

How we live...

Introduction

Sullivan's Island has remained successful in maintaining the unique single-family character of a quaint, small beach town since its inception. 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

Housing Stock

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 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. There is room for error in this assumption, but the three-month period allows for a concerted effort in confirming who may be a partial resident or not.

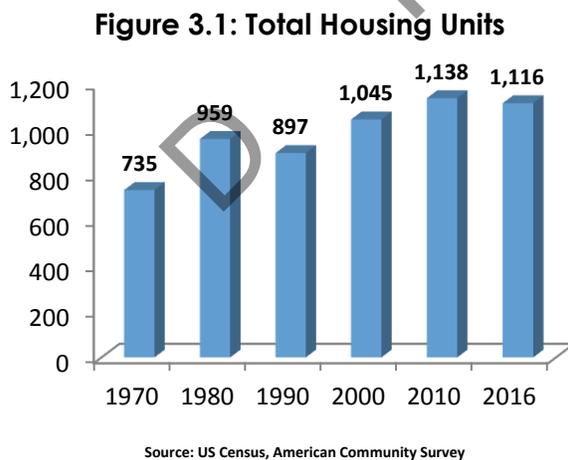


Table 3.1: Assessed Parcels	
4% Assessment	610
6% Assessment	524
Total Assessed Parcels	1,134
Single Family Residential	882
Multifamily	172
Total Dwelling Units	1,054
Vacation Rentals	51
Long Term Rentals	82
Total Confirmed Rentals	133
ADU Special Exceptions	15

Source: Charleston County Assessor / Sullivan's Island

Further analysis regarding part-time and full-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 do a good job of communicating with part-time residents in their three month contact period. The main question asked by the ACS, if the resident is in the home more than two months of the year, shows where the ACS would consider the home is occupied. This would drastically increase the amount of full-time residents as a result, so the numbers seem to be nearly correct.

The Town also keeps records on the types of units (single-family and multi-family) like vacation rentals and long term rentals, as well as Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Special Exceptions. 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. Below are a few public comments from online surveys that were collected throughout the planning process.

“I think it important to retain the essentially single-family home predominance.”
– Raymond Sweigart

“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.”
--Dennis Lovell

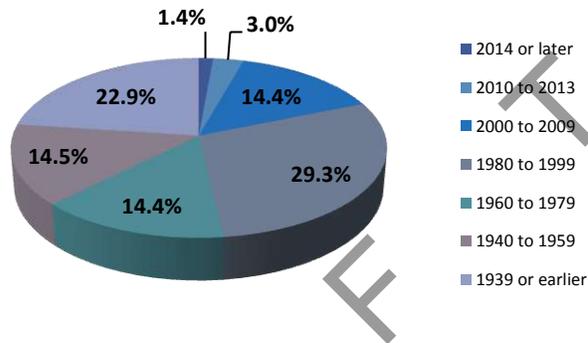
Table 3.2 is data that is collected by the Town of Sullivan's Island for those properties that report whether they are short or long term rentals. The table helps to show average monthly rents for each category across the Island.

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	55
Average Monthly Gross	\$3,443.53	\$3,687.69	\$4,336.56	\$5,009.71	\$4,898.96

Source: Sullivan's 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, who 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 main era's on Sullivan's Island, where housing was built. From 1939 or earlier, approximately 23% of the current housing stock was built. However, the largest bulk of existing housing stock (29.3%) was built from 1980 to 1999 (Figure 3.2). The spike in growth from 1939 or earlier could either be from a housing stock that just accumulated over the Town's layered past or the military presence that was built up over time around Fort Moultrie. The larger spike, 1980 to 1999 is probably most likely because of Hurricane Hugo, which decimated the 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%).

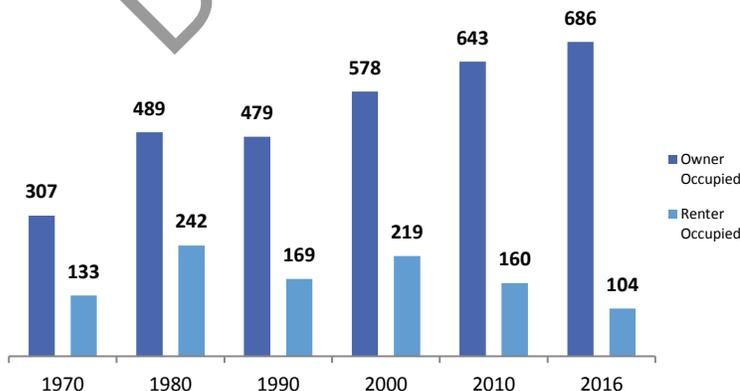
Figure 3.2: Year Structure Built



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)



Source: Census / ACS

Household Type

The majority of household types on the Island are comprised of family households (70.1%) as shown in Table 3.3. 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 that 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.

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%		

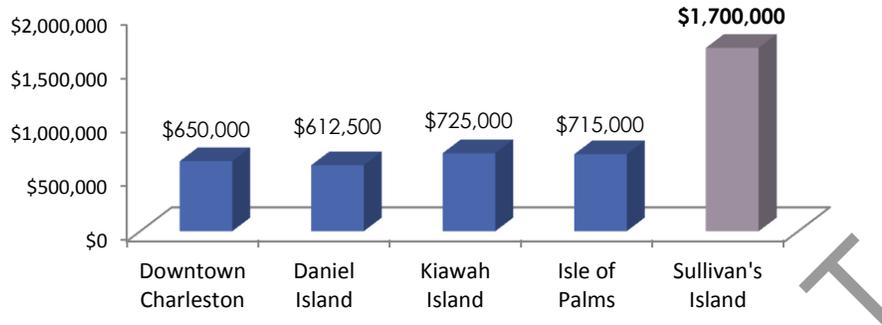
Source: American Community Survey

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)

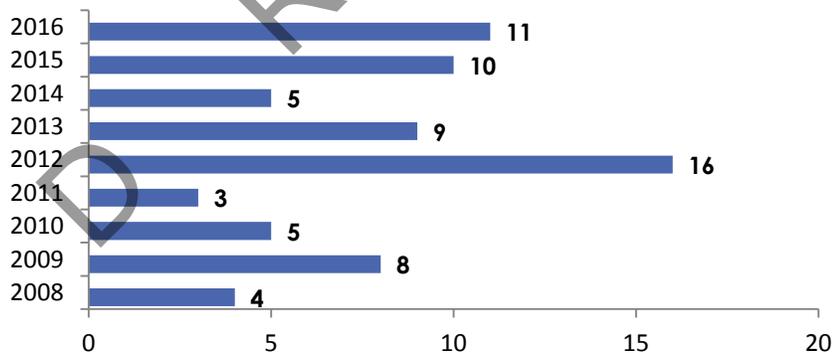


Source: Charleston Trident Association of Realtors

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: 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 island 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 laid out in Sec. 21-11 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.

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 Objections section for Chapter 2.

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 they do not seem to be politically feasible for the Town as 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.

An idea that would seem to be most logical would be for the Town to work with a local jurisdiction such as Mount Pleasant which has more developable land available to develop 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.

D
R
A
F
T