



CHAPTER 3: HOUSING ELEMENT

HOW WE LIVE

Sullivan’s Island has remained successful in maintaining the unique single-family character of a quaint, small beach town since its inception. One of the methods used in the Housing Element to identify how the single-family character will remain is by examining multiple sources of data with regards to primary owner occupied units and those with second homes or rentals. Since differing data sources will be used, not all counts for housing units will be exactly the same (ex. Table 3.1, Figure 3.1, and Figure 3.3). These differences between data sources are nominal and help show that the data collected is relatively accurate. In addition, the historical buildings on Sullivan’s Island give the Island architecture a variety and richness that is not found on many of the surrounding barrier islands. In an effort to maintain the character of the Island, the Housing Element will provide details on existing conditions and future considerations.

HOUSING

Sullivan’s Island has a total of 1,116 housing units, of which, 790 were surveyed as occupied and 326 were vacant. Occupied housing thus represents approximately 71% of the total housing units, whilst vacant units represent approximately 29%. Housing units are considered vacant by the American Community Survey (ACS) after a three month contact period by regular mail (1st month), phone (2nd month), and in person (3rd month). If they are unsuccessful at reaching the resident during the three-month correspondence period, they will declare the unit vacant. It should be noted that vacant does not mean abandoned. There is room for error in this methodology, but the three-month period allows for a concerted effort in confirming who may be a part-time resident or full-time. The difference between the ACS data and Charleston County data will be examined further within this section.

Further analysis regarding full-time and part-time residents in the Town has provided a few data points of value. Table 3.1, provided to the Town by the Charleston County Tax Assessor, shows the number of parcels that have been assessed with a 4% tax versus those with a 6% tax. The 4% assessment represents residents who live full-time on the Island, while 6% represents those who are part-time residents. Approximately 54% of the Island residents are considered full-time while 46% are part-time residents.

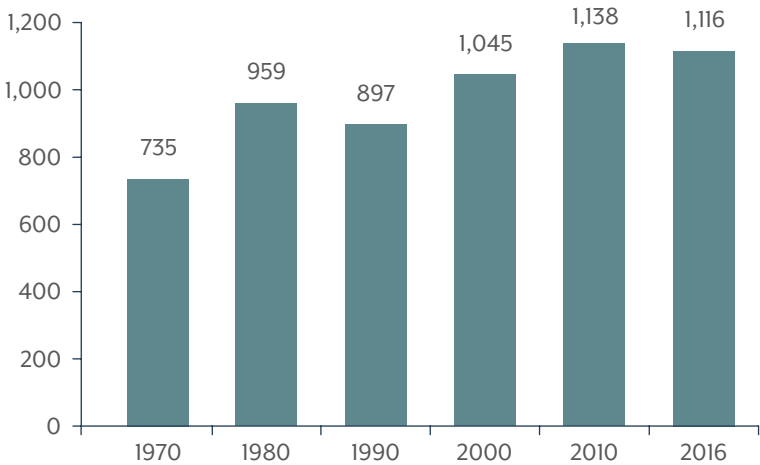
Both the ACS and the Charleston County Assessor’s office data present similar information that has some noticeable variability between the two data sets. As stated before, the ACS shows that 29% of the homes are vacant, which can be tied to part-time residential status (Figure 3.1) Likewise, the Assessor data shows a greater number of part-time residents on the Island (46%). A possible explanation for this discrepancy would be that the ACS does not do a good job of communicating with part-

TABLE 3.1: ASSESSED PARCELS

4% Assessment	610
6% Assessment	524
Total Assessed Parcels	1,134
Single Family Residential	882
Multi-Family	172
Total Dwelling Units	1,054
Vacation Rentals	51
Long Term Rentals	82
Total Confirmed Rentals	133
ADU Special Exceptions	15

Source: 2017 Charleston County Assessor / Sullivan’s Island

FIGURE 3.1: TOTAL HOUSING UNITS



Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey 2016



time residents in their three month contact period. The ACS surveyors want to know if the resident is in the home for more than two months of the year to show whether or not the home is occupied. This could drastically increase the amount of full-time residents that are surveyed in the ACS. However the numbers are fairly close which helps to show the accuracy of both the ACS and the Assessor's data.

The Town also keeps records on the types of units (single-family and multi-family), vacation rentals and long term rentals, as well as Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) which are considered Special Exceptions and not granted by right. Single-family residential represents roughly 84% of the dwelling units on the Island (Table 3.1). Through various public input opportunities for the Comprehensive Plan, the general consensus has been geared toward maintaining the single-family home character of the Island. To the right are a few public comments from online surveys that were collected throughout the planning process.

Table 3.2 is data collected by the Town of Sullivan's Island for those properties that report whether they are short or long term rentals. This table helps to show average monthly rents for each category across the Island.

Overall, Sullivan's Island has built homes at a fairly consistent rate, with the exception of this current decade (2010+). Compared to other municipalities in the region that are currently experiencing large housing booms, the trend is an anomaly. However, the limited supply and overall high cost of land are most likely what affects the trend. There were two major time periods that housing was established on Sullivan's Island. Before 1939, approximately 23% of the housing stock was built. However, the largest bulk of existing housing stock (29.3%) was built between 1980 and 1999 (Figure 3.2). The spike in growth before 1939 was from the military presence that was built up over time around Fort Moultrie. The larger spike, 1980 to 1999 is due to Hurricane Hugo, which decimated the



"I think it important to retain the essentially single-family home predominance."

Sullivan's Island Resident

"We need to continue to encourage single-family housing on the island, with emphasis on the retention of the historical feel of the island, while recognizing each property owner's right to utilize their property in a manner they deem appropriate for them."

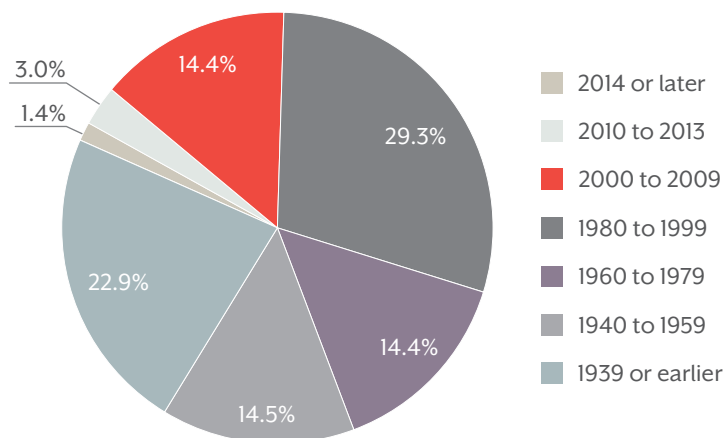
- Sullivan's Island Resident

TABLE 3.2: AVERAGE RENTS

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
LONG TERM RENTALS	89	92	85	64	79
AVERAGE MONTHLY GROSS	\$2,424.93	\$2,364.26	\$2,551.93	\$3,079.07	\$2,912.29
SHORT TERM RENTALS	60	54	53	53	53
AVERAGE MONTHLY GROSS	\$3,443.53	\$3,687.69	\$4,336.56	\$5,009.71	\$4,898.96

Source: Sullivan's Island

FIGURE 3.2: YEAR STRUCTURE BUILT



Source: ACS 2016

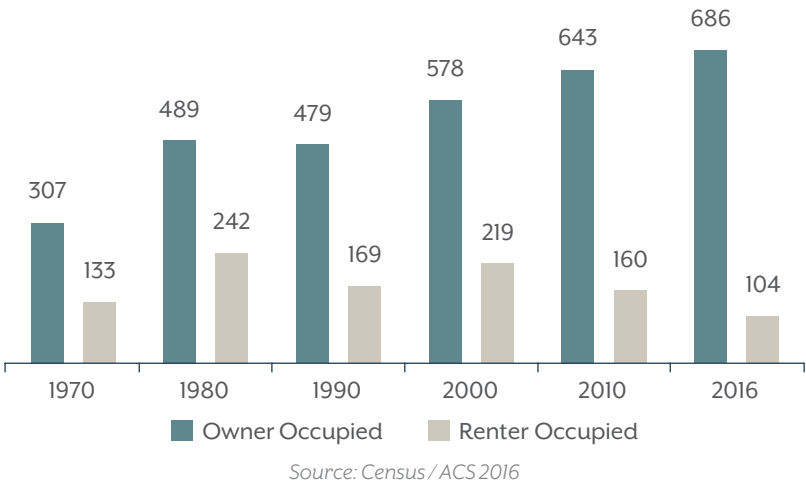


Island in 1989. The remaining three periods, 1940 to 1959, 1960 to 1979, and 2000 to 2009, all had roughly the same growth rate (approximately 14.5%).

HOUSING TENURE

Housing tenure is defined by the U.S. Census as a binary status, which means a housing unit is either owner-occupied or renter-occupied. Of the 790 occupied-housing units, 686 units (86.8%) are owner-occupied. The remaining 104 housing units (13.2%) in the Town are renter-occupied.

FIGURE 3.3: HOUSING TENURE (1970-2016)



HOUSEHOLD TYPE

The majority of household types on the Island are comprised of family households (70.1%) as shown in Table 3.3 (next page). The U.S. Census defines family households as a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage or adoption who reside together. Of the total family households, the largest age range of married householders (39.4%) are those who fall between the ages of 35 to 64 years old.

There are household types in the Town that are considered non-family households and make up almost 30% of the category. Non-family households are defined by the Census as households that consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals. Of the total non-family households, the largest age range percentage (13.2%) is the same as married householders, ages 35 to 64. These are householders whom live alone. For a more detailed breakdown see Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3: HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND AGE OF HOUSEHOLDER

Family Households 70.1%		29.9% Non- family Households	
Married - couple family 57.5%		25.8% Householder living alone	
Householder 15 to 34 years	3.0%	2.5%	Householder 15 to 34 years
Householder 35 to 64 years	39.6%	13.2%	Householder 35 to 64 years
Householder 65 years and over	14.8%	10.1%	Householder 65 years and over
Male householder (no wife present) 3.8%		4.1% Householder not living alone	
Householder 15 to 34 years	0.4%	0.3%	Householder 15 to 34 years
Householder 35 to 64 years	2.7%	3.0%	Householder 35 to 64 years
Householder 65 years and over	0.8%	0.8%	Householder 65 years and over
Female householder (no husband present) 8.9%			
Householder 15 to 34 years	1.3%		
Householder 35 to 64 years	5.1%		
Householder 65 years and over	2.5%		

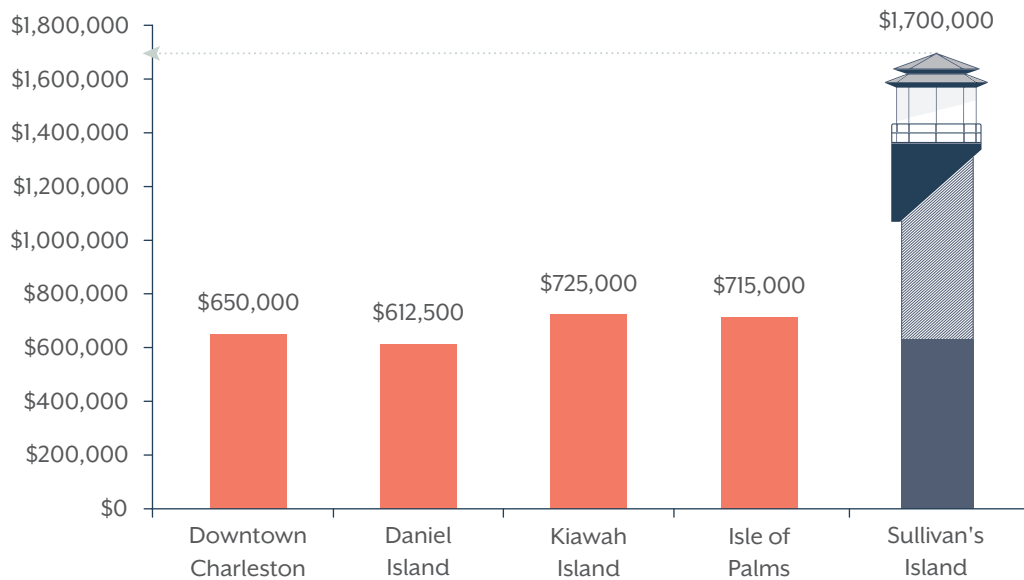
Source: ACS 2016



MEDIAN HOME PRICE

According to 2016 ACS data, the median home price in the Town is \$1.21 million. More updated real estate sources, such as the Charleston Trident Association of Realtors' (CTAR) Annual Report (2017), estimate the median home price as closer to \$1.7 million. Compared to other select Multiple Listing Service (MLS) areas in the Trident Region, Sullivan's Island maintains the highest median home price (Figure 3.4).

FIGURE 3.4: MEDIAN HOME PRICES IN CHARLESTON AREA (2017)

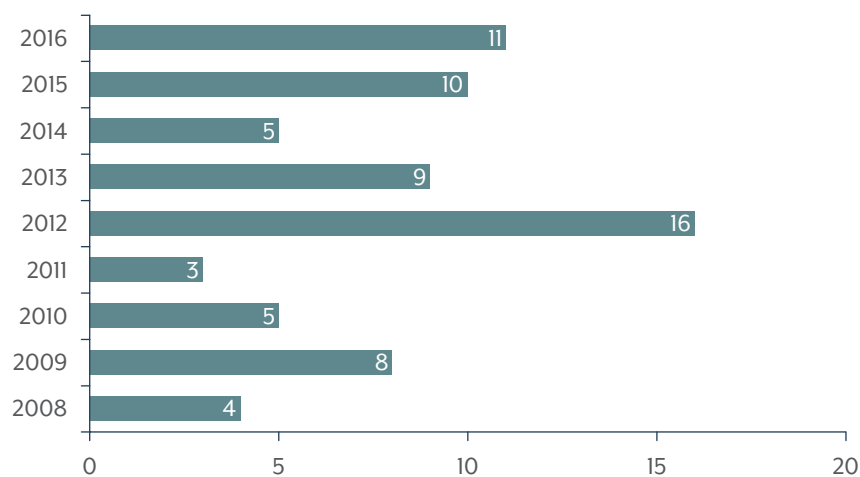


Source: Charleston Trident Association of Realtors 2017

BUILDING PERMITS FOR NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION

From 2008 to 2016, the Town has averaged 7.8 newly constructed homes on the Island (Figure 3.5). Within this time period, the year with the most residential construction was 2012, followed by 2015 and 2016. The rest of these years have all maintained similar levels. Given the relatively small size of the Town and its geographical constraints, these construction activity levels are normal.

FIGURE 3.5: NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION (2008 -2016)



Source: 2017 Town of Sullivan's Island



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Convened for the first time in 2004, the Sullivan's Island Design Review Board (DRB) was created with the intent to "enhance the Island's character, preserve property values and protect the unique identity of Sullivan's Island" (Town Ordinance Section 21-106). Board members are appointed by Town Council and chosen from those in the community who exhibit knowledge and interest in a variety of fields related to architecture and design as spelled out in the ordinance section cited above. To achieve this goal, the DRB maintains jurisdiction with respect to 1) certain new construction and alteration to existing structures, 2) design appeals, 3) implementation of the historic overlay district, and 4) enforcement of design regulations.

In these areas, the DRB is charged with more specific objectives. Among these responsibilities, the Board considers "neighborhood compatibility" (Sec. 21-111) in regard to allowing elements inconsistent with zoning and design standards outlined in Sec. 21-111 of the Town's Zoning Ordinance; maintains updated historic overlay districts on the Official Zoning Map, and initiates all applications to nominate town structures for consideration on the National Register of Historic Places. The DRB may submit their comments to the State Historic Preservation Office for consideration by the State Board of Review.

Maintaining a well-trained and vibrant local historic preservation board is also a requirement of the Town's membership in the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program, overseen by the SC State Historic Preservation Office.

FUTURE HOUSING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Chapter 2 (Population) delineates a slow, but steady population growth in 2030 (1,811) and 2040 (1,843). Given the rate of growth, as well as the small-town character of the Island, accommodating for future housing needs will not be needed in a large-scale, coordinated effort. An incremental approach will be sufficient for future growth patterns on the Island. With the data given being projections, population growth in conjunction with housing stock capacity will need to be closely monitored and is brought to task in the Goals and Objectives section for Chapter 2. One area of concern for the Town is the increased costs of rents for housing on the Island. Workforce housing is affordable housing for those who work on the Island. Demonstrable benefits of workforce housing would include lower traffic congestion, lower parking congestion, better quality of life, diversity among residents, and the ability to get exercise by either walking or biking to work.

WORKFORCE HOUSING

Workforce housing may be achieved through a number of differing policy recommendations. The basic concept from a market perspective is to increase the supply of housing units in an effort to lower the costs of housing. This is a very arduous task in a coastal town that has a very limited supply of land to offer. However, residential densities may be increased by allowing more Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) or mixed-use businesses (ground floor retail with residential units built on top). Either scenario may work to help with workforce housing, but it should be noted that most of the communication received from public input for this plan seems to be geared towards keeping the business district the same, as well as limiting the number of ADUs island-wide. The existing character and fabric of the Island is therefore valued more importantly than an egalitarian ideal for workforce housing.

The Town could also work with a local jurisdiction, such as Mount Pleasant, which has more developable land available to build workforce housing. However, this too, during the current writing seems to be a long shot as Mount Pleasant has implemented several moratoriums on building apartments which are limiting the supply of housing and driving up rents simultaneously. Infrastructure concerns are certainly a driving force for slowing the pace of development until infrastructure can be improved that can handle new developments.

