

Residents, visitors, realtors, business owners, and prospective property owners are always curious about how Sunset Beach compares to other communities.

The tendency is to compare Sunset Beach with contiguous towns – Calabash, Ocean Isle, Holden Beach, and Shallotte. Such a comparison, however, is comparing apples to oranges. Neither Calabash nor Shallotte is a “beach or ocean front town” and, therefore, does not have the same responsibilities or challenges as Sunset Beach.

A major factor that must always be taken into account when comparing Sunset Beach to any other community is its unique geography. Of our 6.3 square miles of land area, the majority is located on the mainland. Approximately 100 of our 3,572 permanent residents live on the island.

What criteria are used to create peer groups for comparisons with other North Carolina beach towns?

There are a total of twenty-one (21) oceanfront municipalities in North Carolina, and this is the peer group that is most relevant when making comparisons of the Town of Sunset Beach to others.

While there are important differences among these communities, they all share some common characteristics, including a desirable natural environment, somewhat similar demographics, relatively highly valued properties, and similar local government challenges.

The following areas of comparison are worth noting.

Permanent Population

According to the 2010 US Census, **Sunset Beach has the 5th largest permanent population among the twenty-one (21) oceanfront municipalities**, making it one of the largest oceanfront communities. It is important to note that these are full-time residents only, and each town has many more seasonal residents and visitors.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Permanent Population</u>
1	Oak Island	6,783
2	Kill Devil Hills	6,683
3	Carolina Beach	5,706
4	Emerald Isle	3,655
5	Sunset Beach	3,572
6	Kitty Hawk	3,272
7	Nags Head	2,757
8	Southern Shores	2,714
9	Wrightsville Beach	2,477
10	Kure Beach	2,012
11	Surf City	1,853
12	Atlantic Beach	1,495
13	Pine Knoll Shores	1,339
14	North Topsail Beach	743
15	Holden Beach	575
16	Ocean Isle Beach	550
17	Caswell Beach	398
18	Duck	369
19	Topsail Beach	368
20	Bald Head Island	158
21	Indian Beach	112

Permanent Population North Carolina Oceanfront Towns

Source: *2010 US Census*

Total Housing Units

All of the twenty-one (21) oceanfront municipalities have much larger seasonal populations due to the high number of second homes and vacation rental properties. In Sunset Beach, the peak summertime population can reach approximately 15,000 people - much larger than the official permanent population. Because there is not reliable and consistent data available on the total seasonal population among all of the twenty-one (21) oceanfront municipalities, the total number of housing units (reported by the *US Census*) is perhaps the most relevant indicator of the true size of a NC oceanfront community. As noted, **Sunset Beach has the 5th most housing units.**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Housing Units</u>
1	Oak Island	8,686
2	Emerald Isle	6,735
3	Kill Devil Hills	6,617
4	Carolina Beach	5,626
5	Sunset Beach	5,110
6	Atlantic Beach	4,935
7	Nags Head	4,884
8	Surf City	3,312
9	Ocean Isle Beach	3,206
10	Kitty Hawk	3,196
11	Wrightsville Beach	2,751
12	Duck	2,722
13	North Topsail Beach	2,547
14	Southern Shores	2,369
15	Holden Beach	2,335
16	Kure Beach	2,213
17	Pine Knoll Shores	2,049
18	Indian Beach	1,565
19	Topsail Beach	1,298
20	Bald Head Island	1,111
21	Caswell Beach	685

Total Housing Units North Carolina Oceanfront Towns
Source: 2010 US Census

Total Land Area

While the majority of the land area in oceanfront municipalities is located on a barrier island, Sunset Beach is the exception. The majority of our land area is on the mainland. As noted, Sunset Beach is approximately 6.3 square miles, and ranks 6th in this indicator.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Square Miles</u>
1	Oak Island	15.1
2	Kitty Hawk	8.2
3	Surf City	6.7
4	Nags Head	6.5
5	North Topsail Beach	6.4
6	Sunset Beach	6.3
7	Kill Devil Hills	5.5
8	Emerald Isle	5.2
9	Topsail Beach	4.4
10	Bald Head Island	4.3
11	Southern Shores	4.1
12	Ocean Isle Beach	3.6
13	Caswell Beach	3.1
14	Holden Beach	3.0
15	Pine Knoll Shores	2.6
16	Carolina Beach	2.6
17	Duck	2.4
18	Atlantic Beach	2.3
19	Wrightsville Beach	1.3
20	Kure Beach	0.8
21	Indian Beach	0.6

Total Land Area - Square Miles North Carolina Oceanfront Towns 2009
Source: NC State Demographer

Total Taxable Value - Adjusted for Market Conditions

All of the oceanfront municipalities experienced significant property value increases in the mid-2000s, followed by significant value decreases in the past few years. The impact on all of the communities was similar, and each of the communities conducted a tax revaluation at different times in the 2000s. To account for differences in the revaluation year, the NC Local Government Commission (in the State Treasurer's Office) calculates the adjusted taxable value based on market conditions in that particular county each year. The data below is from FY 2009-2010, the most recent year of data available. As noted, Sunset Beach has the 8th largest adjusted taxable value of all twenty-one (21) oceanfront municipalities.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Adjusted Tax Value</u>
1	Emerald Isle	\$ 3,816,324,431
2	Oak Island	\$ 3,771,441,450
3	Wrightsville Beach	\$ 3,166,733,514
4	Nags Head	\$ 2,743,096,814
5	Carolina Beach	\$ 2,363,905,834
6	Kill Devil Hills	\$ 2,352,152,467
7	Ocean Isle Beach	\$ 2,337,203,197
8	Sunset Beach	\$ 2,230,080,637
9	Atlantic Beach	\$ 2,032,199,870
10	Holden Beach	\$ 1,952,800,798
11	Duck	\$ 1,906,663,929
12	Bald Head Island	\$ 1,752,789,852
13	Surf City	\$ 1,664,772,598
14	North Topsail Beach	\$ 1,563,019,528
15	Southern Shores	\$ 1,560,029,772
16	Kitty Hawk	\$ 1,280,242,772
17	Pine Knoll Shores	\$ 1,228,291,596
18	Kure Beach	\$ 1,128,124,830
19	Topsail Beach	\$ 616,672,012
20	Indian Beach	\$ 524,489,859
21	Caswell Beach	\$ 381,766,023

Total Taxable Value - Adjusted for Market Conditions North Carolina Oceanfront Towns
FY 2009-2010

Source: NC Treasurer's Website

General Fund Tax Rate

All of us at the Town of Sunset Beach try our best to provide the highest quality local government services at the lowest possible cost to our taxpayers. The Town has been fortunate to maintain a very low General Fund tax rate over years, and for FY 11-12 (the recently adopted budget), even with a slight increase, **Sunset Beach has the 2nd lowest rate of all twenty-one (21) oceanfront municipalities.**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Tax Rate</u>
1	Bald Head Island	0.4060
2	Oak Island	0.2750
3	Surf City	0.2326
4	North Topsail Beach	0.2255
5	Kill Devil Hills	0.2150
6	Indian Beach	0.2150
7	Kitty Hawk	0.1800
8	Carolina Beach	0.1750
9	Topsail Beach	0.1725
10	Caswell Beach	0.1700
11	Atlantic Beach	0.1700
12	Kure Beach	0.1625
13	Nags Head	0.1575
14	Pine Knoll Shores	0.1560
15	Southern Shores	0.1400
16	Ocean Isle Beach	0.1300
17	Holden Beach	0.1270
18	Duck	0.1250
19	Emerald Isle	0.1150
20	Sunset Beach	0.1050
21	Wrightsville Beach	0.0990

Note: Does not include taxes levied specifically for beach nourishment activities.

Total General Fund Revenues

Total General Fund revenues can also be an indicator of the size of the municipality, and potentially can be considered when judging the overall value of local government services. As noted below, Sunset Beach collected \$5.3 million of General Fund revenues (from all sources) in FY 2009-2010.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Total General Fund Revenues</u>	<u>Population</u>
1	Kill Devil Hills	\$ 11,195,581	6,683
2	Oak Island	\$ 10,918,256	6,783
3	Nags Head	\$ 10,008,478	2,757
4	Carolina Beach	\$ 8,381,128	5,706
5	Wrightsville Beach	\$ 7,984,017	2,477
6	Bald Head Island	\$ 7,179,655	158
7	Emerald Isle	\$ 7,115,907	3,655
8	Surf City	\$ 5,507,319	1,853
9	Ocean Isle Beach	\$ 5,500,407	550
10	Kitty Hawk	\$ 5,374,049	3,272
11	Sunset Beach	\$ 5,359,809	3,572
12	Atlantic Beach	\$ 5,300,077	1,495
13	Duck	\$ 4,886,725	369
14	Southern Shores	\$ 4,025,211	2,714
15	North Topsail Beach	\$ 3,504,282	743
16	Pine Knoll Shores	\$ 3,156,255	1,339
17	Kure Beach	\$ 3,092,699	2,012
18	Holden Beach	\$ 2,103,184	575
19	Topsail Beach	\$ 2,021,150	368
20	Indian Beach	\$ 1,251,428	112
21	Caswell Beach	\$ 795,829	398

Total General Fund Revenues North Carolina Oceanfront Towns
FY 2009-10 Source: NC State Treasurer

Total General Fund Revenues Per Housing Unit

In order to get a clearer picture of relative revenues, it may be helpful to compare the total General Fund revenues per housing unit. As noted below, the Town of Sunset Beach received approximately \$1,049 per housing unit to fund General Fund expenses during FY 2009-2010. **This ranks Sunset Beach taxes among the lowest by this indicator.**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Total GF Revenues Per Housing Unit</u>
1	Bald Head Island	\$ 6,462
2	Wrightsville Beach	\$ 2,902
3	Nags Head	\$ 2,049
4	Duck	\$ 1,795
5	Ocean Isle Beach	\$ 1,716
6	Southern Shores	\$ 1,699
7	Kill Devil Hills	\$ 1,692
8	Kitty Hawk	\$ 1,681
9	Surf City	\$ 1,663
10	Topsail Beach	\$ 1,557
11	Pine Knoll Shores	\$ 1,540
12	Carolina Beach	\$ 1,490
13	Kure Beach	\$ 1,398
14	North Topsail Beach	\$ 1,376
15	Oak Island	\$ 1,257
16	Caswell Beach	\$ 1,162
17	Atlantic Beach	\$ 1,074
18	Emerald Isle	\$ 1,057
19	Sunset Beach	\$ 1,049
20	Holden Beach	\$ 901
21	Indian Beach	\$ 800

Total General Fund Revenues Per Housing Unit
North Carolina Oceanfront Towns
FY 2009-10
Source: NC State Treasurer and 2010 US Census

Total General Fund Property Tax Revenues

The tables above represent total General Fund revenues from all sources, which include various State-collected revenues, other fees and charges, and miscellaneous revenue sources. Most taxpayers are most concerned about their property tax bill, and the table below presents the total General Fund property tax revenues collected by the oceanfront municipalities in FY 2009-2010. As noted, Sunset Beach collected slightly more than \$2 million of General Fund property tax revenues.

<u>Rank Municipality</u>	<u>Total GF Property Tax Revenues</u>
1 Oak Island	\$ 5,743,851
2 Kill Devil Hills	\$ 5,315,580
3 Bald Head Island	\$ 5,254,626
4 Nags Head	\$ 4,522,141
5 Carolina Beach	\$ 4,311,691
6 Surf City (FY 2008-09 data)	\$ 3,508,815
7 Emerald Isle	\$ 3,013,663
8 Atlantic Beach	\$ 2,859,813
9 Wrightsville Beach	\$ 2,633,910
10 Kitty Hawk	\$ 2,553,160
11 Duck	\$ 2,463,421
12 Ocean Isle Beach	\$ 2,373,426
13 Sunset Beach	\$ 2,237,408
14 North Topsail Beach	\$ 2,066,771
15 Southern Shores	\$ 1,702,879
16 Kure Beach	\$ 1,605,579
17 Pine Knoll Shores	\$ 1,580,922
18 Holden Beach	\$ 1,474,580
19 Topsail Beach	\$ 1,325,174
20 Indian Beach	\$ 807,551
21 Caswell Beach	\$ 561,927

Total General Fund Property Tax Revenues
 North Carolina Oceanfront Towns
 FY 2009-10
 Source: NC State Treasurer

Total General Fund Property Tax Revenues Per Housing Unit

Again, in order to get a clearer picture of relative General Fund property tax revenues, it may be helpful to compare the total General Fund property tax revenues per housing unit. As noted below, the Town of Sunset Beach received approximately \$438 of property tax revenue per housing unit to fund General Fund expenses during FY 2009-2010. This equates to a monthly General Fund property tax bill of \$36.50 for the average-value housing unit in Sunset Beach. **This ranks Sunset Beach as the lowest by this indicator.**

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Total GF Property Tax Revenues Per Housing Unit</u>
1	Bald Head Island	\$ 4,730
2	Surf City (FY 2008-09 data)	\$ 1,059
3	Topsail Beach	\$ 1,021
4	Wrightsville Beach	\$ 957
5	Nags Head	\$ 926
6	Duck	\$ 905
7	Caswell Beach	\$ 820
8	North Topsail Beach	\$ 811
9	Kill Devil Hills	\$ 803
10	Kitty Hawk	\$ 799
11	Pine Knoll Shores	\$ 772
12	Carolina Beach	\$ 766
13	Ocean Isle Beach	\$ 740
14	Kure Beach	\$ 726
15	Southern Shores	\$ 719
16	Oak Island	\$ 661
17	Holden Beach	\$ 632
18	Atlantic Beach	\$ 579
19	Indian Beach	\$ 516
20	Emerald Isle	\$ 447
21	Sunset Beach	\$ 438

General Fund Property Tax Revenues Per Housing Unit NC Oceanfront Towns
FY 2009-10

Source: NC State Treasurer and 2010 US Census

Housing Density Per Acre

Sunset Beach prides itself on its family beach, small-town atmosphere, and the preservation of this atmosphere is the Town's highest priority. As noted in the table below, Sunset Beach has developed in a low-density manner, with an average of 1.3 housing units per acre in the Town.

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Housing Units Per Acre</u>
1	Kure Beach	4.4
2	Indian Beach	4.1
3	Carolina Beach	3.4
4	Atlantic Beach	3.4
5	Wrightsville Beach	3.2
6	Emerald Isle	2.0
7	Kill Devil Hills	1.9
8	Duck	1.8
9	Ocean Isle Beach	1.4
10	Sunset Beach	1.3
11	Pine Knoll Shores	1.2
12	Holden Beach	1.2
13	Nags Head	1.2
14	Southern Shores	0.9
15	Oak Island	0.9
16	Surf City	0.8
17	North Topsail Beach	0.6
18	Kitty Hawk	0.6
19	Topsail Beach	0.5
20	Bald Head Island	0.4
21	Caswell Beach	0.3

Housing Density - Per Acre
 North Carolina Oceanfront Towns 2009-10
 Source: 2010 US Census and NC State Demographer

A Final Note About the Data

The data presented above is intended to give the reader a better general sense of how Sunset Beach compares to our most relevant peer group, but it is also important to note that this data does not account for differences in the individual communities' expectations, historical development patterns, historical challenges and opportunities, the range of services provided, nor the quality of services provided.

We hope this information is interesting and helpful to you. All of us at the Town of Sunset Beach try our best to provide the highest quality local government services at the lowest possible cost for our taxpayers. We also continually strive to improve the quality of life for our residents and also continually enhance Sunset Beach's desirability as a tourism destination and vacation home community!