

## CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

The following analysis provides information on the population, housing, and economic characteristics of Sunset Beach. Such information is intended to allow Town officials to make growth management decisions based on an understanding and knowledge of where the Town has come from, where it is, and where it may be heading.

NOTE: Data and statistics contained in this chapter are derived from a number of sources. Figures for years beyond 2014 are estimations and projections. Statistics from 2014 and earlier are sourced from the US Census Bureau and NC Office of State Budget and Management.

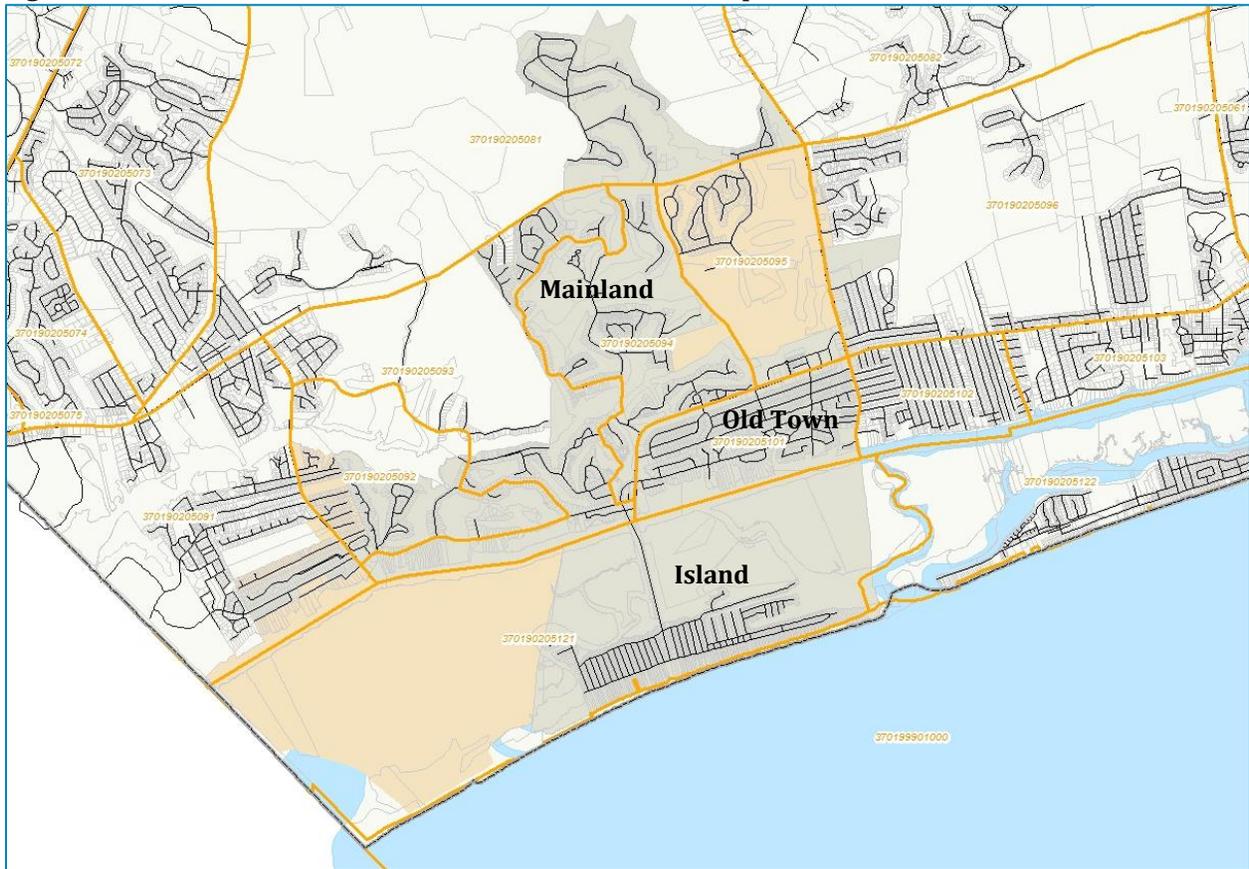
### *POPULATION, HOUSING, AND ECONOMY*

The current population size, both permanent and seasonal, and the level to which it will change during the planning period can help estimate the development pressure that may impact coastal resources. In addition, demands placed on community infrastructure (roads, sewer, stormwater, community services, etc.) are directly related to growth in population and development.

Statistics on the existing housing stock in the Sunset Beach community provides a foundation for understanding future housing needs. Household size, the types of housing units, and the number of owners and renters, can all be considerations when formulating development policies.

The following analysis identifies three different areas within Sunset Beach. Figure 3.1 shows the Town limits (shown in gray) and the census blocks that make up the Town (outlined in orange). The “Island” section incorporates only the island within the municipality and is within Census Block Group 370190205121. “Old Town” refers to the oldest part of the mainland portion of town, encompassed within Census Block Group 370190205101. The portion of the Town referred to as “Mainland” encompasses the remaining portion of the municipality within the Town limits.

**Figure 3.1: Sunset Beach Town Limits and Census Block Groups**



## POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS

**Table 3.1: Population Change in Sunset Beach, 1990-2014**

Source: U.S Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010, U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2013 and 2014 Estimates, and NC State Demographer.

	Population	% Growth (from previously recorded year)
<b>1990</b>	311	-----
<b>2000</b>	1,852	495%
<b>2010</b>	3,572	93%
<b>2013</b>	3,629	1.6%
<b>2014</b>	3,752	3.4%
<b>% Growth (1990-2010)</b>		1049%
<b>% Growth (2010-2014)</b>		5%

**Table 3.2: Sunset Beach Annexations, 1990-2015**

Source: Town of Sunset Beach.

Name	Year	Acres
King's Trail	1990	25
Sea Trail Phase I and II	1990	210
Sugar Sands	1990	24
Oyster Point Phase I and II	1991	66
Colony	1991	21
Woodstork, Baroney Place, Osprey Watch	1994	59
Seaside Station, Shoreline Woods, Oyster Bay Golf Course	1995	454
Planter's Ridge	1995	108
Rice Mill Phase III & IV	1998	29
Seatrail at NC 179	1998	4
Discovery Lake at Seatrail Plantation	1998	11
Sea Trail	1999	592
Colony II	1999	8
Georgetown Estates	2001	32
Rice Mill Phase II	2003	21
Ransom Tract	2005	29
Lake Medcalf/Lake Shore	2005	45
Frink Property	2006	18
Meyers Park	2006	2
Bonaparte's Retreat II	2007	80
Sandpiper Bay	2007	550
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2,387</b>

Table 3.1 shows that the population of Sunset Beach has increased considerably from its 1990 level. However, it must be noted that several annexations of pre-existing housing units and populations occurred on the mainland portion of Town between 1990 and 2000. Such annexations help explain the substantial percent increase in population as compared to other Brunswick County municipalities. While there were additional annexations between 2000 and 2004, the percent growth of only 13% between 2000 and 2004 shows that the scale of annexations decreased and therefore the scale of population growth decreased. Table 3.2 above shows the annexations between 1990 and the present. From 1990-1996, annexations included many developments/subdivisions with pre-existing occupied housing units, or units which were subsequently developed and occupied before the Census 2000 count. The only comparatively large annexations between 1997 and 2015 were part of the Sea Trail golf course (Jones Byrd course) and Sandpiper Bay.

**Table 3.3: Population of Sunset Beach based off Census Block Groups, 1990-2014**

Source: ESRI Community Analyst for Sunset Beach 2013, 2010, and 2000; LINC 1990; U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2014 Estimate.

Geography	1990	2000	2010	2013	2014
Sunset Beach Town Limits	311	1,852	3,572	3,629	3,752
"Island"	NO DATA	241	144	221	NO DATA
"Old Town"	NO DATA	741	724	699	NO DATA
"Mainland"	NO DATA	870	2,704	2,709	NO DATA

Table 3.3 shows specific information for each area of Sunset Beach. The population on the "Mainland" has increased significantly since 2000. After these areas were annexed,

subdivisions were developed and became occupied between 2000 and 2010. The population on the “Island” and in “Old Town” have decreased since 2000.

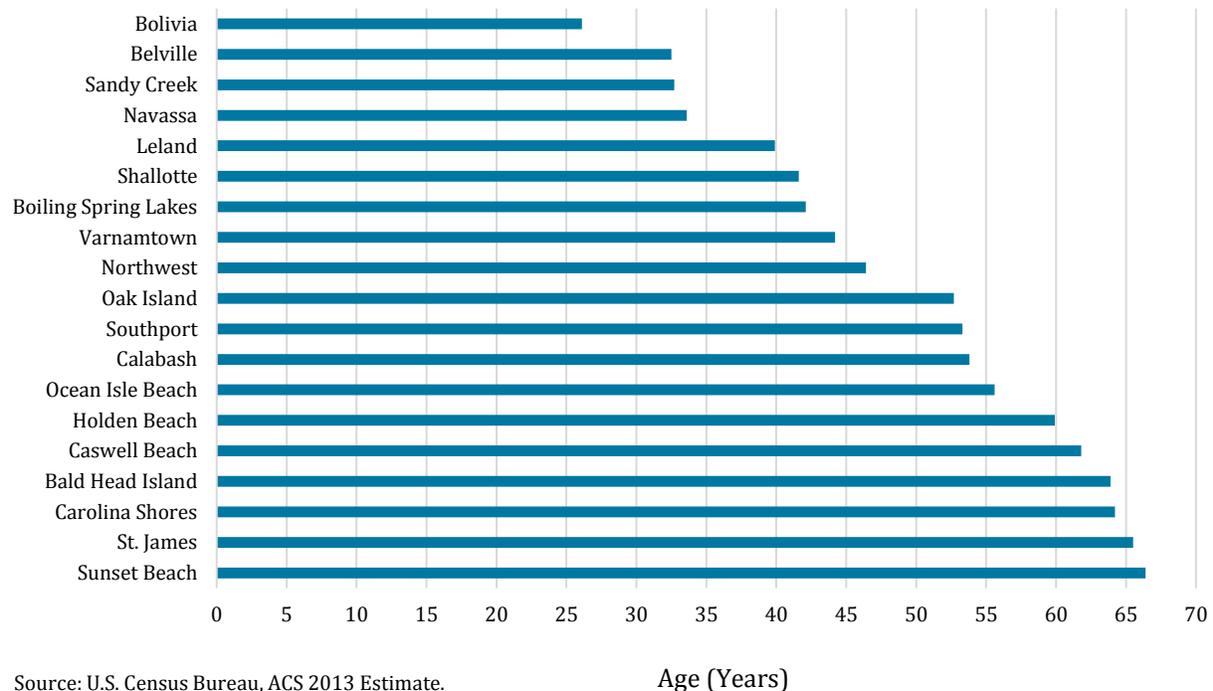
**Table 3.4: Total Population in Brunswick County and its Municipalities, 2000-2014**

Source: U.S Census Bureau 1990, 2000, 2010 and U.S. Census ACS 2013 and 2014 Estimate.

Total Population	2000	2010	2013	2014	% Change 2000-2010	% Change 2010-2014
Bald Head Island	173	158	165	168	-8.7%	6.3%
Belville	285	1,936	2,039	2,059	579.3%	6.4%
Boiling Spring Lakes	2,972	5,372	5,603	5,689	80.8%	5.9%
Bolivia	148	143	148	150	-3.4%	4.9%
Calabash	711	1,786	2,068	2,092	151.2%	17.1%
Carolina Shores	1,482	3,048	3,540	3,609	105.7%	18.4%
Caswell Beach	370	398	410	416	7.6%	4.5%
Holden Beach	787	575	607	619	-26.9%	7.7%
Leland	1,938	13,527	16,031	17,015	598.0%	25.8%
Navassa	479	1,505	1,532	1,542	214.2%	2.5%
Northwest	671	735	761	764	9.5%	3.9%
Oak Island	6,571	6,783	7,176	7,345	3.2%	8.3%
Ocean Isle Beach	426	550	570	582	29.1%	5.8%
St. James	804	3,165	3,948	4,409	293.7%	39.3%
Sandy Creek	246	260	267	267	5.7%	2.7%
Shallotte	1,381	3,675	3,676	3,766	166.1%	2.5%
Southport	2,351	2,833	3,114	3,267	20.5%	15.3%
<b>Sunset Beach</b>	<b>1,824</b>	<b>3,572</b>	<b>3,629</b>	<b>3,752</b>	<b>95.8%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>
Varnamtown	481	541	564	568	12.5%	5.0%
Rank of Sunset Beach within Municipalities	5 <sup>th</sup> Highest	5 <sup>th</sup> Highest	6 <sup>th</sup> Highest	6 <sup>th</sup> Highest	8 <sup>th</sup> Highest Growth	12 <sup>th</sup> Highest Growth
Unincorporated Area of Brunswick County	49,043	56,869	59,414	60,757	16.0%	6.8%
Brunswick County	73,143	107,431	115,262	118,836	46.9%	10.6%

Table 3.4 shows the considerable growth rate that the Town experienced from 2000 to 2014. Many of the communities listed in the table experienced growth from annexation in addition to net migration – including Sunset Beach. Leland and Belville experienced significant population growth rates in the ten years after 2000. From a percentage standpoint, Sunset Beach grew more than the county, but much less than several inland communities. Growth slowed for most communities after 2010, due in part to the Great Recession of 2008. With only 5% growth in the four years between 2000 and 2014, Sunset Beach has seen little change in its permanent population.

**Figure 3.2: Brunswick County Municipalities**  
Median Age, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2013 Estimate.

Age (Years)

Figure 3.2 shows that the median age in Sunset Beach is the highest within Brunswick County at 66 years. For comparison, the median age in NC and Brunswick County in 2013 was 37.6 and 48.3 respectively. The median age in Sunset Beach in 1990 was 50 and in 2000 it was 60. This significant jump in median age is due less to an aging population and more to the people who have recently moved into the Town as retirees. The proportion of younger people is decreasing as this older population moves into the area. If these retirees plan to remain in Sunset Beach, housing and services that support this aging population must be addressed.

#### *CURRENT SEASONAL POPULATION ESTIMATES*

When planning for infrastructure, housing, commerce and recreation, it is important to consider the impact of vacationers, visitors, and temporary residents visiting the community on a seasonal basis. Typically, the seasonal population has the greatest impact on services and resources from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Persons who reside in the planning area for the majority of the year, or refer to it as their primary residence, make up the permanent population. Whereas, persons who temporarily vacation or visit for at least one night in the planning area during the peak season comprise the seasonal population. The permanent population plus the seasonal population make up the peak population. While there is no standard method for tabulating seasonal population

for a given jurisdiction, there are a few methods that can be used to estimate the population.

### *Seasonal Estimate by Housing Unit*

According to Census data, there were 2,420 vacant units categorized as seasonal use in the year 2010. Census 2010 also shows that approximately 50% of the total housing in Sunset Beach is used for seasonal purposes. Since Census 2010, there have been 88 total housing units built. If it is assumed that the 50% ratio for seasonal housing continues, it can be assumed 50% of the 88 new housing units will be used for seasonal use. The 2,420 already existing seasonal units plus 44 new units equals 2,464 units for seasonal use today. To account for variation in the number of persons per housing unit, it will be assumed that 50% are occupied by 3 persons and 50% are occupied by 6 persons. In addition, a low seasonal estimate will be derived by assuming occupancy of only 75% of the seasonal units. The peak seasonal overnight estimate will be derived by assuming 100% occupancy of the seasonal units. It should be noted that seasonal housing units are also found on the mainland, thus resulting in a lower persons per housing unit. Furthermore, this estimate should not be viewed as exact. Calculating seasonal population figures is an imperfect science at best. The permanent population has been estimated to be 3,752 for 2014. The peak overnight seasonal population is more likely to occur on summer holidays such as Memorial Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, and Labor Day.

#### **Peak Estimate (100% Occupancy)**

[1,232 housing units x 3 persons per housing unit = 3,696] +

[1,232 housing units x 6 persons per housing unit = 7,392] = 11,087 seasonal pop.

11,087 seasonal population + 3,752 permanent population =

**14,839 peak overnight population**

#### **Low Estimate (75% Occupancy)**

[(1,232 housing units x .75) x 3 persons per housing unit = 2,772] +

[(1,225 housing units x .75) x 6 persons per housing unit = 5,544] = 8,316 seasonal pop.

8,316 seasonal population + 3,752 permanent population =

**12,068 low overnight population**

**Average Estimate = 13,454 seasonal overnight population**

During the summer months, the seasonal overnight population in the Town of Sunset Beach is approximately 13,454 people.

### *Day-Trip Visitors*

Another consideration when gauging seasonal population impact on community infrastructure is the effect of day-trippers. Unlike estimates of overnight visitors above, day-trippers travel for brief stays in the community, typically for recreation activities like going to the beach. Day-trippers would primarily have an impact on traffic congestion and parking availability. Again, there is no standard method for calculating day-trippers. One of the best indicators for the number of day-trip visitors is the number of parking spaces available. The availability of public parking in the Town has not changed significantly since the 2010 Land Use Plan update. It is also assumed, on a typical peak day during the summer, the majority of vehicles are mostly full, at 4 persons per vehicle. Using data from the 2010 Land Use Plan, and assumptions based off knowledge of the Town and southern Brunswick County, the number of day-trippers is estimated as follows:

$$[1 \text{ shift of parking} \times 601 \text{ parking spaces (441 public spaces} + 160 \text{ paid spaces)}] \times 4 \text{ persons per vehicle} = \mathbf{2,404 \text{ day-trip visitors per day}}$$

Again, many variables including fewer shift changes and more persons per car, and even illegal parking could make the day-trip visitor total vary widely. In addition, some mainland residents will occupy parking spots on the island. As such, the calculation only includes one shift of parking rather than multiples.

### *Peak Population and Day-Trip Visitors*

Considering the peak over-night population estimates plus the day-trip visitor estimate, the Town of Sunset Beach is estimated to have 17,243 people in its jurisdiction on a peak day.

### *POPULATION PROJECTIONS*

Much like seasonal and peak population estimates, population projections can vary widely due to intervening factors such as the strength of the economy, availability of jobs and housing prices. Population projections identify potential challenges and needs that may confront the community in the near future. Sunset Beach is a community with vacant land available for residential development, as well as the potential for redevelopment and in-fill. Sunset Beach is located in Brunswick County, which is one of the fastest growing counties in NC, and one of the fastest growing counties in the United States. Sunset Beach is also on the state border with South Carolina and the high growth area of North Myrtle Beach and Little River.

County population projections are provided by the North Carolina State Demographer. However, municipal population projections are not provided by the State Demographer. The State Demographer's population growth for Brunswick County indicates population increase will occur solely from migration into the county, while natural growth from births will be offset by the natural population decline from deaths. It is also assumed that this

trend of all in-migration growth and zero natural population growth will be the same for Sunset Beach.

The Division of Coastal Management recommends the use of the ratio approach to develop population projections for municipalities. By utilizing the State Data Center (SDC) population projections for Brunswick County, the population projection for Sunset Beach can be determined. In 2014, Sunset Beach accounted for 3.27% of the population of Brunswick County. Using the ratio approach, two methods were developed to project the population of Sunset Beach into the year 2045. The Division of Coastal Management requires that population projections be calculated for a 30-year horizon. However, for infrastructure planning and other calculations based upon these projections, it is wise to use only a twenty-year projection. Other chapters of the plan will use these population projections to calculate future land and infrastructure demand.

**Table 3.5: Population Projection, Method 1: Consistent Share**

Source: Office of State Budget and Management Demographics, LINC, U.S. Census Bureau 2010, U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2014 Estimate.

Method 1	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
<b>Sunset Beach</b>	3,572	3,980	4,486	4,991	5,497	6,003	6,503	7,009
<b>Brunswick County</b>	108,085	121,581	137,036	152,492	167,951	183,410	198,869	214,328
<b>Share (2014)</b>	3.30%	3.27%	3.27%	3.27%	3.27%	3.27%	3.27%	3.27%

**Table 3.6: Population Projection, Method 2: Changing Share**

Source: Office of State Budget and Management Demographics, LINC, U.S. Census Bureau 2010, U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2014 Estimate.

Method 2	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
<b>Sunset Beach</b>	3,572	3,980	4,421	4,859	5,285	5,700	6,105	6,494
<b>Brunswick County</b>	108,085	121,581	137,036	152,492	167,951	183,410	198,869	214,328
<b>Share (2010-2014)</b>	3.30%	3.27%	3.23%	3.19%	3.15%	3.11%	3.07%	3.03%

Method 1 in Table 3.5 assumes that Sunset Beach will always account for 3.27% of the population of Brunswick County. Therefore, by using the equation below, the population projection for the Town can be calculated for any given year.

$$\text{Population of Sunset Beach} = 3.27\% \times \text{Population of Brunswick County}$$

In the year 2045:

$$7,009 \text{ (2045 pop.)} = 3.27\% \text{ (pop. ratio)} \times 214,328 \text{ (Brunswick Co. pop.)}$$

Method 2 in Table 3.6 assumes that the share of the population within Sunset Beach will change based off past trends. In 2010, the share of the County population in Sunset Beach

was 3.30% and in 2014, that share dropped to 3.27%. If that trend continues, the Town will have a share of 3.03% in 2045.

$$\text{Population of Sunset Beach} = 3.03\% \times \text{Population of Brunswick County}$$

In the year 2045:

$$6,494 \text{ (2045 pop.)} = 3.03\% \text{ (pop. ratio)} \times 214,328 \text{ (Brunswick Co. pop.)}$$

In 2035, the permanent population of Sunset Beach is projected to be between 5,700 and 6,003 people. This is an increase of about 2,000 people or 50%. Whereas in 2045, the permanent population is expected to be between 6,494 and 7,009 people. Assuming this projection is accurate, the permanent population will almost double over the next thirty years. It should be noted that such a substantial increase would only result from a significant amount of new residential development and seasonal unit conversion to permanent/year-round use.

The population growth rate from 2010 to 2014 was 5%, which equates to the addition of 45 new permanent residents a year. If the population projections were calculated based upon the addition of 45 new residents a year, then the permanent population in 2045 would be 5,102. However, basing the population projection on growth from 2010 to 2014 is likely misleading as 2010 through most of 2013 were characterized by lower than normal growth as a result of the economic downturn.

## HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS IN SUNSET BEACH

Analyzing the types of existing housing stock enables the community, elected officials and planners to get an overall picture of the range of housing opportunities available or needed in the jurisdiction. Other housing attributes such as the building year of the structure, owner versus renter occupation, and value, act as indicators to the nature and characteristic of the existing housing stock.

**Table 3.7: Total Housing Units in Brunswick County and its Municipalities, 2000-2010**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010.

Total Housing Units	2000	2010	Growth Rate (2000-2010)
Bald Head Island	591	1,111	88%
Belville	115	787	584%
Boiling Spring Lakes	1,403	2,418	72%
Bolivia	71	77	8%
Calabash	519	1,445	178%
Carolina Shores	844	1,981	135%
Caswell Beach	575	685	19%
Holden Beach	2,043	2,335	14%
Leland	904	6,583	628%
Navassa	185	661	257%
Northwest	303	326	8%

Oak Island	6,662	8,686	30%
Ocean Isle Beach	2,515	3,206	27%
St. James	593	2,263	282%
Sandy Creek	102	104	2%
Shalotte	600	1,908	218%
Southport	1,308	1,777	36%
<b>Sunset Beach</b>	<b>3,072</b>	<b>5,110</b>	<b>66%</b>
Varnamtown	245	277	13%
Unincorporated Areas	28,781	35,742	24%
Brunswick County	51,431	77,482	51%

Note: Due to annexations, approximately 800 housing units were added to the Town's housing stock between 2000 and 2010.

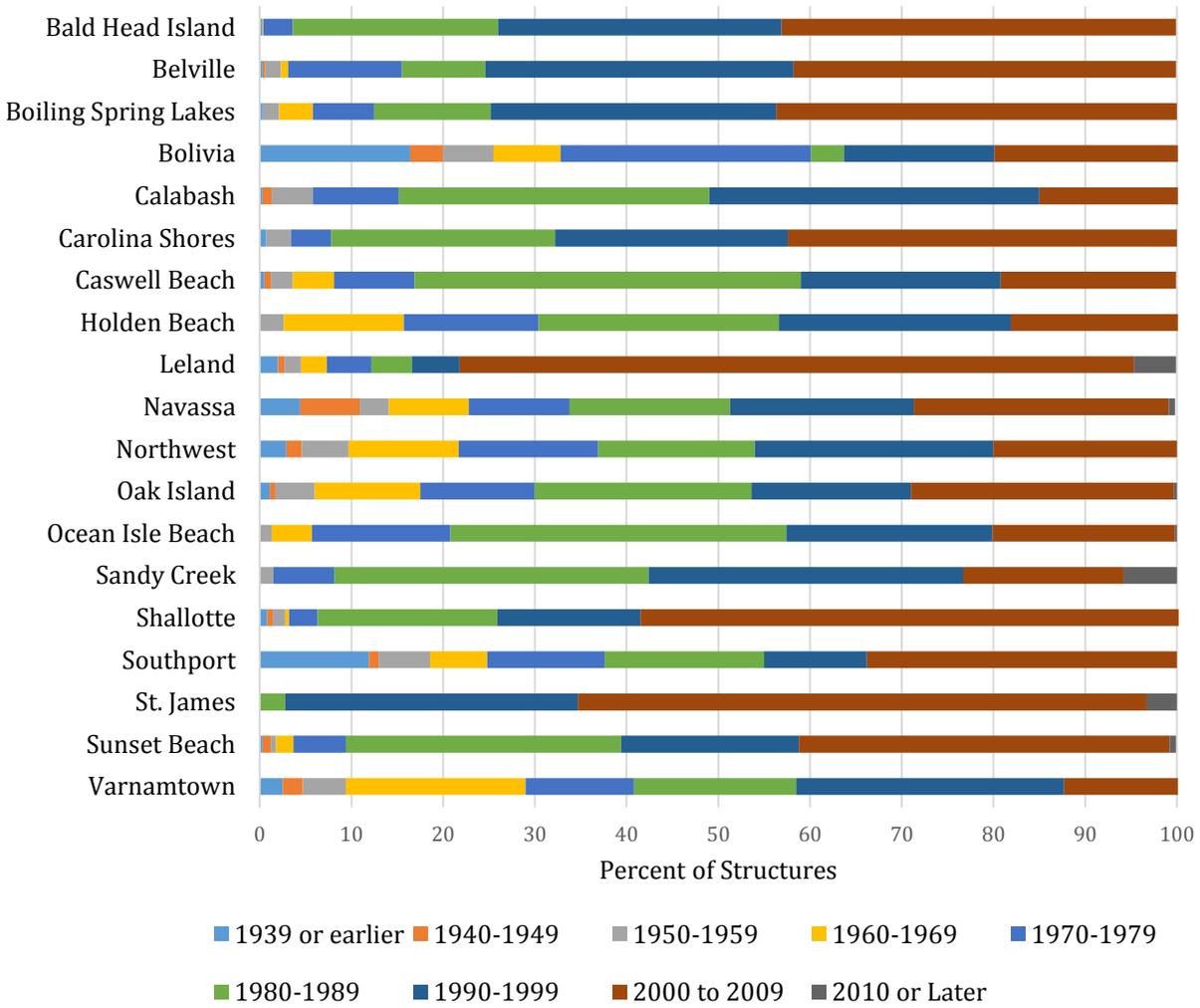
**Table 3.8: Total Housing Units in Sunset Beach based off Census Block Groups, 2000-2010**

Source: ESRI Community Analyst 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010.

Geography	2000	2010	Growth Rate (2000-2010)
<b>Sunset Beach Town Limits</b>	<b>3,072</b>	<b>5,110</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>"Island"</b>	1,094	1,301	19%
<b>"Old Town"</b>	823	929	13%
<b>"Mainland"</b>	1,066	2,880	186%

Table 3.7 shows the number of total housing units in Brunswick County, its municipalities, and its unincorporated areas. The number of units in Sunset Beach grew 66% between 2000 and 2010. Table 3.8 shows the number of housing units in the three geographical areas displayed in Figure 3.1. The "Mainland" portion of town is made up mostly of area annexed into Sunset Beach since 1990. This area has seen the most growth in new housing units. The "Island" and "Old Town" portions have less vacant land for development.

**Figure 3.3: Brunswick County Municipalities**  
Housing: Year Unit Built, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Estimate 2013.

Figure 3.3 shows Brunswick County municipalities and the year that structures within each town or city were built. Bolivia has the highest percentage of older housing while Bald Head Island and St. James have the highest percentage of newer housing. When a community has an older housing stock, those units can require renovation to ensure stability for new residents. Sunset Beach has a relatively new housing stock, indicating less need for rehabilitation projects.

**Table 3.9: Housing Occupancy and Tenure in Sunset Beach, 1980-2010**

Source: ESRI Community Analyst, LINC, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010.

	1980	1990	2000	2010
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	573	1,095	2,983	5,110
<b>Occupied</b>	119 (21%)	142 (13%)	910 (30%)	1,871 (37%)
<b>Renter-Occupied</b>	19	18	90	218
<b>Owner-Occupied</b>	100	124	820	1,653
<b>Vacant</b>	454 (79%)	953 (87%)	2,073 (70%)	3,239 (63%)
<b>Seasonal Units</b>	N/A	N/A	1,823	2,420
<b>Other for rent, sale, etc.</b>	N/A	N/A	250	819

\*Detailed data for vacant units is not available for census years 1980 and 1990.

Table 3.9 shows housing occupancy and tenure in Sunset Beach from 1980 to 2010. In 1980, nearly 80% of the housing in Sunset Beach was considered vacant – most likely used for seasonal purposes. Over the past 30 years, the percentage of housing dedicated to year-round residents (Occupied) has increased significantly. This has occurred as a result of annexations and the conversion of seasonal vacation housing units to permanent occupancy. However, more housing units are still dedicated to seasonal use than for permanent use. It is likely that the percentage of vacant housing units will continue to decline, while the percentage of occupied housing units will continue to increase. In fact, the conversion of vacant, seasonally occupied housing units, will likely increase to account for new permanent residents in the future.

**Table 3.10: Median Value of Housing for Brunswick County Municipalities, 2013**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2013 Estimates.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Median Value of Housing</b>
<b>Brunswick County</b>	<b>\$186,600</b>
Bald Head Island	\$865,400
Belville	\$173,000
Boiling Spring Lakes	\$170,900
Bolivia	\$67,500
Calabash	\$146,800
Carolina Shores	\$201,300
Caswell Beach	\$462,300
Holden Beach	\$481,500
Leland	\$197,600
Navassa	\$130,100
Northwest	\$101,000
Oak Island	\$243,200
Ocean Isle Beach	\$538,700
St. James	\$450,000
Sandy Creek	\$108,900
Shalotte	\$193,700
Southport	\$245,800
<b>Sunset Beach</b>	<b>\$273,100</b>
Varnamtown	\$175,000

Table 3.10 shows the median housing value in Brunswick County municipalities. Sunset Beach has a significantly higher median housing value than the county, at \$273,100. The median housing value for strictly inland communities is generally much lower than the value of homes in coastal communities. Sunset Beach homes have median values that are typical of a beach community in Brunswick County. Accordingly, affordable housing can be difficult to ascertain for local workforce. For example, a typical measure of a municipality's housing affordability is calculated by multiplying the community's median household income by a factor of three. This number should be roughly equivalent to the median housing value. Based on this calculation ( $\$54,900 \times 3 = \$164,700$ ), it is evident that locating affordable housing is likely an issue for the local workforce. However, the Town does have housing located on the mainland with values that would accommodate the workforce around the \$165,000 range.

**Table 3.11: Projected Occupied Housing Units in Sunset Beach, Method 1, 1980-2035**

Source: ESRI Community Analyst, LINC, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010.

Method 1	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
<b>Total Population</b>	304	311	1,824	3,572	3,980	4,486	4,991	5,497	6,003
<b>Estimated Increase in Population per 5 years</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	408	506	505	506	506
<b>Persons Per Housing Unit (1980-2010)</b>	2.6	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	1.4
<b>Total Occupied Housing Units</b>	119	142	909	1,871	<b>2,105</b>	<b>2,405</b>	<b>2,719</b>	<b>3,056</b>	<b>3,410</b>
<b>Estimated Increase in Occupied Housing Units per 5 years</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>234</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>354</b>

**Table 3.12: Projected Occupied Housing Units in Sunset Beach, Method 2, 1980-2035**

Source: ESRI Community Analyst, LINC, U.S. Census Bureau 2000 and 2010.

Method 2	1980	1990	2000	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
<b>Total Population</b>	304	311	1,824	3,572	3,980	4,486	4,991	5,497	6,003
<b>Estimated Increase in Population per 5 years</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	408	506	505	506	506
<b>Persons Per Housing Unit (2010)</b>	2.6	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9
<b>Total Occupied Housing Units</b>	119	142	909	1,871	<b>2,085</b>	<b>2,350</b>	<b>2,614</b>	<b>2,879</b>	<b>3,144</b>
<b>Estimated Increase in Occupied Housing Units per 5 years</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>214</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>265</b>

Table 3.11 and 3.12 show the projected occupied housing units for Sunset Beach through the year 2035. In order to determine the number of housing units needed in the future, the population projection estimates are divided by persons per housing unit. Table 3.11 projects persons per housing unit into the future while Table 3.12 uses the constant value of 1.91 persons per housing unit for each 5-year increment. The projected total population values are then divided by the persons per housing unit for each time period to determine the number of occupied units that Sunset Beach will have in that year. The occupied housing units projected here are a combination of new units and units that have been converted from seasonal to year-round residences.

## LOCAL ECONOMY

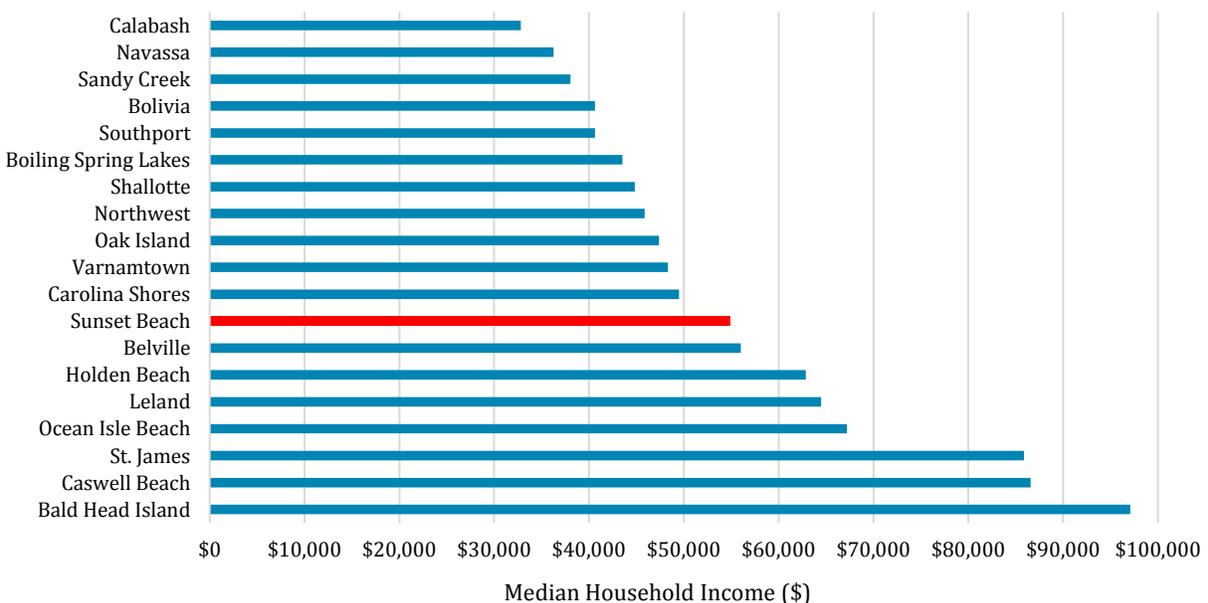
Like many smaller coastal communities, the traditional local economy is predominantly driven by seasonal tourism and recreation. In addition, Sunset Beach is located within two miles of the Town of Calabash, which continues to be a regional destination for seafood restaurant activity. Sunset Beach is also within ten miles of North Myrtle Beach, which is expanding as a regional commercial center with large-scale retail, recreation, entertainment, and service industries. Other quickly growing areas with substantial commercial activities near Sunset Beach include Shallotte and the Wilmington metropolitan area.

As shown previously in Table 3.9, there is a relatively low full-time housing occupancy level of around 37%. This implies that the local economy of Sunset Beach is still primarily dependent on seasonal tourism, recreation, and rental housing activity for generating economic revenue. Yet, the Town’s growing permanent population suggests increasing support for more year-round industry.

### *Seasonal Accommodation Activity*

While seasonal vacationers are vital to the local economy, the Town does not have a large presence of traditional motels, hotels, resorts, or inns. The largest resorts in Sunset Beach are the Sea Trail Plantation Resort with 545 rooms and the Colony at Oyster Bay with 120 rooms. These resorts are located on the mainland portion of Town. There is also the Sunset Inn, which contains 14 rooms. Most of the seasonal rental activity is of vacation rental houses, duplexes, and condos on the island portion of Town.

**Figure 3.4: Brunswick County Municipalities**  
Median Household Income, 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2013 Estimates.

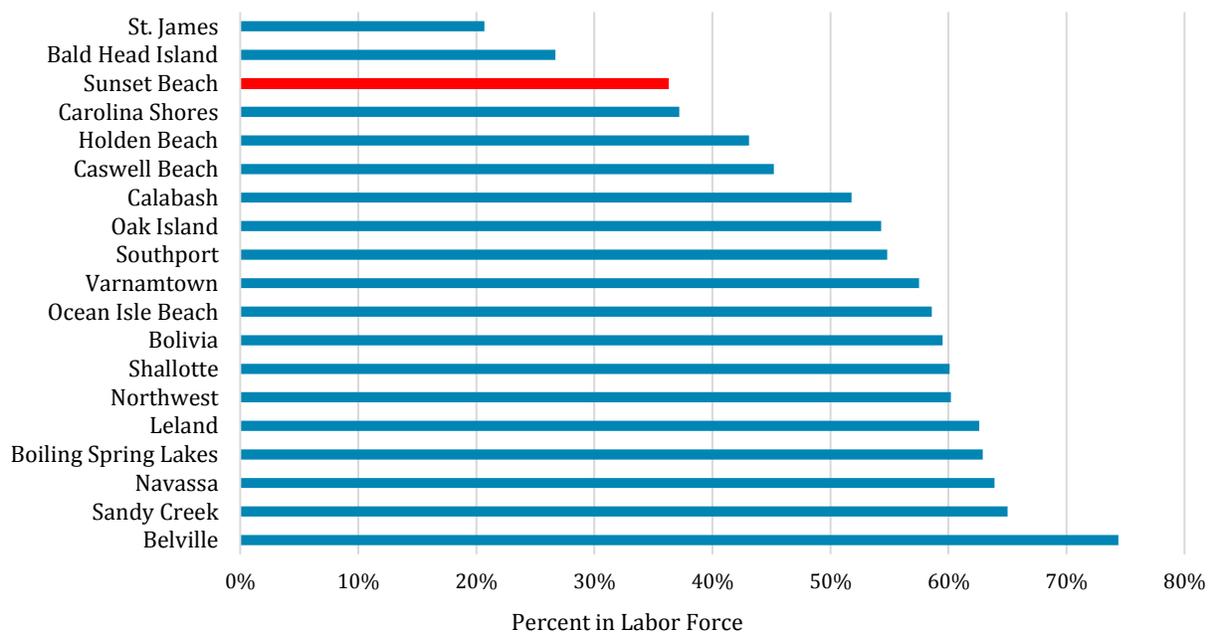
Figure 3.4 shows that the Sunset Beach area has considerably higher median household income (\$54,900) than adjacent municipalities in Brunswick County. In Sunset Beach, for many residents, the median household income is calculated based upon retirement income rather than income earned in the labor force. This is important to note as only 38% of the population is considered part of the labor force. The Town’s high income level indicates the presence of discretionary income that can support retail and commercial enterprises and allow for leisure activities. The median household income in North Carolina in 2013 was \$46,334. In Brunswick County, that number is \$46,438.

*Employment Statistics*

According to Figure 3.5 below, approximately 38% of the population 16 and over in Sunset Beach was part of the labor force\*. This percentage was the third lowest for Brunswick County municipalities. This low number of ‘workers’ and the Town’s comparatively high median age indicates a large presence of retired or semi-retired persons.

\*Labor force meaning those employed at a place of business or in private practice.

**Figure 3.5: Brunswick County Municipalities**  
Percent in Labor Force (16 & Over), 2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2013 Estimate.

Table 3.13 below shows the employment industry of those living in Sunset Beach and are part of the labor force. Retail Trade and the Arts, Entertainment, Recreations, Accommodation, Food Service industries support approximately half of the employment in Sunset Beach. Typically, these employment sectors are composed of part-time or seasonal jobs. There are very few jobs in the professional service sector, indicating a lack of high paying or high skilled employment options.

**Table 3.13: Employment by Industry in Sunset Beach for Persons 16 Years and Older, 2013**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 2013 Estimates.

<b>Employment Industry</b>	<b>Number Employed</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting</b>	0	0%
<b>Mining</b>	0	0%
<b>Construction</b>	93	8%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	96	8%
<b>Wholesale trade</b>	0	0%
<b>Retail trade</b>	240	21%
<b>Transportation and warehousing, and utilities</b>	13	1%
<b>Information</b>	68	6%
<b>Finance and insurance, real estate and rental and leasing</b>	114	10%
<b>Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services</b>	58	5%
<b>Educational, health and social services</b>	115	10%
<b>Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services</b>	281	25%
<b>Other services (except public administration)</b>	6	1%
<b>Public administration</b>	52	5%
<b>TOTAL Employed Persons 16+</b>	<b>1,136</b>	<b>100%</b>

## SUMMARY

- The permanent population of Sunset Beach has increased by 1,000% since 1990 (largely due to annexation).
- The “Mainland” section of Sunset Beach has seen the most population growth.
- Sunset Beach has the highest median age in Brunswick County, at 66 years.
- Considering the peak over-night population estimates plus the day-trip visitor estimate, the Town of Sunset Beach is estimated to have 17,243 people in its jurisdiction on a peak day.
- The permanent population of Sunset Beach is projected to grow by 50% in the next 20 years. It should be noted that such a substantial increase would only result from a significant amount of new residential development and seasonal unit conversion to permanent/year-round use.
- The “Mainland” section of Sunset Beach has seen the most development of housing units.
- Sunset Beach has a relatively new housing stock.
- About half the housing units in Sunset Beach are seasonal units.
- The median household income in Sunset Beach is higher than that of the State and the County.
- Less than half the population of Sunset Beach is part of the labor force in the Town.
- Part-time and seasonal jobs account for the highest percentage of employment in the Town.