

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32

	PREFACE	i
1.0	INTRODUCTION: LIVABLE DELAWARE	1
1.1	House Bill 396	
1.2	Managing Growth in 21 st Century Delaware	
1.3	House Bill 255	
2.0	SUSSEX COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ((provided by RVB Engineering))	
2.1	Background	
2.2	20xx Plan update	
2.3	Relationship of County Plan to Dewey Beach Comprehensive Plan	
3.0	CONTEXT FOR DEWEY BEACH'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN	
3.1	Statutory Requirements	
3.2	Population Threshold	
3.3	This Document	
3.4	Community Profile: Town of Dewey Beach	
3.4.1	Locale	
3.4.2	History and Cultural Resources	
3.4.3	Update Since 2007 Plan	
3.4.4	Process	
3.4.5	Vision, Goals, and SWOT Analysis	
3.5	Dewey Beach Demographics And Housing Data ((updated by RVB Engineering))	
4.0	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
5.0	THE NATURAL ENVIROMENT	
6.0	THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	
7.0	PUBLIC SAFETY	
8.0	GOVERNMENT, SERVICES, AND FACILITIES	
9.0	QUALITY OF LIFE	
10.0	IMPLEMENTATION	

1 A Municipal Comprehensive Development Plan for
2 The Town of Dewey Beach, Delaware

3 **PREFACE**¹

4 This Comprehensive Development Plan is intended to serve as a document for the future
5 development of Dewey Beach. It has been adopted by the Town Council and is given official
6 recognition as a guide for future planning efforts of the community and its representatives. The
7 legal means for the implementation of the goals and objectives of this plan are included in
8 zoning codes and other municipal codes and ordinances. This plan is a flexible document, and
9 the updating or revision of planning goals and objectives is essential to keep the planning
10 program responsive to the changing needs of the community. The public's understanding of its
11 role in, and contribution to, the efforts of the Planning Committee are needed to keep the
12 community's best interests aligned with the town's growth and development plans for the future.
13 Community interest and cooperative commitment to practical planning, and the timely
14 implementation of the goals and objectives of comprehensive development planning, will
15 contribute to a higher quality of life in Dewey Beach.

16 The plan is also an informational document for the public. Citizens, business people, and
17 government officials can turn to the plan to learn more about Dewey Beach and its policies for
18 future land use decisions. Potential new residents can use the documents as an informational
19 resource about the town, including its characteristics and facilities, to help them make decisions
20 about moving to Dewey Beach. This document contains the most current, available information
21 on population, transportation, housing, employment, and the environment, which may be of
22 interest to land developers, economic-development professionals, and financiers.

23 Finally, the Dewey Beach Comprehensive Plan is a legal document. The Delaware Code
24 specifies that “. . . any incorporated municipality under this chapter shall prepare a
25 comprehensive plan for the city or town or portions thereof as the commission deems
26 appropriate.” The code further specifies, “after a comprehensive plan or portion thereof has
27 been adopted by the municipality in accordance with this chapter, the comprehensive plan shall
28 have the force of law and no development shall be permitted except as consistent with the
29 plan.” (§ 702, Title 22, Delaware Code)

¹ From Town's 2007 Comp Plan

1 **1.0 INTRODUCTION: LIVABLE DELAWARE²**

2 **1.1 House Bill 396**

3 In June of 1998, the Delaware General Assembly adopted House Bill 396 (“HB 396”), which
4 provided for each municipality in the State to undertake a community-based planning process to
5 develop a Comprehensive Plan regulating growth in the community. The Assembly’s goal in
6 adopting HB 396 was:

7 *to encourage the most appropriate uses of the physical and fiscal resources of*
8 *the municipality and the coordination of municipal growth, development, and*
9 *infrastructure investment actions with those of other municipalities, counties and*
10 *the State through a process of municipal comprehensive planning.³*

11
12 HB 396 (b) defines a Comprehensive Plan as "a document in text and maps, containing at a
13 minimum, a municipal development strategy setting forth the jurisdiction's position on population
14 and housing growth within the jurisdiction, expansion of its boundaries, development of adjacent
15 areas, redevelopment potential, community character, and the general uses of land within the
16 community, and critical community development and infrastructure issues".

17
18 Once completed and adopted, a municipality’s Comprehensive Plan will be used as the basis
19 for zoning decisions, infrastructure spending, annexation decisions and redevelopment and
20 general growth policies.

21
22 HB 396 also requires that each municipality in Delaware review its Comprehensive Plan at least
23 every five (5) years to determine its relevance given changing conditions in a community. The
24 Plan must be fully revised and formally readopted at least every ten (10) years.

25
26 The Town of Dewey Beach first adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in July 2007. That plan
27 was reviewed and amended in 2013 (“Five-Year review”), and again in 2015 to amend the Town
28 Zoning Map. This document will constitute the mandatory 10-year Comprehensive Plan revision
29 and re adoption.

30
31 **1.2 Managing Growth in 21st Century Delaware**

32 In December of 1999, the Governor’s Cabinet Committee on State Planning Issues published a
33 report focusing on how Delaware and its 57 individual municipalities can manage the explosion
34 of growth occurring in the state. Policies related to sprawl management (“Smart Growth”),
35 environmental issues and business concerns and their collective impact on public sector
36 spending were addressed. The result was a series of initiatives designed to shape Delaware’s
37 future. At its heart, these growth management initiatives are grounded in sound planning
38 principles.

39
40 **1.3 House Bill 255**

41 In July of 2001, House Bill 255 was signed into law. Said Bill amended various land use laws in
42 the State of Delaware and, most notably, strengthened the role that Comprehensive Plans play
43 in a county and a municipality. Such a document is required to, in general, review the existing
44 conditions in a particular county and municipality, outline community goals and objectives and
45 state policies regarding how the community plans to achieve said goals and objectives.

² From 2014 Newport, DE Comp Plan

³ HB 396 (a)

- 1 2.0 Sussex County Comprehensive Plan
- 2

DRAFT

1 **3.0 CONTEXT FOR DEWEY BEACH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

2 **3.1 Statutory Requirements**

3 HB 396 (b) mandates that all municipal Comprehensive Plans address the jurisdiction's position
4 on:

- 5 • population and housing growth
- 6 • expansion of its boundaries
- 7 • development of adjacent areas
- 8 • redevelopment potential
- 9 • community character and general uses of land within the community
- 10 • critical community development and infrastructure issues.

11
12 This section further requires:

13 *The comprehensive plan for municipalities of **greater than 2,000 population***
14 *shall also contain, as appropriate to the size and character of the jurisdiction, a*
15 *description of the physical, demographic and economic conditions of the*
16 *jurisdiction; as well as policies, statements, goals, and planning components for*
17 *public and private uses of land, transportation, economic development,*
18 *affordable housing, community facilities, open spaces and recreation, protection*
19 *of sensitive areas, community design, adequate water and wastewater systems,*
20 *protection of historic and cultural resources, annexation, and such other*
21 *elements which in accordance with present and future needs, in the judgment of*
22 *the municipality, best promotes the health, safety, prosperity, and general public*
23 *welfare of the jurisdiction's residents.*
24

25 **3.2 Population Threshold**

26 The population for the Town of Dewey Beach as reported by the 2010 Census is _____.⁴ Based
27 on the requirements of HB 396 and the population of Dewey Beach, specific issues to be
28 addressed in this Comprehensive Plan include:

- 29 • A Community Profile addressing population, housing, community services and
30 infrastructure issues,
- 31 • Transportation,
- 32 • General Land Uses and development of adjacent areas, and
- 33 • Critical Community Development issues such as expansion of boundaries (annexation)
34 and redevelopment.

35
36 **3.3 This Document**

37 This document, entitled 2017 Comprehensive Plan, Town of Dewey Beach, Sussex County,
38 Delaware (hereinafter referred to as the "2017 Comprehensive Plan" or "2017 Plan"),
39 supersedes the Town's 2007 Comprehensive Plan (hereinafter referred to as the "2007
40 Comprehensive Plan" or "2007 Plan"), and provides a discussion of the issues currently faced
41 by the resident and businesses in Dewey Beach and outlines strategies and recommendations
42 to address those issues. The Plan was developed with the guidance of Dewey Beach's Town
43 Commission, the Town's Planning Commission, and a committee/working group comprised of
44 local property and business owners. The recommendations contained herein, along with the

⁴ US Census: 2010 Demographic Profile

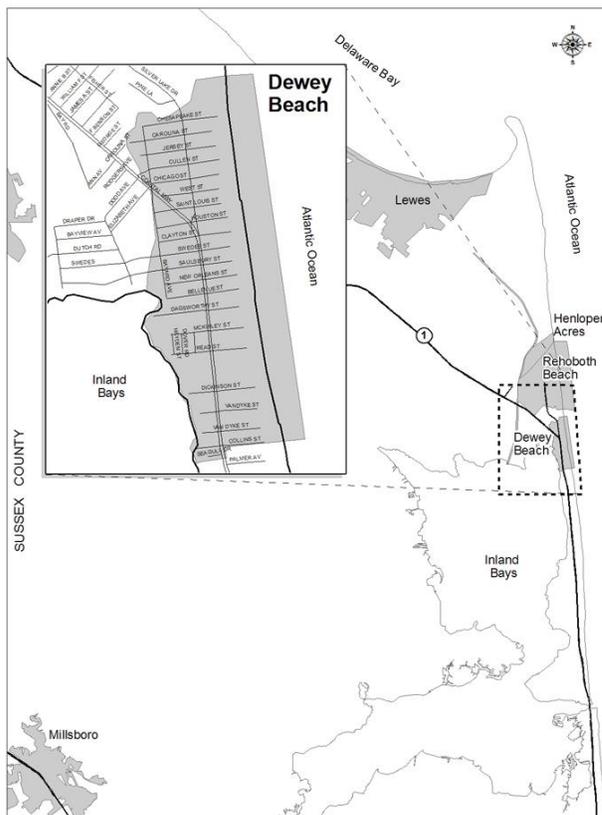
1 maps developed for this Plan, are designed to assist Dewey Beach's leaders in their efforts to
2 maintain and enhance the quality of life in the town.

3 **3.4 Community Profile: Town of Dewey Beach**

4 **3.4.1 Location**

5 The Town of Dewey Beach is located along Delaware's Atlantic coastline in eastern Sussex
6 County. Its municipal boundaries comprise approximately 300 acres. The Town is bounded on
7 the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the west by the Rehoboth Bay, and on the north and south by
8 unincorporated Sussex County. The Town of Dewey Beach is located just north of the
9 Delaware Seashore State Park, a protected natural area, and just south of the City of Rehoboth
10 Beach. The map below illustrates the location and municipal bounds of the Town of Dewey
11 Beach.

12



13

14 **3.4.2 History & Cultural Resources**

15 On January 5, 1855, Clementine and Robert West bought 135 acres of what
16 would become Dewey Beach from John Rodes. Development in the town was
17 sparse until Rehoboth by the Sea Realty Company began developing the northern
18 portion of what is now Dewey Beach, then known as Rehoboth By The Sea. In
19 1915 Morgan T. Gum was commissioned by the State to produce a subdivision plan
20 for what is now the southern portion of Dewey Beach. Gum's design was based
21 on the same grid system used in the development to the north in 1855. By
22 continuing the northern grid system, Gum effectively completed the plan for what
23 would later become Dewey Beach.

24 U.S. Life-Saving Station 141 was built on what is now Dagsworthy Street in 1879.
25 At the time it was called the Rehoboth Life Saving Station, and those chosen to
26 staff the station were drawn from local watermen. Over time a small community
27 grew around the station, and in 1915 the

39 U.S. Life Saving Service became the U.S. Coast Guard. In the wake of the Spanish-American
40 War, many towns were named in honor of war hero Admiral George Dewey. Three history
41 books, one written as far back as 1938, suggest that Dewey Beach can also claim the Admiral
42 as its namesake.

44 While the Great Depression had a serious impact upon Rehoboth By The Sea Realty Company,
45 surviving partners George A. McMahon and John E. Redefier retained the company and
46 continued the town's development. These efforts were greatly helped when Route 1 was built in
47 1944, providing greater accessibility to the town. The Great Nor'easter Storm of March 5th and
48 6th, 1962, brought high winds and ocean waves of 30 feet. The storm damaged or destroyed
49 many buildings as the ocean and the bay met, engulfing the town. The "storm of the century,"

1 as it was called at the time, caused an estimated \$200-million-worth of damage (equivalent to
2 about \$ 1.6-billion today) across coastal communities in Delaware.
3

4 Following the storm, sewer and water systems were introduced, spurring increased interest in
5 the town and a modest period of development through the 1960s. By the mid 70s the area had
6 attracted the interest of several developers. Around this same time, the state banned drinking in
7 Whiskey Beach. This occurrence, combined with the lack of structure, or a strong police
8 presence in Dewey, which was still an unincorporated town, made it the new favored spot for
9 the displaced Whiskey Beach crowd.
10

11 In response to these problems, Dewey Beach became an officially incorporated town in order to
12 make laws against behavioral crimes and hire police to enforce them. Over the next ten years,
13 town officials and local police worked hard to reestablish order and rid Dewey of its “frontier
14 town” image, in favor of the more family-friendly lifestyle it had known in the past. Today,
15 Dewey Beach boasts a vibrant tourist trade and has become a popular summer destination for
16 more than 30,000+ visitors each week. These summer visitors are attracted to the wide array of
17 entertainment opportunities and the spectacular natural beauty Dewey Beach has to offer.
18

19 Officially incorporated as a municipality in 1981, the Town of Dewey Beach was one of the last
20 of the fifty-seven cities and towns formally recognized by the State of Delaware. However, the
21 history and culture of Dewey Beach spans more than a century. Today, the Town of Dewey
22 Beach hosts an eclectic mix of full-time and seasonal residents, as well as many tens-of-
23 thousands of daily and weekly visitors. Some of Dewey’s historic cultural resources, such as
24 the old Boat House Restaurant, have been lost to time. However, the town has a number of
25 culturally important structures and hosts a variety of cultural events, including:
26

- 27 • The Dewey Beach Lifesaving Station – Dating back to the late 1800s, the lifesaving
28 station was moved from Dagsworthy Street to Highway 1 in 1947 and painstakingly
29 restored by the Reader family in the late 1990s. A replica of the original life guard
30 station was completed in 1987 on the Dagsworthy Street property and today serves both
31 as the headquarters for the lifeguards and a town meeting facility.
32
- 33 • The Lions Club John Waples Memorial Playground (McKinley Ave.) – The playground
34 contributes significantly to Dewey Beach’s cultural identity as a family-friendly vacation
35 destination, while also providing an amenity for full-time residents.
36
- 37 • The Lighthouse at Lighthouse Cove (Dickinson Ave.) – An iconic landmark and popular
38 meeting place on the Bay surrounded by restaurants for live music and open air dining.
39
- 40 • The Town has two memorial parks on the Bay, Sunset Park (Dagsworthy Ave.) and
41 Monigle Park (Read Ave.). While both offer the public seating, access to the Bay, and
42 views of Ospreys and sunsets, these parks are not well maintained by the Town and are
43 thus underutilized.
44
- 45 • Children and families – Dewey Beach offers weekly movies and bon fires with story
46 telling on the beach, organized sports on the beach in the early evening, a Junior
47 Lifeguard program, and environmental education programming. Dewey also permits
48 activities the following types of activities on the beach when space permits doing so
49 safely: ball throwing, volley ball, tether ball, kite flying, skim- and boogie boarding and
50 surfing and surf fishing. Dewey Business Partnership hosts an annual Art Fair, Treasure

1 Fest community yard sale, and Easter Egg Hunt on the beach (Spring), Summer Solstice
2 Parade and kids' party (Summer kick-off), Halloween Trick or Treat and a haunted beach
3 bon fire (Fall), Christmas tree lighting, a New Year's Eve "Surfer Drop" and New Year
4 Day Dewey Dunk (Winter).

- 5
- 6 • Dogs – Dewey Beach permits dogs on the beach (properly registered and under an adult
7 owner's control) mornings before 9:30 am and evenings after 5:30 pm in the Summer,
8 and all day long in the off season. Dewey Beach also annually hosts a number of dog-
9 oriented events, including weekend-long events for Greyhounds (Reach the Beach/twice
10 a year), Golden retrievers (Golden Rush/twice a year), Chihuahuas (Cinco de Mayo
11 Races), "doodles" weekend, and others, each attracting hundreds of canine registrants
12 and their families. There are many, many dog-friendly accommodations to choose from,
13 including h/motels and rental houses.
- 14
- 15 • Music – Dewey Beach is the home of several renown music venues and events. On any
16 given evening during the Summer season, one can enjoy a variety of live music in more
17 than a dozen locations; music that ranges from acoustic guitar to the Island Boyz, from
18 live jam sessions to popular up-and-coming Delaware bands. Annually, Dewey
19 businesses host Music Fest and an Elvis Festival, and join with Rehoboth in its annual
20 Jazz Festival.
- 21
- 22 • Kicking back – Dewey also has a culture of kicking back and enjoying the moment.
23 Some typical events spread throughout the year include the Winter Gala, St. Patrick's
24 Day festivities, Starboard's Opening, Running of the Bulls, Bacon Fest, and the property
25 owners' End of the Summer Party. Dewey is home to a number of group houses that
26 embrace the Dewey vibe and take advantage of the benefits of ride/house sharing.
- 27
- 28 • Food and Beer – For a tiny town, Dewey has an eclectic mix of places to eat; 27
29 restaurants and eateries in its 8 block "downtown" business strip. There is, of course,
30 pizza and more pizza, but also healthy foods, a salad-focused restaurant, a raw bar,
31 Mexican food, Thai food, your normal beach food, and many upscale specialties. Any
32 given year one or more of these eateries/restaurants are recognized by local and State
33 news outlets and associations as being the "Best in Delaware" for their breakfasts,
34 salads, crab cakes, etc. A number of these restaurants focus on providing craft beers,
35 and there are two brew pubs now operational in Town.
- 36

3.4.3 Update since the 2007 Plan

37 In 2007 the Town adopted its first Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP, comp plan, or
38 plan). The 2007 plan enumerated ____ planning Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations.
39 Over the past nine years ____ of these have been achieved, while ____ have not yet been
40 begun. For many of the latter, it was determined that County, State and/or Federal support
41 would be necessary for making any significant progress. Some of these issues have been re-
42 addressed in this 2017 update, recognizing the need for coordination and collaboration with the
43 cognizant entities and agencies.

44

45

46 Since 2007 Dewey Beach has seen some major developments and events:

- 47 • Review and amendment of the Towns Zoning Code (Chapter 185 of the Municipal Code) to
48 align with the certified 2007 comp plan (2009).

49

- 1 • Plan updates. Interim reviews and certified updates of the 2007 comp plan in 2013 (five-year
2 update) and 2015 (change in zoning district boundaries).
3
- 4 • Update of the Town's Flood Damage Reduction Code (Chapter 101 of the Municipal Code)
5 to align with recent changes required by the Federal Emergency Management
6 Administration (2015).
7
- 8 • Hurricanes Irene (2011) and Sandy (2012). These events required the evacuation of the
9 Town and provided successful tests of the effectiveness of the Town's Emergency
10 Response Plan. They also caused significant storm- and flood-related damage, emphasizing
11 the reality of sea-level rise and resulting in a strategic focus on SLR issues and planning.
12
- 13 • Bayard Ave. Drainage Project. This was a million dollar infrastructure improvement project to
14 alleviate chronic flooding in the Bayard/Bellevue Ave area. Supported in part by monies from
15 the Town's Infrastructure Reserve Fund and a State loan, this project was preceded by
16 numerous public meetings to discuss the problem and evaluate engineering options and
17 studies.
18
- 19 • Ruddertowne Redevelopment (now Lighthouse Cove; bay block between Collins and
20 Dickinson Aves.). Now entering Phase III of a planned \$_____ million redevelopment that
21 will include a Hyatt Place Hotel, luxury Residences at Lighthouse Cove condominiums,
22 _____ square feet of retail space, three Dewey landmark restaurants and the
23 BayCenter conference center, a re-nourished and expanded bay-side public beach area at
24 the end of Van Dyke Ave., and an expanded public bay walk.
25
- 26 • Financial Soundness. In 2008 Dewey Beach suffered a \$_____ budget deficit; in part a
27 result of the widespread 2007/2008 economic downturn. This was followed by the retirement
28 of the long time Town Manager, appointment of three different Acting Town Managers, and
29 two new Town Managers, each of whom resigned after only brief periods in office. With the
30 appointment of its current Town Manager in _____, Dewey has shown positive budget
31 results each year since 2013 and has built its reserve funds up to a level of \$_____ million
32 (not including a restricted Beach Replenishment Fund of \$ _____ million).
33

3.4.4 Process

34
35
36 TBD

37
38 At the outset of this process the Comprehensive Development Plan Working Group and
39 Committee established the following mission and overarching objectives:
40

41 Mission Statement

42 *The mission and purpose of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and Working*
43 *Group is to fairly address the interests and needs of the town's constituents,*
44 *namely the residents, property owners, businesses, and visitors, in a way that*
45 *results in a plan for Dewey's future that is balanced and ensures a stable and*
46 *positive image and future for the town, optimizing its key attributes including a*
47 *beautiful and healthy beach and bay, small town feel, vibrant family and social*
48 *life, safety and quiet enjoyment, fiscal responsibility, and natural resources.*
49

50 Objectives:

- *review the Town’s 2007 Comprehensive Development Plan and those of its neighboring Coastal DE municipalities and Sussex County,*
- *establish a shared vision of Dewey Beach 2035 that assures a stable and positive future for the Town, and*
- *develop an updated Plan that will engage all of the Town’s stakeholders to work together to move the Town forward over the next 10 years toward that vision.*

3.4.5 Vision, Goals, and SWOT Analysis

Vision

TBD – Vison Team

Goals of Governance

Section 4 of the Charter of the Town of Dewey Beach enumerates five overarching goals for the general governance of the town and its residents:

1. Maintain peace and order.
2. Provide for the town’s sanitation.
3. Protect the town’s beauty.
4. Provide for the health, safety, convenience, comfort, and well-being of the population.
5. Protect and preserve all property, public and private.

Planning Goals

The following are goals that have been reviewed and discussed by the Comprehensive Development Plan Working Group (CDPWG), Planning Commission and Town Commissioners, and reflect the Town’s consensus objectives for making Dewey Beach a better, safer, and friendlier town that serves all the town’s constituents equitably and provides guidance for the next decade of the Town’s evolution.

- The Town of Dewey Beach will be characterized by a respectful and diverse culture that values quiet enjoyment in harmony with vibrant day- and night-time activities.
- The Town of Dewey Beach will enable all stakeholder groups to contribute to Dewey’s vibrancy, and to share in the costs and benefits of the Town’s culture and commerce in a balanced way.
- The Town of Dewey Beach will achieve financial sustainability based on stable and predictable revenue sources and reasonable and predictable expenditures.
- The Town of Dewey Beach will invest in itself and become recognized as a gem of a Mid-Atlantic small beach town; clean, beautiful and vibrant.
- The Town of Dewey Beach will provide for the security and safety of all stakeholders within Town limits, including on its beaches and ocean and bay areas, in residential and commercial areas, and along Coastal Highway (SR-1).

- 1 • Dewey Beach town operations and governance will be recognized as efficient and
2 effective in meeting the needs of this vibrant and evolving community.
- 3 • The Town of Dewey Beach will develop comprehensive business cases regarding the
4 annexation of strategic areas of neighboring lands and communities to improve the long-
5 term viability of the area and to protect the surrounding natural resources.
- 6 • The Town of Dewey Beach will preserve the existing character of the Town and the
7 diversity of its surrounding natural resources, and protect them in perpetuity by
8 appropriate municipal code and effective Town governance.
- 9 • The Town of Dewey Beach will take a leadership position in, and responsibility for,
10 protecting and preserving the natural environment in and around Dewey.
- 11 • The Town of Dewey Beach will develop and maintain a strategy for long-term adaptation
12 to sea-level rise that is supported by County and State policy, operations and funding.
- 13 • The Town of Dewey Beach's culture and commerce will extend throughout the Spring
14 and Fall shoulder seasons.

15 SWOT Analysis

16 An analysis of the Town's Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities (SWOT) was
17 used to frame high priority recommendations. The result of this SWOT Analysis is presented
18 below. Each recommendation is framed to leverage the Town's strengths to improve areas of
19 weakness, mitigate recognized threats to the Town's well being, capture opportunities and/or
20 further the Town governance goals identified in the Town Charter.
21
22

23 Strengths

24
25 Unique Ocean beach / Bayside
26 Small town ambiance
27 Accessible / Walkable
28 Seasonal rhythms
29 Relaxing / People & pet friendly
30
31

Weaknesses

Lack of town gathering place(s)
Route One congestion / division
Rowdiness image
Lack of coherent, shared vision
Variable revenue base

32 Threats

33
34 Increased congestion (Internal & external)
35 Sea level rise
36 Rowdiness image
37 Conflicts between stakeholder groups
38 Diminishing property values
39
40

Opportunities

Proactive Vision & Town Planning
Robust shoulder season
Leader in sea level rise mitigation
Iconic gathering place(s)

41 3.5 DEWEY BEACH DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING DATA

42 3.5.1 Demographics and Population

43 ***Vision Statement – Demographics and Population. The Town of Dewey Beach is aware of***
44 ***and equitably addresses the needs of its residents, business and property owners, and***
45 ***visitors when formulating public policy and strategic planning.***
46

This section of the plan provides details regarding the past, present, and projected population of the Town of Dewey Beach. The data contained in this section may be useful in providing information regarding future service and facility needs, as well as information regarding anticipated changes in the social character of the Dewey Beach community. Information from this section will be noted extensively in other sections of the plan document to reinforce and justify many of the core recommendations. Demographic data used in this planning document were collected from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 U.S. Censuses, and the _____ Delaware Population Consortium report.

Important note: The data and statistics included in this section have been drawn primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau, among other sources. While the accuracy of the data is probably very good, the figures apply only to the permanent population of the Town of Dewey Beach. The vast majority of people in the town are seasonal and occasional residents, weekly or weekend lessees, and daytime visitors. In fact, even some of the town officials are not permanent residents. Unfortunately, accurate statistics regarding this significant portion of the population are extremely difficult to generate, and estimates of these statistics are not recommended for communities the size of Dewey Beach. It is important that the absence of data regarding this segment of the town's population be recognized; however, some basic data regarding the Dewey Beach community is necessary to provide a profile of the town and its people.

Demographics of Resident Population

In 2010, the resident population of the Town of Dewey Beach was 341 (and estimated to be 371 in 2015)⁵. Having grown by almost 50% in the prior 10 years, from 2000 to 2010 the apparent population “growth rate” slowed as Dewey Beach’s year-round population grew by a mere 13%. This is approximately two-thirds that of Delaware as a whole (37%); a striking one-third that of Sussex County (20%). Unlike Sussex County where much of this population growth is driven by residential development of previously undeveloped lands, 99% of the parcels in Dewey Beach have already been developed; there is negligible space for new housing development. Therefore the increases in year-round population numbers, the “population growth” measured by census data probably reflects small changes in use of the 1,500 to 2,000 housing units from shorter-term rentals and second homes to permanent residences. Dewey Beach’s population growth rate between 2000 and 2010 is also significantly less than that for the neighboring communities of Rehoboth Beach (14%) and Bethany Beach (17%) which have similar demographics and housing Table 1 displays population data for the Town of Dewey Beach, Sussex County, and the State of Delaware.

Table 1 – Total Population, 1960-2010

Place	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Dewey Beach	--	--	--	204	301 (+47.5%)	341 (+13.3%)
Sussex County	73,195	80,356 (+9.8%)	98,004 (+22.0%)	113,847 (+16.2%)	157,430 (+38.3%)	215,622 (+37.0%)
Delaware	446,292	548,104 (+22.8%)	594,338 (+8.4%)	669,069 (+12.6%)	786,448 (+17.5%)	945,934 (+20.2%)

Source: U.S. Census, 1960-2010

⁵ American Fact Finder at www.factfinder.census.gov

1
2 **Population Projection**

3 Population projections are often difficult to accurately compose and are very unreliable for small
4 geographic areas, because there is a large margin of error when manipulating relatively small
5 numbers. Therefore, state sources do not typically calculate population projections for towns
6 the size of Dewey Beach. One method of estimating future municipal population is to project it
7 as a percentage of the growth projected for the larger surrounding area. Another is to project
8 forward the existing trend line for growth within the municipality.
9

10 The first scenario uses the U.S. Census population data and estimates for Dewey Beach from
11 1990 to 2010, included in Table 1. The population counts for this period indicate that between
12 2000 and 2010 the residential population grew by an average annual rate of about 1.3 percent.
13 Using this figure as the standard for projection, a lower bound for the population projection can
14 be derived.
15

16 The second scenario calculates the town's portion of the official county population projection to
17 2030 based upon the percentage of the total County population residing in Dewey Beach in
18 2010, approximately 0.16 percent. Reliable population projections for Sussex County are
19 available and regularly updated by the Delaware Population Consortium. Using this method, a
20 more aggressive population projection is derived.
21

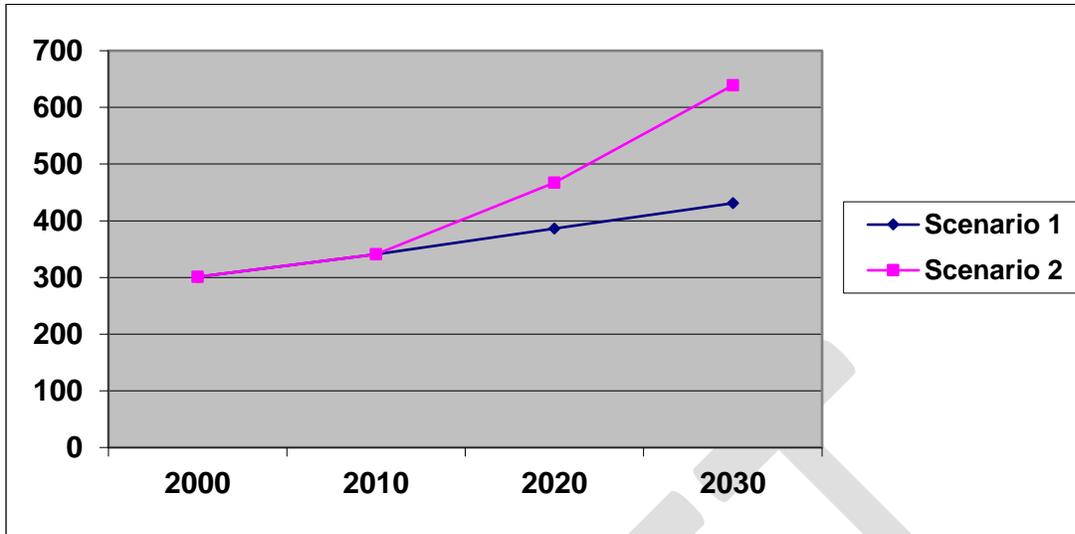
22 Figure 1 and Table 2 display the results of these two scenarios. It is proposed that the future
23 population of Dewey Beach will lie within the range shown by these two projection methods.
24 However, it is again important to note that these projections are not necessarily reliable and are
25 provided only for some basic information regarding the anticipated future of the town and the
26 content of its community. An important factor in the growth of the Dewey Beach community is
27 the rate at which the town transforms from a summer resort community to an increasingly
28 permanent, year-round community.
29

30 **Table 2 – Population Projection Scenarios, Town of Dewey Beach, 2000-2030**

Growth Scenario	2000	2010	2020	2030
Scenario 1: Trend Projection of Decadal Growth	301	341	386 (+13.3%)	431 (+13.3%)
Scenario 2: Portion of Projected Sussex County Population	301	341	467 (+37.0%)	639 (+37.0%)

31 Source: IPA, U.S. Census, Delaware Population Consortium, 2005
32
33

34 **Figure 1 – Population Projection Scenarios, Town of Dewey Beach, 2000-2030**



Source: IPA, U.S. Census, Delaware Population Consortium, 2005

A parcel survey completed in 2005 showed that the town has little undeveloped land. This seems to indicate that population growth in the future may be driven by existing seasonal residents or rental property owners relocating permanently to Dewey Beach or selling their existing property to year-round owners. However, individual tastes and market forces, both of which are impossible to predict, will continue to determine future trends in population and development.

Racial Composition

Table 3 details the racial composition of the Town of Dewey Beach as compared to Sussex County and the state of Delaware. Dewey Beach's population includes a greater proportion of non-minority persons than Sussex County or the State of Delaware. Diversity, has not increase significantly. While this data does not directly indicate any need for policy changes or specific public service needs, the relative diversity of the town's population in comparison to the surrounding area is an important part of a comprehensive profile of the community.

Table 3 – Racial Composition (%) by Place

Race	Dewey Beach 2000	Dewey Beach 2010	Sussex County 2010	Delaware 2010
White	91.7	93.3	80.9	71.0
Black	0.3	3.5	14.0	22.9
Asian	3.7	0.3	1.3	1.1
Other	4.3	2.9	3.8	5.0

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 & 2010

Table 4 – Hispanic or Latino Population, (%) 1990-2010

	Dewey Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
1990	0.5	1.3	2.4
2010	5.9	8.6	8.2

Source: U.S. Census, 1990-2010

Age

Tables 5 and 6 provide some basic information regarding the age of persons living in Dewey Beach, Sussex County, and the state of Delaware. The town’s population is relatively older than the population of either Sussex County or the state. The proportion of Dewey Beach residents under the age of nineteen is about half that of the county and the state. More important than the proportion, the total number of residents who are 19 years of age or younger suggests minimal needs for educational facilities, daycare services, and other child-related institutions. The proportion of adults 20-64 years of age in Dewey Beach is relatively similar to that of Sussex County and the state as a whole. Regarding seniors, Dewey Beach’s proportion of persons 65 years of age or over is substantially higher than in the County, and nearly double the proportion in the state. While high (36.8%), the proportional distribution of residents who are in their 60s, 70s, and 80s has not changed significantly in the past decade. Overall, the town displays the characteristics of a relatively older community that can be expected to require services conducive to the needs of seniors.

Table 5 – Age Groups (%) by Place, 2010

Age Range	Dewey Beach 2000	Dewey Beach 2010	Sussex County 2010	Delaware 2010
0-19 years		12.0	22.5	26.0
20-64 years		60.7	56.7	59.5
65+ years	28.2	27.3	20.8	14.5

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Table 6 – Age Profile of Adult Population (%) by Place, 2010

Age Range	Dewey Beach 2000	Dewey Beach 2010	Sussex County 2010	Delaware 2010
20-29 years		5.3	10.7	13.4
30-39 years	9.6	10.3	10.3	12.2
40-49 years	16.9	16.2	13.1	14.3
50-59 years	15.0	16.5	14.6	15.7
60-69 years	16.6	18.2	15.1	10.6
70-79 years	13.6	12.1	9.0	6.1
80+ years	6.6	7.3	4.7	3.7

Source: U.S. Census, 2000 and 2010

Education

Table 7 presents data regarding the educational attainment of persons over the age of 25 living in Dewey Beach (262), Sussex County (137,183), and Delaware (587,903). As shown, the most

1 common educational level of attainment for the Town of Dewey Beach is a bachelor's degree.
 2 The most common highest level of educational attainment for the county and the state is a high
 3 school diploma. Nearly four-fifths of the working-age population of Dewey Beach has education
 4 beyond the high school level. At 58.4%, the proportion of individuals in Dewey Beach with a
 5 college education or higher is more than double that of the state as a whole (27.7%), and almost
 6 triple that of Sussex County (21.2%). This data suggests a significant potential within the
 7 resident population for contributive public involvement in knowledge-intensive project design
 8 and implementation.
 9

10 **Table 7 – Educational Attainment (%) by Place**

Highest Level Achieved	Dewey Beach 2000	Dewey Beach 2010	Sussex County 2010	Delaware 2010
No High School	2.0	0.0	5.1	4.2
Some High School	0.0	5.0	9.7	8.7
High School Diploma	19.4	14.1	37.4	32.2
Some College	19.0	18.7	19.0	19.8
Associate Degree	11.7	3.8	7.6	7.4
Bachelor's Degree	26.6	36.3	12.7	16.6
Graduate or Professional Degree	21.3	22.1	8.5	11.1

11 Source: U.S. Census, 2000 and 2010

12
 13 ***Income and Poverty***

14 Table 8 shows median-household-income data for Dewey Beach, Sussex County, and the state
 15 of Delaware. Personal income in Dewey Beach did not grow significantly between 2000 and
 16 2010, but in 2010 was significantly higher than that in Sussex County and the State. While this
 17 does not necessarily translate into direct benefits to the town, the higher income levels enjoyed
 18 by residents in Dewey Beach facilitate property maintenance and improvements that allow for
 19 the preservation of the town's community environment more easily than in other communities in
 20 the state. The relatively high amount of disposable income held by local residents may also
 21 make Dewey Beach an attractive location for economic development, which provides residents
 22 and local officials with significant power to carefully define and attract the businesses and
 23 commercial services that are truly desired and beneficial for the local and regional community.
 24

25 **Table 8 – Median Household Income, 2010**

Dewey Beach 2000	Dewey Beach 2010	Sussex County 2010	Delaware 2010
\$79,471	\$71,667	\$51,046	\$57,599

26 Source: U.S. Census, 2000 and 2010

27
 28 Table 9 displays data regarding poverty status among the populations of Dewey Beach, Sussex
 29 County, and the state of Delaware. Poverty status is determined by the U.S. Census by the use
 30 of specific poverty thresholds identified and refined each year by the federal government.
 31 Poverty thresholds are the statistical version of the poverty measure and are issued by the U.S.
 32 Census Bureau. They are used for calculating the number of persons in poverty in the United
 33 States or in states and regions
 34

35 **Table 9 – Poverty Status (%) by Age Group and Place, 2010**

Age Group	Dewey Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
All Ages	5.1	11.7	11.0
0-17 years		20.4	16.3
18-64 years	1.6	10.4	9.8
65+ years	7.1	6.5	7.3

1 Source: U.S. Census, 2010
2

3 As shown, the town hosts a much lower percentage of persons living in poverty as compared to
4 the county and state as a whole. Considering the large proportion of seniors living in the town,
5 the fact that only about seven percent were reported as living in poverty in 2010 seems to
6 suggest that the town is not generally in need of policies, services, and facilities necessary to
7 provide support to an impoverished population.
8

9 **Summary**

10 The resident population of the Town of Dewey Beach has been growing at a low rate over the
11 past decade. While trends would suggest continued population growth, the town is largely built-
12 out and has no plans to annex undeveloped land areas new development. Therefore, the
13 majority of future population growth will be less the result of new-home construction as it is in
14 Sussex County, and more the result of an increasing percentage of existing and new residents
15 opting to live in Dewey Beach year-round.
16

17 Because the value of Dewey Beach lies principally in its resort-like environment, careful
18 planning is required to ensure that the town's infrastructure is capable of meeting the demands
19 of its seasonal population, and that any growth in seasonal or full time populations do not place
20 an undue burden on the community and its natural environment.
21

22 Finally, information regarding seasonal or occasional residents and visitors of all types is vital to
23 a full understanding of the general service needs of the town. There is little reliable data
24 available regarding these populations, so it may be important for the town to create strategies
25 for developing its own data in this regard for future planning and policymaking activities.
26

27 **Critical Issues and Planning Objectives and Recommendations**

28 While the Town knows a lot about its resident population through data collection by the U.S.
29 Census, it has really very little quantitative knowledge of its property owners and visitors. Since
30 year over year the adult resident population represents only about 10% of the adult portion of
31 the total citizenry. Additionally, the Town has little quantitative information on its large visitor
32 population as a whole. This lack of knowledge makes it difficult, if not impossible, to craft
33 relevant policy that is supportive of the majority of residents, property owners, and visitors..
34

35 ***Obj D&P-1 The Town of Dewey Beach is aware of and equitably addresses the needs 36 of its residents, business and property owners, and visitors when formulating public 37 policy and strategic planning.***

38 A high priority recommendation to preserve and enhance the existing high quality of life is:

- 39 • The Town should develop and implement a strategy for collecting and analyzing
40 comprehensive data and information regarding its population, including year-round
41 residents, seasonal and occasional residents, business owners, and visitors.
42
43

3.5.2 Housing **[[THIS SECTION STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS]]**
Vision Statement – Housing. Zoning Codes encourage residential re-development and improvement that preserve the existing sense of community while protecting and preserving the natural environment.

This section of the plan addresses the current and future housing needs of Dewey Beach, including a detailed analysis of the town’s housing stock and a plan for future housing.

Total Housing Units

Housing, or dwelling units, are defined as one or more rooms, designed, occupied, or intended for occupancy as a separate living quarter, with cooking, sleeping, and sanitary facilities provided within the dwelling unit for the exclusive use of a single family maintaining a household. Table 9 displays some basic data on total housing for the town, county, and state over the past five decades. These data do not include hotel, motel or bed & breakfast rooms, nor do they include institutional structures such as hospitals. As shown, the data for Dewey Beach indicates relatively slow growth in total housing as compared to the County. This should not be surprising since over 80% of the residential-use land area of the town had been developed prior to the 1990s. Assuming that this is the case, policies and regulations regarding local housing and residential areas should be aimed at preserving the integrity, quality, and sustainability of the existing housing stock of Dewey Beach.

Table 9 – Total Housing Units, 1960-2010

Year	Dewey Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
1960	--	29,122 (--)	143,725 (--)
1970	--	34,287 (+17.7%)	180,233 (+25.4%)
1980	(see Table 11)	54,694 (+59.5%)	238,611 (+32.4%)
1990	1,314 (--)	74,253 (+35.8%)	289,919 (+21.5%)
2000	1,356 (+3.2%)	93,070 (+25.3%)	343,072 (+18.3%)
2010	1490 (+9.9%)	123,036 (+32.2%)	405,885 (+18.3%)

Source: U.S. Census, 1960-2010

Housing Types

Table 10 and 11 provide data regarding the types of residential structures located in Dewey Beach. The town has a relatively small proportion of single-family dwellings and a relatively large proportion of multi-family dwellings. This makes sense in consideration of the town’s location and its history as a traditional coastal resort community.

Table 10 – Housing Types, (%) by area, 2010

Housing Type	Dewey Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
Single Family, Detached	38.3	59.3	60.9

Single Family, Attached	14.6	4.8	14.5
Multi-Family	46.1	9.7	18.7
Mobile Home, Boat, Other	1.0	26.2	8.3

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

As shown in Table 10, the proportion of multi-family dwellings in Dewey Beach is relatively high, even in comparison to other coastal resort towns in the region. This creates some unique issues for the town regarding residential management and public policy. The large number of multi-family structures implies a relatively higher density of residential units in Dewey Beach. While this density may reduce the impact of the local population on the natural environment—a major issue in the environmentally sensitive area within which the town is located—policing and fire safety become much more important issues. Depending upon the tastes and preferences of potential residents, this housing stock may also impact the number and type of individuals, groups, and families who visit or relocate to Dewey Beach in the future. The large number of multi-family dwellings may also indicate the existence of a large number of non-resident property owners. This may generate a somewhat lower than expected demand for public services—especially during the winter months—as well as a larger demand for specialized commercial and public services such as property management, external and internal property maintenance, general security, and property inspection.

Table 14 – Housing Types for Delaware’s Coastal Towns and Cities (%), 2000

Housing Type	Dewey Beach	Bethany Beach	Fenwick Island	Henlopen Acres	Lewes	Rehoboth Beach	South Bethany
Single Family, Detached	38.3	72.1	88.6	100.0	68.6	60.1	97.4
Single Family, Attached	14.6	18.6	6.4	0.0	11.6	3.8	1.3
Multi-Family (2-9 Units)	37.1	8.5	0.7	0.0	15.6	9.9	1.1
Multi-Family (10-19 Units)	5.9	0.3	1.2	0.0	2.4	2.0	0.0
Multi-Family (20-49 Units)	2.9	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.9	3.1	0.0
Multi-Family (50+ Units)	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	18.1	0.0
Mobile Home, Boat, Other	1.0	0.3	2.8	0.0	0.9	3.0	0.2

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Age of Housing Stock

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

19
20
21
22

Tables 15 and 16 outline recent data regarding the age of local housing stock compared to the county and state as well as the region's other local beach towns. In general, the housing in Dewey Beach is relatively older than that in the county and state. The majority of the local housing was built before 1970, and the median year for housing built in Dewey Beach is 1969, earlier than that of the surrounding county by twelve years.

Table 15 – Age of Housing (%), 1939-2000

Period Built	Dewey Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
After 2000			17.0
1990-2000	20.1	28.9	16.5
1980-1989	17.5	23.7	15.5
1970-1979	10.2	18.3	13.6
1960-1969	33.0	9.8	11.6
1950-1959	11.4	6.7	10.7
1940-1949	5.0	4.3	5.2
1939 or Earlier	2.8	8.3	9.7
Median Year Built	1969	1981	

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

As shown, the Town of Dewey Beach experienced its most significant housing boom in the 1960s. This period of growth occurred earlier than most other coastal towns in Delaware, which generally experienced housing growth periods later in the century. However, housing growth in Dewey Beach has generally kept pace with the rest of the coastal towns in the region. While Dewey Beach does not host a significantly historic housing stock, such as that found in Lewes, the maintenance and redevelopment of housing in the town will increasingly become an issue as the existing residential infrastructure ages.

Table 16 – Percentage of Housing Stock Built by Decade

Period Built	Dewey Beach	Bethany Beach	Fenwick Island	Henlopen Acres	Lewes	Rehoboth Beach	South Bethany
1990-2000	20.1	22.4	14.9	5.2	25.6	5.3	23.6
1980-1989	17.5	32.8	26.8	16.5	17.8	8.0	32.6
1970-1979	10.2	24.4	24.9	8.2	9.8	30.0	18.1
1960-1969	33.0	8.6	9.2	21.1	8.3	15.2	16.4
1950-1959	11.4	2.7	15.8	32.0	5.8	14.0	8.9
1940-1949	5.0	5.0	4.2	5.7	7.2	12.8	0.4
1939 or Earlier	2.8	4.1	4.2	11.3	25.5	14.7	0.0
Median	1969	1982	1977	1960	1973	1966	1982

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Occupancy and Use

Tables 17 and 18 display data regarding the occupancy and use of vacant housing units in Dewey Beach and in other towns along the Delaware coast. Dewey Beach hosts the largest

portion of vacant housing units found on the Delaware seashore. Of the unoccupied units in Dewey Beach, more than two-thirds are used as seasonal or occasional residences, and nearly a third are used as rental units.

Table 17 – Occupancy Status for Delaware’s Coastal Towns and Cities, 2010

Housing Status	Dewey Beach	Bethany Beach	Fenwick Island	Henlopen Acres	Lewes	Rehoboth Beach	South Bethany
Occupied Units	180 (12.1%)	476 (20.0%)	184 (26.6%)	72 (37.1%)	1,333 (56.4%)	852 (27.0%)	280 (24.6%)
Seasonal or Occasional Use	1,310 (87.9%)	1,903 (80.0%)	508 (73.4%)	122 (62.9%)	1,030 (43.6%)	2,300 (73.0%)	857 (75.4%)
Total Housing	1,490 (100.0%)	2,379 (100.0%)	692 (100.0%)	194 (100.0%)	2,363 (100.0%)	3,152 (100.0%)	1,137 (100.0%)

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

Value

Tables 19, 20, and 21 display data regarding the value of housing in and around Dewey Beach. As shown in Table 19, the median housing value in Dewey Beach is more than twice that of Sussex County, and much higher than that of the state as a whole. Among the towns along Delaware’s coast, however, Dewey Beach hosts the second-lowest median housing value. This may imply that housing is relatively more affordable in Dewey Beach for those who wish to purchase housing in the region.

The value of housing in and around Dewey Beach has increased steadily, as shown in Table 21. According to the most recent data available, the average home in the Lewes, Rehoboth Beach, and Dewey Beach area sells for nearly \$400,000. This information suggests that the development of affordable housing in the immediate area may be relatively difficult. While the presence of affordable housing is vital for the provision of sufficient labor for the area’s businesses, the solution to this issue must be a regional one.

Table 19 – Median Housing Value, 2000

	Dewey Beach	Sussex County	Delaware
Median Value	\$717,100	\$243,700	\$242,300

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

Table 20 – Median Housing Value for Delaware’s Coastal Towns and Cities, 2000

	Dewey Beach	Bethany Beach	Fenwick Island	Henlopen Acres	Lewes	Rehoboth Beach	South Bethany
Median Value	\$215,200	\$184,000	\$283,300	\$558,800	\$243,500	\$296,000	\$242,600

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

Table 21 – Real Estate Data, Lewes Area*, 2004-2005

Quarter	Med. Home Price	Avg. Home Price	Min. Sale Price	Max. Sale Price

Jan. – Mar. 2004	\$298,000	\$382,000	\$28,000	\$1,591,000
Apr. – June 2004	\$302,500	\$344,838	\$24,000	\$1,350,000
July – Sept. 2004	\$315,000	\$330,885	\$124,000	\$895,000
Oct. – Dec. 2004	\$295,000	\$375,014	\$31,000	\$1,850,000
Jan. – Mar. 2005	\$365,500	\$472,875	\$157,000	\$1,900,000
Apr. – June 2005	\$325,000	\$436,508	\$37,000	\$1,650,000
July – Sept. 2005	\$323,500	\$413,438	\$45,000	\$2,595,000
Average	\$317,786	\$393,651	\$63,714	\$1,690,143

Source: Delaware State Housing Authority *Lewes Area: Lewes, Rehoboth Beach, and Dewey Beach, 2005

Summary:

OBJ. H-1 Zoning Codes encourage residential re-development and improvement that preserve the existing sense of community while protecting and preserving the natural environment.

High priority recommendations to preserve the sense of community include:

- The Town should identify and define the character of the residential community(ies) within each zoning district, including that of particular neighborhoods or sub-sections of each zoning district;
- The Town should amend its Zoning Code to support residential development and improvements that will foster architecturally interesting design options while preserving those elements of the built environment that foster the existing sense(s) of community.