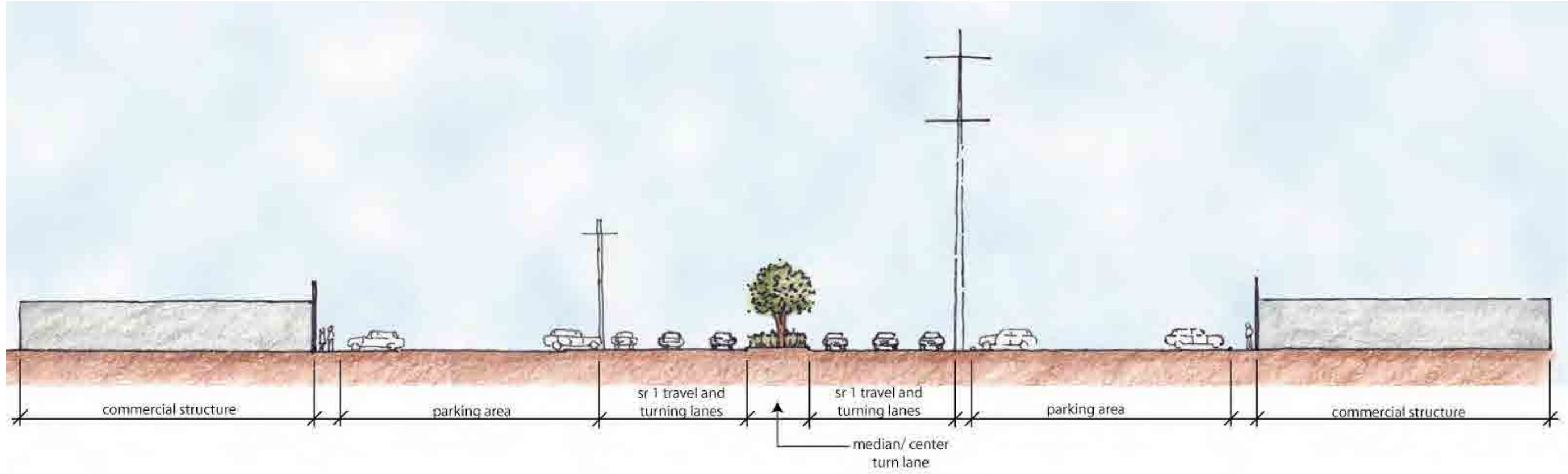
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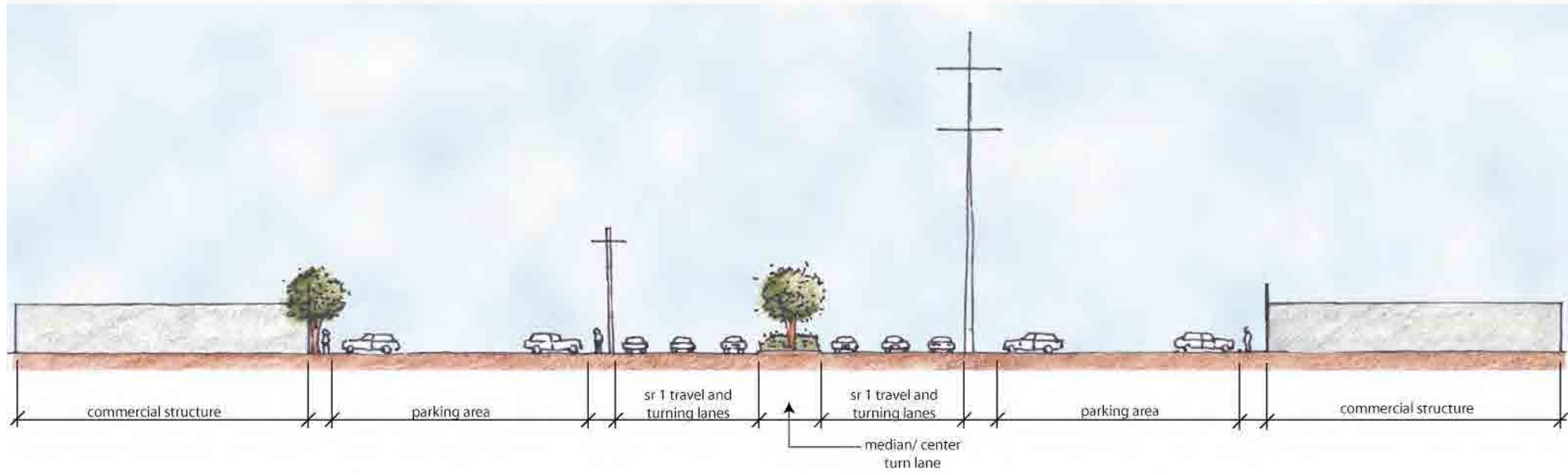
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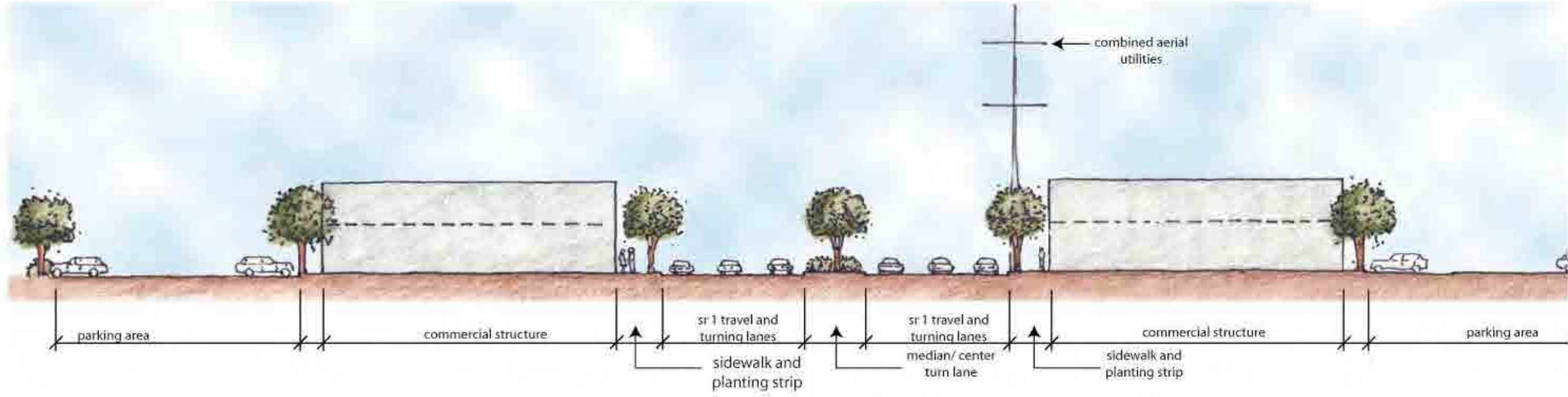






SR 1 section - minor planning influence

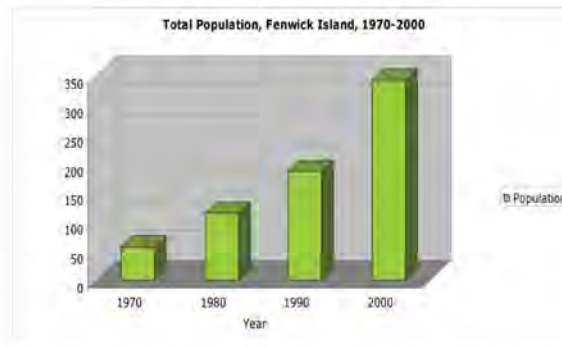




SR 1 section - major planning influence







Location	1970	1980	1990	2000
Fenwick Island	56	114	186	342
Sussex County	80,356	98,004	113,847	157,430
Delaware	446,292	548,104	594,338	786,448

## population overview

fenwick island has seen a steady increase in population since 1970

fenwick island grew 84% from 1990 to 2000

sussex county grew 38% and the state of delaware grew 18% during that same period

recent trends indicate that fenwick island is seeing a transition from seasonal to full-time residents

## demographics

fenwick island is predominantly white (99.4%)

65% of the population is over the age of 55

the median household income is \$58,333, considerably higher than the county (\$39,208) and the state (\$47,381)

the population is well educated, with 42% holding a college degree

Race	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
White	340	80.3%	74.6%
Black	0	15.0%	19.0%
Other	2	4.7%	6.4%

Age	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
Over 55 years old	64.70%	30.80%	15.90%

	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
Median Household Income	\$58,333	\$39,208	\$47,381

Highest Level Achieved	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
Associate Degree	4.2%	6.1%	6.6%
Bachelor's Degree	22.6%	10.1%	15.6%
Graduate or Professional Degree	15.2%	5.9%	7.9%

draft population overview  
fenwick island comprehensive plan



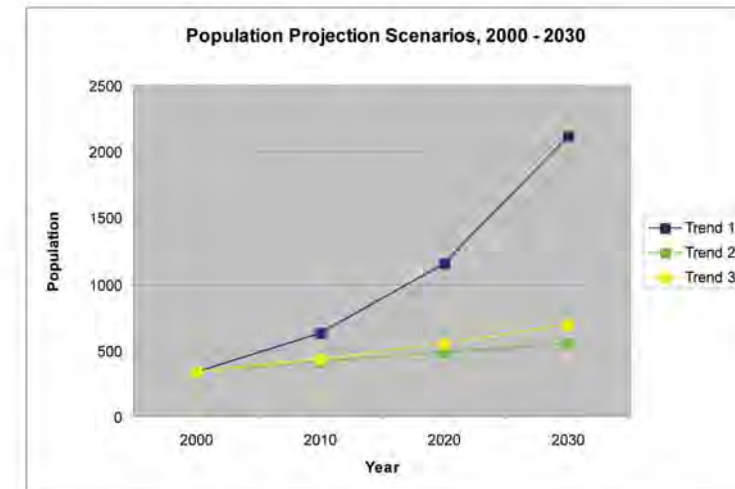
## population trends

population growth can be studied in three trends:

trend 1 considers a higher growth rate based on decadal growth rates for fenwick island since 1970

trend 2 exhibits a slower growth rate based on fenwick island's portion of the county's growth rate for this same period

trend 3 demonstrates the population increase based on the transition of seasonal to full-time residents plus the increase in additional residential units predicted through full-build out of the existing municipal area



Growth Scenario	2000	2010	2020	2030
Scenario 1: Trend Projection of Decadal Growth	342	628 (+83.7%)	1,154 (+83.7%)	2,120 (+83.7%)
Scenario 2: Portion of Projected Sussex County Population	342	422 (+23.4%)	492 (+16.6%)	549 (+11.6%)
Scenario 3: Transition of Seasonal to Full-time Residents Plus Increase in Population due to New Construction (through build out)	342	434 (+26.9%)	555 (+27.9%)	694 (+25.0%)

## population key points

the population of fenwick island is projected to increase, but buildable land is becoming more scarce

the working group foresees a more conservative growth projection for fenwick island due to the lack of buildable land remaining

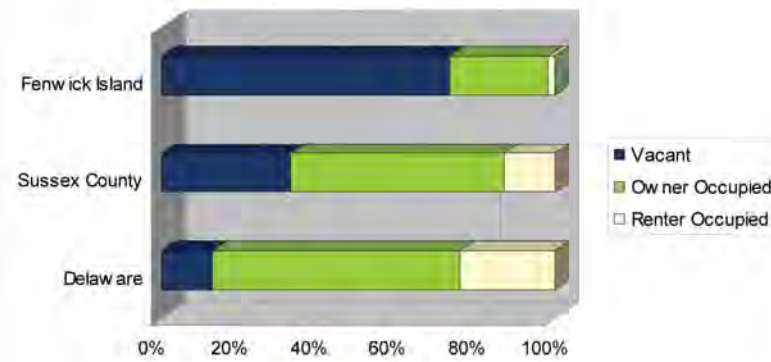
the working group noted that an increase in population will create a need for the services to support it

the latest census indicates that population increases are occurring as formerly seasonal residents are moving to the area full-time

draft population overview  
fenwick island comprehensive plan



Ownership and Vacancy Rates, 2000



### housing overview

fenwick island has a large percentage of "vacant" or seasonally occupied units (73.3%)

this number is decreasing as seasonal residents become full-time residents

between 1990 and 2000, new unit construction increased by only 3.5% - during that same time period, the population increased 84%

since 2001, 77 new residential units have been built

today, 76 residential lots are vacant

### age and value of housing stock

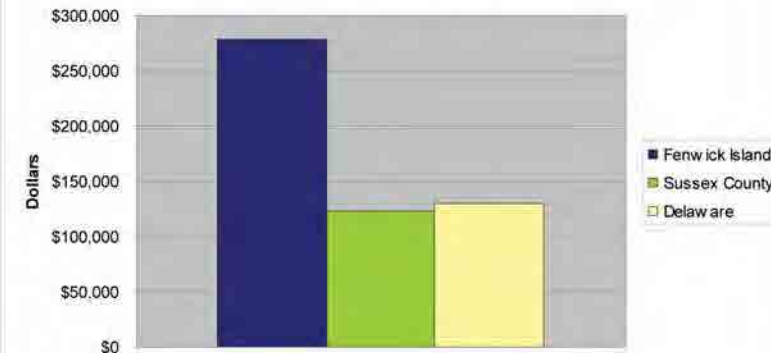
Year Built	Fenwick Island	Sussex County	Delaware
1939 or earlier	4.20%	8.20%	10.70%
1940 to 1959	19.90%	11.00%	19.50%
1960 to 1979	34.10%	28.10%	30.90%
1980 to 1989	26.90%	23.70%	17.10%
1990 to 2000	14.90%	28.90%	21.20%

Housing Type	Fenwick Island	%	Sussex County	%	Delaware	%
Single Family, Detached	613	88.60%	55,171	59.3%	191,688	55.9%
Single Family, Attached	44	6.40%	4,504	4.8%	48,340	14.1%
Multi-Family	15	2.20%	8,986	9.7%	64,128	18.6%
Mobile Homes	20	2.90%	23,817	25.6%	38,281	11.2%
Other	0	0%	595	0.6%	635	0.2%
Total	692	100%	93,070	100%	343,072	100%

Value	Number	%
Less than \$50,000	0	0%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	3	1.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	17	10.6%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	33	20.6%
\$200,000 to \$299,999	30	18.8%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	40	25.0%
\$500,000 to \$999,999	35	21.9%
\$1,000,000 or more	2	1.3%
<b>Median</b>	<b>\$278,600</b>	

source: 2000 U.S. Census

Median House Value



source: 2000 U.S. Census

### housing trends

fenwick island is comprised of almost 89% single family detached units, significantly more than the composition of state and county ratios at 50%-60%

attainable housing for town employees and younger families is scarce

with housing demand outpacing supply, home values will most likely continue to rise

### housing key points

vacant buildable land within the town boundaries is becoming scarce

housing prices are increasing as demand outpaces supply

the working group is concerned that rental housing and attainable housing could impact the quiet nature of the town

opportunities exist to include housing above commercial properties or in accessory units





## existing land use

residential areas of town are organized around a commercial core lining coastal highway running north to south

municipal streets are in a grid pattern with most streets running east to west

adjacent unincorporated areas are designated as environmentally sensitive areas with special considerations for water quality and open space

## taxes

### sussex county

residential property tax	\$ .4016/ \$100 of total assessed value
commercial property tax	\$ .4016/ \$100
school tax	indian river school district - \$2.447/ \$100
	sussex tech - \$.2269/ \$100
library tax	\$0.0432/ \$100
sewer and water assessment	\$68.50 flat rate

### fenwick island

residential property tax	\$1.92/ \$100 of total assessed value
commercial property tax	\$1.92/ \$100 of total assessed value
rental tax	7.5% of each rental
trash assessment	\$185 flat rate



source: sussex county comprehensive plan - 2007

## regional zoning

much of the land surrounding fenwick island is zoned agricultural (ar-1)

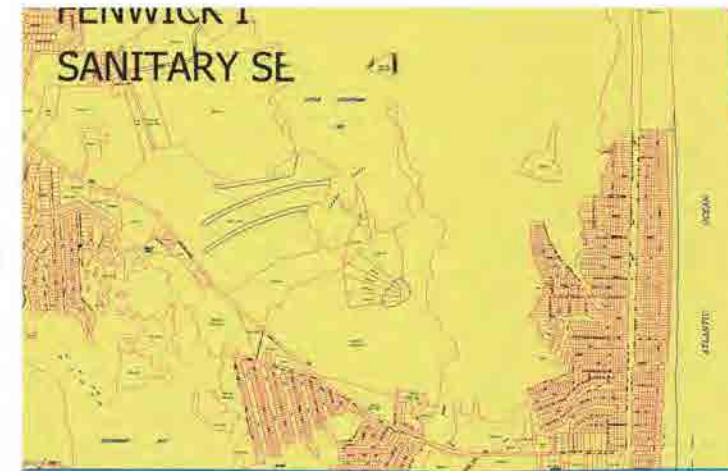
general commercial (c-1) areas exist to the south and south-west along state route 54

neighborhood business (b-1) areas exist to the south-west along state route 54

medium residential (mr) zoning exists to the west along state route 54

draft land use and annexation overview

fenwick island comprehensive plan



source: sussex county comprehensive plan - 2007

## regional utilities

the south coastal regional wastewater facility covers the fenwick island regional sewer district and operates at roughly half of its capacity

artesian water company serves the area with capacity to cover the town and properties along state route 54 at full build out

## incorporation and past annexation

fenwick island was incorporated in 1953 to protect it from outside development pressure

land west of coastal highway was later annexed, nearly doubling the town's area

today the town is mostly built out within its municipal boundaries

## land use and annexation key points

utilities are available to serve the area outside town

intergovernmental coordination zone (1-mile beyond the town boundaries) allows the town to review proposed land use actions within this zone or to initiate annexations

draft land use and annexation overview

fenwick island comprehensive plan







## redevelopment overview

the first residential cabins began to dot the fenwick island landscape in the 1930's

improved access and infrastructure led to rapid growth through the 1990's

from 1990 to 2000, fenwick island's population increased sharply while construction of new housing units was almost flat

with aging structures and increasing land values, fenwick island is ripe for redevelopment

## residential redevelopment

there is no maximum lot size

since 2001, 50 major residential remodel projects and 46 residential demolition/ house relocation projects have been completed

increasing property values and current housing design trends are spurring residential redevelopment

the majority of new homes are considerably larger than more historic structures, often maximizing lot coverage and property values

new floor area cap limits new homes to 7500 sf or 70% of total lot area, whichever is less

Year	Permits Issued	New Construction	Major Remodel/ Addition	Demolition/ Move House	Small Projects
2001-2002	161	15	10	8	128 (4 commercial)
2002-2003	143	16	16 (1 commercial)	8	105 (5 commercial)
2003-2004	137	23	11 (1 commercial)	13	90 (5 commercial)
2004-2005	124	15	12 (1 commercial)	12 (1 commercial)	85 (8 commercial)
2005-2006	101	10 (2 commercial)	4	4	80

source: town of fenwick island 2007

draft redevelopment overview

fenwick island comprehensive plan



## commercial redevelopment

recent commercial development projects have continued a highway-oriented development pattern

vacant commercial properties have developed as residential units

commercial properties do not generate additional property taxes for the town compared to residential properties

vacant and residential uses interrupt the commercial area's continuity

since 2001, five major remodels or demolitions and two new construction projects have occurred on commercial properties



## redevelopment key points

redevelopment can help unify or compromise fenwick island's community character

redevelopment will gain momentum as vacant lots build out and developed properties age

at the current pace, the remainder of fenwick island's vacant lots will be developed by 2013

the working group noted an opportunity to change development patterns as properties redevelop

### Sands Motel buyer asks for input

By M. Patricia Vito

The Sands Motel buyer, who is currently seeking to sell the property, is looking for input from the community. The buyer, who is currently seeking to sell the property, is looking for input from the community. The buyer, who is currently seeking to sell the property, is looking for input from the community.

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draft redevelopment overview

fenwick island comprehensive plan





## infrastructure overview



fenwick island has a growing permanent population with increasing infrastructure and service needs

current infrastructure and services are provided by the town, county, private companies and through intergovernmental agreements

population increases require improved infrastructure upgrades, while infrastructure capacities impact the rate of population increase

the ability to provide infrastructure and services affects annexation

## traffic

traffic patterns in fenwick island are both regionally and seasonally dependant

traffic is heaviest during the summer months although there has been no change in the average number of vehicles per day since 2001

most of this traffic volume is through traffic, connecting north or south along state route 1

## roadway infrastructure

**public transportation** - DART bus route 208 runs through fenwick island in the summer months with a stop in front of dairy queen at essex street

**charter/ shuttle transportation** - stateline park in unincorporated fenwick island provides discharge and pickup for residents of inland developments

**pedestrian amenities** - the majority of the pedestrian route along SR 1 is interrupted by utility poles and curb cuts, causing conflicts with vehicles

bunting avenue is a popular walking and jogging route

**bicycle amenities** - both sides of SR 1 have wide shoulders and are painted as bike lanes

bunting avenue is a popular bicycling route

## roadway infrastructure (continued)

**state route 1** - deldot maintains this four-lane road (plus turn lanes) which bisects fenwick island running north to south and is an emergency evacuation route to the recently improved state route 54

**municipal streets** - fenwick island has approximately 5.5 miles of municipal roads serving mostly residential areas

**parking** - there are roughly 108 parking spaces along town roads - a permit is required to park along municipal roads from may 15 to september 15

on-site parking spaces provide the majority of the parking supply

## community services

**911 service** - provided throughout town

**police** - operated by town including five full-time officers and a police chief (includes parking enforcement)

**fire and rescue** - provided by the bethany beach volunteer fire company with a 16 square mile service area

**beach patrol** - operated by the state of delaware on fenwick island's town beaches



**recreation** - the town maintains a public park adjacent to town hall

**educational services** - provided out of town in selbyville and frankford

**library** - nearby full-service libraries in bethany beach and selbyville

**town administration** - provided by town and includes town council, planning commission/committee, support, and building and zoning code review and enforcement

**full service health care providers** - atlantic general hospital (berlin, md - 17 mi.); beebe medical center (lewes - 25 mi.); penninsula regional hospital (salisbury, md - 36 mi.)

**seasonal/ limited service health care** - 126th street seasonal medical center (ocean city, md - 2 mi.); beebe medical center seasonal emergency center (millville - 9mi.)

draft infrastructure overview  
fenwick island comprehensive plan





## utilities

**public works** - operates out of town hall and is responsible for park and median landscape maintenance, sign maintenance, beach maintenance, road maintenance, drainage system upkeep, residential trash collection, and maintenance of town vehicles and facilities

**water** - provided by the artesian water company and a few remaining private wells

capacity to supply water for 2 hour fire protection at 1500 gallons/minute for commercial buildout and 500 gallons/minute for residential buildout

additional capacity exists to serve higher densities than are currently seen in fenwick island

ability to serve properties along state route 54 as currently zoned and if upzoned in the future

emergency back-up with the town of bethany beach

**wastewater** - provided by sussex county's south coastal regional wastewater facility

recently completed a capacity upgrade to 9 million gallons/day and 14 million gallons/day peak capacity

regional demand in july 2006 hit a peak of 4.37 million gallons/ day

**storm drainage** - a closed and open storm drainage system operates on the bayside of town and drains into the bay

**additional utilities** - aboveground and some underground utilities are operated by comcast, verizon, the delaware department of transportation, and connectiv, while above ground utility poles are operated by connectiv

## infrastructure key points

fenwick island exists within a fragile environment where infrastructure upgrades and improvements can have significant positive or negative impacts on the local ecosystem, community character, and economy

the town's level of dependency upon intergovernmental relationships will vary based upon the needs and desires of its growing population

many of fenwick island's infrastructure needs are currently part of a bigger, regional infrastructure system, which in turn varies the amount of control the town has over a particular service





## built environment overview

the first cottages began to dot the fenwick island landscape in the 1930's

the original cottages were of simple construction with no electricity or running water

as infrastructure and access improved into the 1940's, fenwick island began to grow rapidly in a town pattern of lots and blocks

the land area of town has been changed by dredging, filling, and shore stabilization



1937 aerial photo  
source: delaware datamill



1968 aerial photo  
source: delaware datamill



1997 aerial photo  
source: delaware datamill



## residential development

while there is a great diversity of architectural styles in town, the original character and scale of small, cottage-style houses is at risk of being lost

residents and visitors enjoy the quiet nature of the residential streets

some recent development is maximizing lot coverage and is out of scale with older development



## commercial development

fenwick island is home to many quaint and interesting restaurants and shops

commercial areas consist of a vehicular dominated environment with few pedestrian amenities

a majority of the buildings are single-story, and many are aging and will most likely be redeveloped

## built environment key points

residents and visitors are attracted to fenwick island by its quiet and relatively compact built community character

many elements of fenwick island's historic development patterns are still evident

built development patterns heavily influence fenwick island's natural environment

the working group noted that future development and redevelopment should be consistent with the desired community character







## natural environment overview

the natural environment is the basis of fenwick island's community character and economy

the natural environment that draws residents and visitors to fenwick island is also the biggest threat to the town's existence

measures can be taken to balance protection of the natural environment with the need to protect development from the destructive forces of the natural environment

## beaches

the beach area of fenwick island is its biggest tourism draw

recent improved dune crossings have made the beaches more accessible

fenwick island's beaches are threatened by coastal erosion at a rate of up to four feet per year, one of the highest erosion rates along the entire atlantic coast

beach replenishment projects are undertaken repeatedly to preserve the beach, rebuild the dunes, and protect the town structures

## wildlife

fenwick island is located within the Inland Bays Ecosystem

the habitats in and around fenwick island support a variety of wildlife including beavers, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, osprey, bald eagles, waterfowl, shorebirds and numerous species of shellfish

water pollution, habitat development and other human disturbances are the greatest threats to wildlife



source: dnrec

draft community character - natural environment

fenwick island comprehensive plan



## water quality

clean water is essential to wildlife, the fragile ecosystems of fenwick island, and fenwick island's residents and visitors

some past development practices in fenwick island and the surrounding region have had negative impacts on water quality

poor water quality can lead to a lack of drinking water, the closure of beaches, harm to wildlife, and severe financial impact to fenwick island's tourism economy

## vegetation

very little undisturbed vegetation remains in fenwick island

less than 1% of the town's land is covered with trees

vegetation has many positive benefits including acting as wind breaks, providing wildlife habitat, improving water quality and creating aesthetic appeal

fenwick island is a challenging growing environment where native and/or hardy vegetation grows best and with relatively little maintenance

## storm threats

fenwick island is the only town in delaware that exists entirely in the "100-year special flood hazard area"

much of the back barrier salt marshes have been developed and stabilized

the town's built environment is affected by flood plain construction requirements and high water table constraints

special construction methods and evacuation routes help to protect people and property from hurricanes and nor'easters

## natural environment key points

the working group noted that fenwick island can act both locally and regionally to protect its vital natural environment

the waters and ecosystems surrounding fenwick island have been extensively studied resulting in an abundance of information that is available to guide planning decisions

state and federal programs and funding sources exist to encourage positive natural environment change



draft community character - natural environment

fenwick island comprehensive plan





## A Vision for Fenwick Island

2/25/05



February 25, 2005

### THE TOWN OF FENWICK ISLAND

800 Coastal Highway / Fenwick Island, DE 19944 / 302-539-3011 / Fax 302-539-1305  
 fenwicktown@splus.net

February 25, 2005

To All Property Owners:

#### QUESTIONNAIRE A Vision for Fenwick Island

Last summer over one hundred property owners participated in one of three workshops at Town Hall aimed at shaping a vision for the future of Fenwick Island. Participants identified positive characteristics that need to be preserved and/or improved as well as changes that need to be avoided, in order to keep Fenwick Island the great place it is and make it even better. The enclosed report summarizes the ideas that emerged from those workshops.

It would be very helpful if you could take a few minutes to read this report and then answer one or more of the questions on the attached questionnaire. Your answers do not have to be elaborate or typed, but if you need more space, attach additional pages.

You may mail, fax or email your response to the appropriate address above. Responses received prior to March 15th will be particularly useful for Town Council's early deliberations on these subjects.

Thank you in advance for your input.

Harry Haon  
 Director of Planning  
 Town Council

## A Vision for Fenwick Island

### Introduction

The most prized and well-known treasure of Fenwick Island is its mile and a half shoreline along the **Atlantic Ocean**. Throughout the summer and fall the ocean is mostly calm and warm and the sandy beach is wide and relatively un-crowded. Beachgoers of all ages from toddlers to grandparents enjoy swimming, riding the waves, building a castle, having a catch, talking to friends, reading a book, napping and searching for seashells. The ocean and the beach are why Fenwick Island is called a resort town with over 3/4 of the houses owned as 2nd homes where families and friends convene for weekends and extended visits. During at least some part of the summer about 1/3 of these homes are rented by the week to vacationing families, primarily from Delaware, Maryland and Pennsylvania. Many renters return each year and some eventually become homeowners.

At the same time Fenwick Island is more and more becoming a **year-round principal residence** for primarily retired and semi-retired persons. They enjoy their family visitors in the summer and the tranquility of the off-season without the hassle, high taxes and congestion of suburban and metropolitan life. Full local services are available in the area as well as an abundance of year-round activities to choose from.

And then there's a lesser-known treasure in Fenwick Island and that is the **Little Assawoman Bay**. Among Delaware's seven coastal towns, Fenwick Island has the longest shoreline along one of the state's three inland bays. About 1/3 of the homes are located either directly on the bay or on natural and man-made canals and lagoons coming from the bay. Boat related recreational activities abound including canoeing, kayaking, sailing, wind surfing, water skiing, fishing, crabbing, and bird watching. Pontoon boat cruising is popular to watch the sailing races off Seal Island, catch a summer breeze, have a picnic at Mulberry Landing, and watch the sunset over Dirickson's Creek or see the Fourth of July fireworks in Ocean City.

With this diversity of attributes, it is not surprising that property values have soared. Realizing that **change** is inevitable, what are the characteristics of Fenwick Island that are important to preserve and where are the opportunities for improvement?



February 25, 2005

- 1) What ideas in the report do you think will have the most impact, positive or negative, on the future of Fenwick Island and, therefore, are the most important for follow-up?
- 2) What suggestions do you have on ways to address certain issues covered in the report?
- 3) Are there ideas that you strongly disagree with?
- 4) Are there other topics that you believe should be dealt with?

PLEASE RESPOND BY MARCH 15TH

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fenwick Island  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**THE BEACH**

Thanks to continuing *beach replenishment* programs managed and funded by the State of Delaware and the Corps of Engineers, Fenwick Island offers one of the widest public beaches on the East Coast.

Each year the Town provides and pays for a team of well-trained professional *lifeguards*, dedicated to the safety of ocean swimmers seven days a week throughout the summer.

Most beach goers recognize the value of a *clean beach* and follow the various Town regulations on trash pick-up, animal control, bonfire clean-up etc. Beach cleanliness is also enhanced by occasional special clean-up events by groups of volunteers, the frequency of which could be increased.

The ease of beach access particularly for senior citizens would be facilitated by adding *handrails* along each of the twelve dune crossings and observation benches.

The Town's *parking permit system* for beachgoers provides about 150 spaces on Oceanside residential streets, half of which at the beach ends are reserved for Fenwick Island property owners and their guests or renters. In general, this system works well and is usually at or near capacity throughout the summer months. However, there is not space for the Town to provide more parking spaces or safely accommodate *shuttle buses* that will be coming from the major residential expansions occurring along Route 54, west of Town. A more practical location to accommodate this expanded demand is at the State Park immediately north of Town, which has a 500 space expandable parking lot, onsite food and bathroom facilities and available space to create a dedicated shuttle bus drop-off station.

**THE BAY**

Water quality:

Although the water quality of the Little Assawoman Bay may in general be somewhat better than the other bays, there is still significant opportunity for *improvement* to avoid negative impacts such as fish kills, odorous rotting seaweed and State imposed activity restrictions as have occurred in the other bays. (Currently only clamming is restricted in the Little Assawoman Bay). The Town and its citizens need to be proactively involved not only in observing non-polluting practices within Fenwick Island but also in lobbying for and participating in State sponsored programs, projects, and regulations to improve the water quality of the bay.

Boating Safety & Navigation:

There are a number of locations at the entrances to some canals and along the shoreline at the northern end of Town where *silting* has made navigation

at low tides difficult or unsafe as boats need to speed up to plane out to deeper water. These locations should be identified and dredged. Also a plan should be developed to stabilize the shoreline of Seal Island off the Town's northern borders so that it's erosion doesn't become a source of further silting of boat channels.

The State needs to be encouraged each year to maintain boat **channel markers** both out in the open bay and at critical locations along the Fenwick Island shoreline.

A few **personal watercraft** docked in Fenwick Island and elsewhere continue to operate at excessive speeds along Town shorelines creating hazardous conditions for other boaters, noise pollution and undesirable wave action in violation of Town and State regulations. New education and enforcement programs are needed.

Currently, "land locked" boat owners in Fenwick Island **access** the bay either through arrangements with bayside friends or by using the State's boat rental franchise location north of Town. Other options should be explored.

### **BEAUTIFICATION**

#### Residential:

To many, one of the most pleasing aspects of Fenwick Island's residential scene is the **architectural diversity** of its homes. Having been built individually over a period of more than 50 years, there is a great variety in size, shape, color and style of the houses and their associated landscaping. Unlike the monotonous style of some mass-produced suburban developments, Fenwick Island offers interesting, unplanned variety. Hopefully a degree of diversity will still be retained as more and more of the older homes are being torn down and replaced.

The attractiveness of the Town's neighborhoods is enhanced by having clean, well-maintained, **well-drained streets** and right a ways. Most citizens do not want sidewalks in the residential zone but prefer to use the full street width for walking, biking and jogging. They also object to the "development" look of sidewalks. However, more attractive and coordinated **street signage** is desirable.

Many citizens believe that the appearance of the residential zone would be greatly enhanced with entirely **underground utilities** and more decorative streetlights, as exist in a few places in Town.

The quality of service of the Town's in-house trash collection is excellent at a competitive price. However, on summertime weekends **overflowing trash** containers or trash left in bags or boxes on the street can be unsightly. This is particularly so with rental properties having a large number of occupants where renters wait until they're leaving Saturday morning to put out much of

their trash. The volume of renters' trash is often increased by recycle materials that could have been taken to the Town's recycle bins at Town Hall. Programs to facilitate and encourage recycling by renters would be beneficial.

#### Commercial:

The appearance of the commercial zone would be greatly enhanced by tree planting in the **median strip** and landscaping in the parking lots along Ocean Highway. Most of the commercial buildings are well maintained and attractive, but some are not and should be improved. Enclosure of Dumpsters should be encouraged. Sidewalks along Ocean Highway should be considered.

### **ZONING**

#### Residential:

There are two zoning requirements, which have virtually unanimous support:

- only **single family** homes and
- **thirty-foot height limits** with no more than two levels of enclosed living space.

Citizens do not want Fenwick Island to have the crowded look or density of Ocean City.

There is also concern about smaller cottages being replaced with significantly **larger vacation homes**, limiting open space and increasing rental density. Current limits on number of bedrooms and bathrooms and rental occupancy are helpful but not a cure-all for this concern. Other approaches should be explored.

Excessive outdoor **lighting** intensity without adequate shielding of adjacent homes is sometimes a problem with newer homes.

#### Commercial:

Considering the narrow depth of commercial lots and the shopping availability in Ocean City, the current mix of retail, service and restaurant businesses in Fenwick Island serves residents and visitors very well. A post-office substation would be useful. The ban on freestanding bars and nightclubs is still desirable to support nighttime peace and tranquility.

The current trend throughout the coastal area to convert commercial property to residential use is of concern particularly if long-standing favorite establishments go out of business. Hopefully, there will continue to be a group of profitable businesses to survive this trend and provide useful products and services to the citizens of Fenwick Island.



#### **TRAFFIC SAFETY**

**Pedestrian safety** is an ongoing concern. Beachgoers coming and going across Ocean Highway including families with small children are challenged not only by the heavy traffic from and to Ocean City but also by the short crossing times allowed by the State controlled traffic lights.

On **Bunting Avenue**, enjoyed by many as a favorite walking and biking promenade, ultra safe driving behavior by vehicles needs to be encouraged and enforced.

On Ocean Highway, **speeding** is an ever-present hazard as well as occasional shoulder driving during peak traffic conditions; improved signage, traffic slowing methods and low-tolerance enforcement by the Fenwick Island Police Department need to be emphasized.

#### **QUIETNESS**

Fenwick Island is promoted as a "Quiet Resort" and citizens indeed value this attribute. Regulations limiting and/or banning various existing or potential sources of **noise disturbances** – such as summertime pile driving, nightclubs, outdoor music at restaurants, loud car radios etc – should continue to be enforced and supplemented.

#### **TOWN SERVICES**

The level and quality of services provided by the Town such as 24-hour police protection, street and grounds maintenance, trash collection and lifeguard protection are appreciated and valued by Town property owners.

#### **COMMUNITY SPIRIT**

Fenwick Island has a friendly, small-Town spirit. Homeowners come from various places and backgrounds, but in Fenwick Island there is a **commonality of interest** built around families, fun and relaxation. Neighbors become friends and friends become part of the family. This spirit is enhanced and broadened by opportunities for organized group interactions and gatherings at the beach, on the bay, at Town Hall and in the Town Park. Expansion of Park facilities for such activities by relocating Public Works out-of-town should be evaluated.





**LEGEND**

--- municipal boundary

**NOTES:**

1. Orthophotography -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).
2. Parcels -- Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
3. Municipal Boundary -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).

Note: This map is for display and reference purposes only. Bluegreen is not responsible for the accuracy of the base information.



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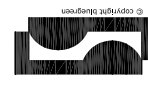


**LEGEND**

- roadway
- water
- municipal boundary





**NOTES:**

1. Parcels -- Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
  2. Municipal Boundary -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).
- Notes: This map is for display and reference purposes only. Bluegreen is not responsible for the accuracy of the base information.





**LEGEND**

-  level one
-  level two
-  level three
-  municipal boundary

**NOTES:**

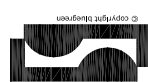
1. State Spending Strategy Level Definition -- Based on map entitled "State Strategies for Policies and Spending" by the Delaware State Office of Planning Coordination
2. Parcels -- Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
3. Municipal Boundary -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).

Note: This map is for display and reference purposes only. Bluegreen is not responsible for the accuracy of the base information.

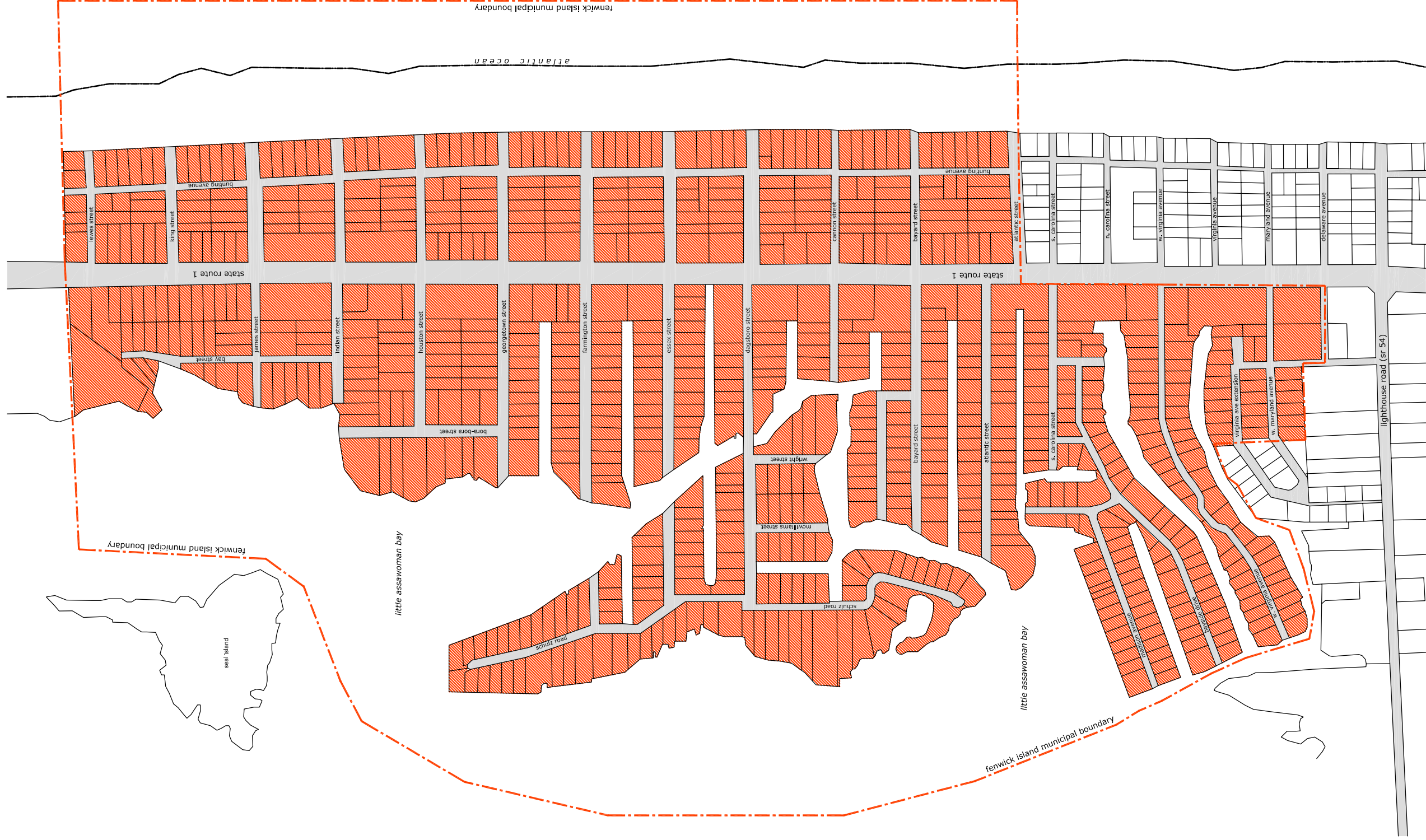


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**LEGEND**

-  level one
-  municipal boundary

**NOTES:**

1. State Spending Strategy Level Definition -- Based on map entitled "State Strategies for Policies and Spending" by the Delaware State Office of Planning Coordination
2. Parcels -- Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
3. Municipal Boundary -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).

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# proposed state strategies for policies and spending

fenwick island comprehensive plan

town of fenwick island | delaware

map 4







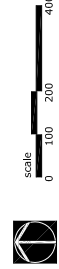
**LEGEND**

- residential
- vacant
- commercial
- institutional
- parks and recreational
- municipal boundary

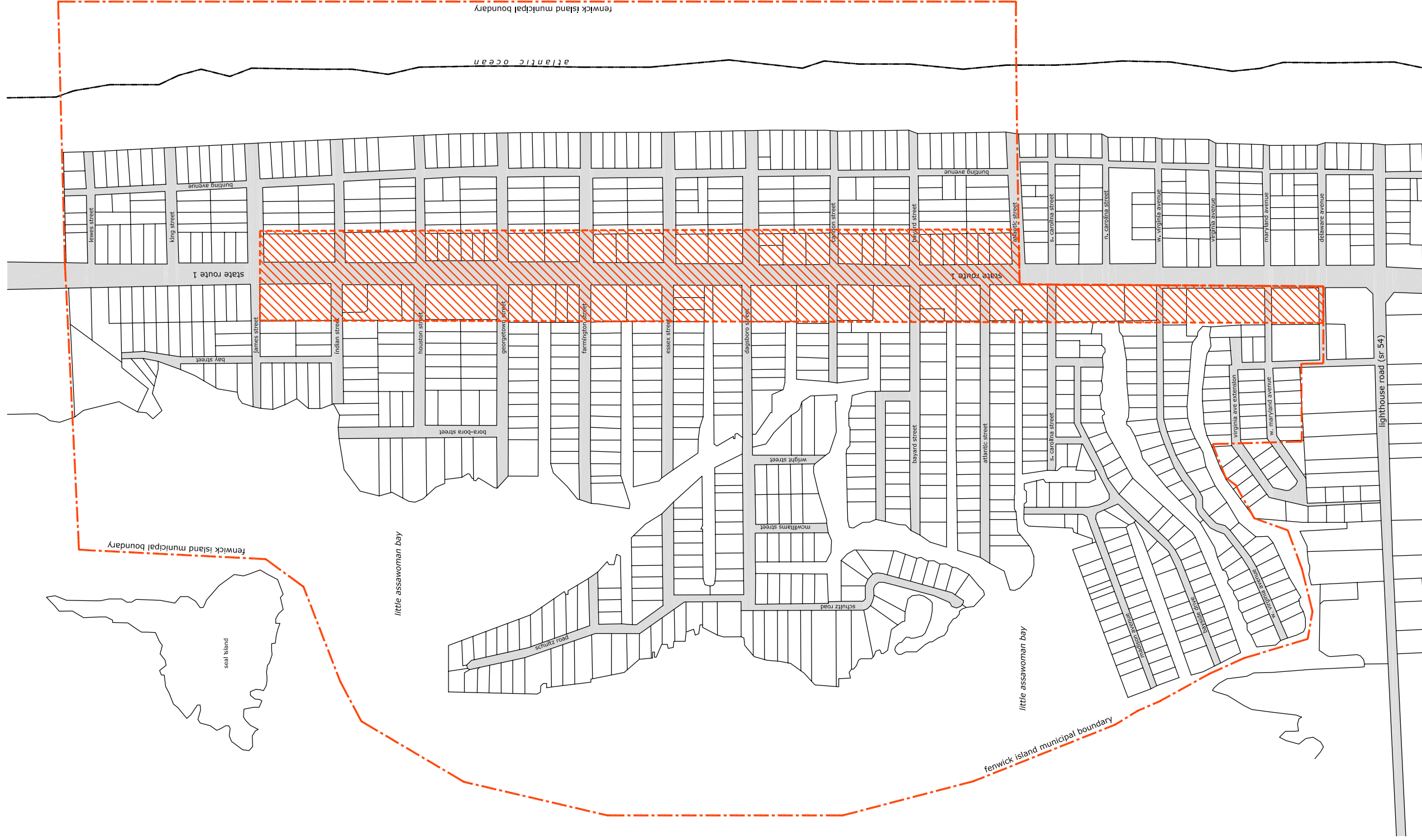
**NOTES:**

1. Land uses -- Office of State Planning Coordination Orthophotography (2002) with field verification by Bluegreen (2006).
2. Orthophotography -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).
3. Parcels -- Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
4. Municipal Boundary -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).




*Notes:* This map is for display and reference purposes only. Bluegreen is not responsible for the accuracy of the base information.







**LEGEND**

-  commercial zone
-  residential zone
-  municipal boundary

**NOTES:**

1. Parcels - Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
2. Municipal Boundary - Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).
3. Zoning Boundaries - Code of the Town of Fenwick Island

Note: This map is for display and reference purposes only. Bluegreen is not responsible for the accuracy of the base information.







**LEGEND**

- residential
- commercial
- open space waterways
- institutional
- parks and recreational
- municipal boundary
- commercial corridor
- overlay district

**NOTES:**

1. Land uses -- Office of State Planning Coordination Orthophotography (2002) with field verification by Bluegreen (2006).
  2. Orthophotography -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).
  3. Parcels -- Sussex County Mapping and Addressing Department (2005).
  4. Municipal Boundary -- Office of State Planning Coordination (2002).
- Note: This map is for display and reference purposes only. Bluegreen is not responsible for the accuracy of the base information.







**LEGEND**

-  residential
-  institutional
-  commercial
-  park
-  parking/streets
-  wetland/habitat edge
-  street tree
-  native vegetation
-  swale/planted area

**NOTES:**

1. This drawing is conceptual in nature and intended for discussion purposes only.



# minor planning influence










fenwick island comprehensive plan  
 town of fenwick island | delaware







**LEGEND**

-  residential
-  institutional
-  commercial
-  park
-  parking/streets
-  wetland/habitat edge
-  street tree
-  native vegetation
-  swale/planted area

**NOTES:**

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enlargement a  
 enlargement b

**LEGEND**

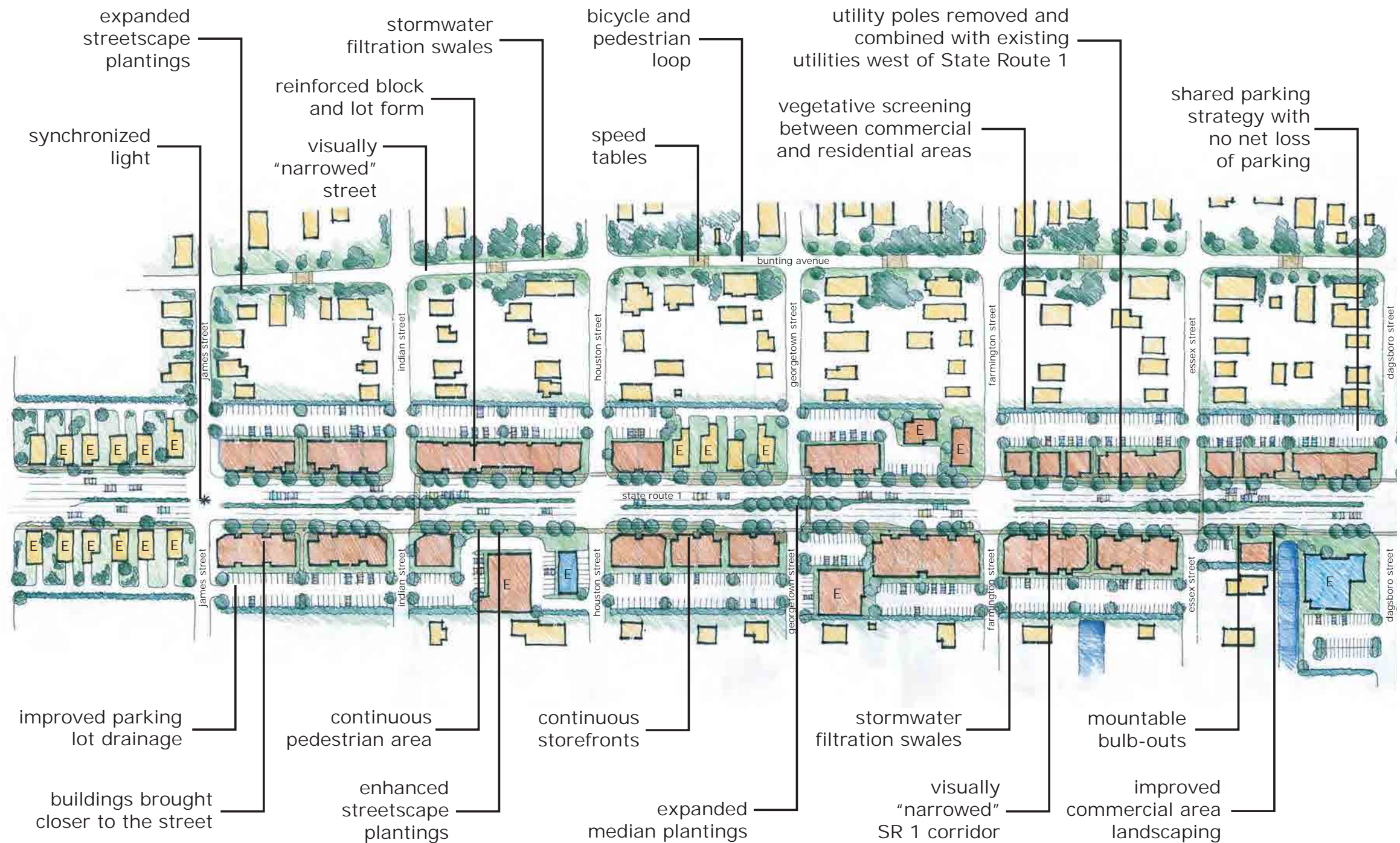
- residential
- institutional
- commercial
- park
- parking/streets
- wetland/  
habitat edge
- street tree
- native vegetation
- swale/planted area

**NOTES:**

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LEGEND

- residential
- institutional
- commercial
- park
- existing building
- wetland/habitat edge
- street tree
- native vegetation
- swale/planted area

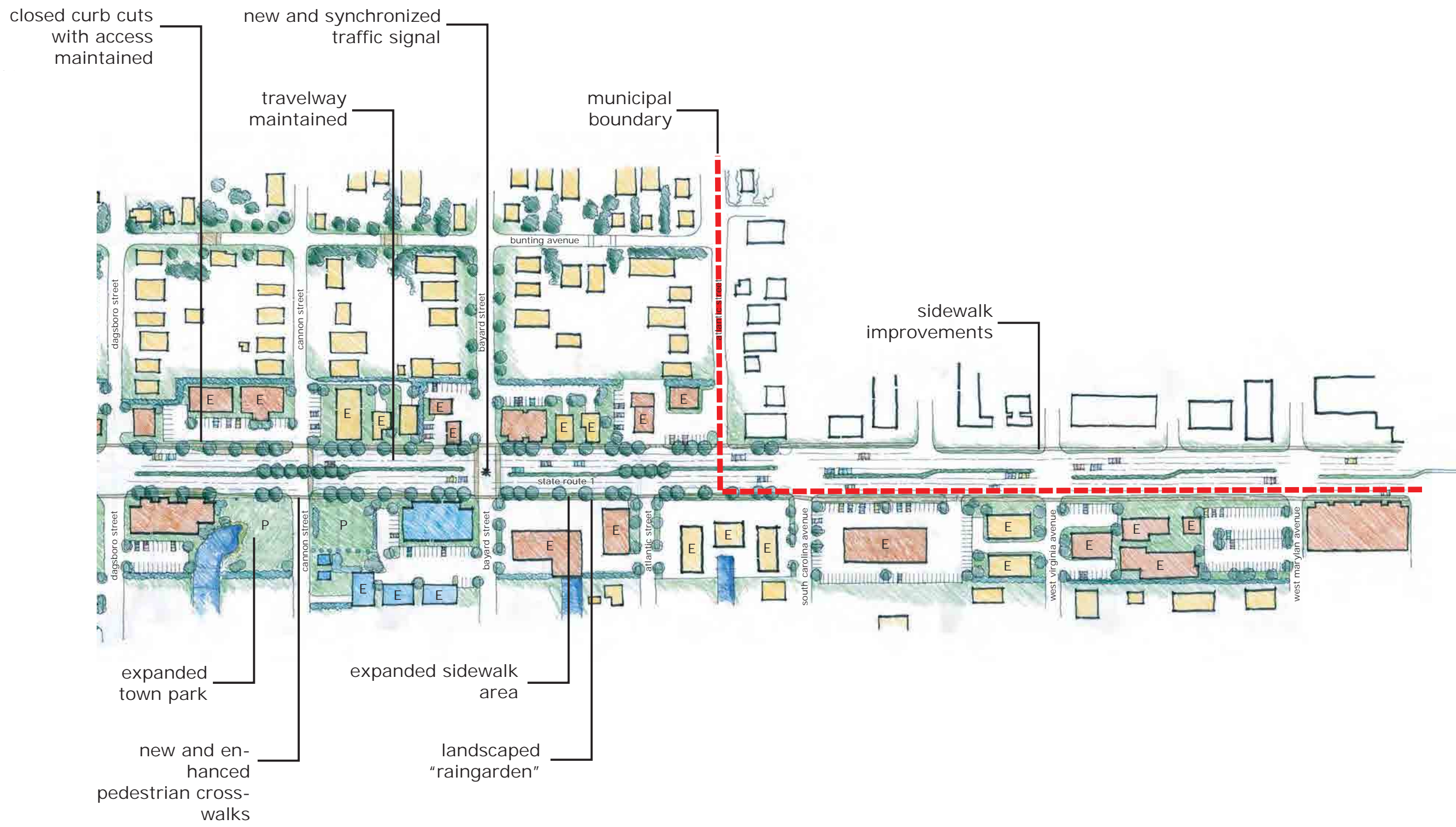
NOTES:

1. This drawing is conceptual in nature and intended for discussion purposes only.

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LEGEND

- residential
- institutional
- commercial
- park
- existing building
- wetland/habitat edge
- street tree
- native vegetation
- swale/planted area

NOTES:

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