



HOUSING ELEMENT

Background

The Housing Element considers location, types, age and condition of housing, owner and renter occupancy, and affordability of housing. This element includes an assessment of non-essential



housing regulatory requirements that add to the cost of developing affordable housing but are not necessary to protect the public health, safety, or welfare. It also includes an analysis of market-based incentives that may be made available to encourage development of affordable housing. Such incentives may encourage development of affordable housing and may include density bonuses, design flexibility, and streamlined permitting processes.

Housing in the Town of Kiawah Island consists primarily of single-family residential homes, including patio and zero lot line homes and condominium units. A majority of the housing stock in the Town is used for vacation homes and is not occupied year-round. The Housing Element section of the Comprehensive Plan explains the different types of housing available on Kiawah Island (i.e., single-family dwellings, condominium units, etc.) and how these are used. Information comes from the U.S. Bureau of Census, 1990 and 2000, and a study prepared by College of Charleston professors, Dr. Frank Hefner and Dr. John C. Crofts, titled “The Economic Impact of Kiawah Island on Charleston County,” dated September 14, 2004.

Existing Conditions

Housing Inventory

Per 2010 Charleston County records, there are approximately 3,367 dwelling units on the Island, which is an increase of 383 dwelling units (13 percent increase), since 2004. Of the total, 2,295 are single family units, including cottages, and 1,081 are condominium units. Based on the 2000 Census, just over 2,500, or 82 percent of the dwelling units at that time



were used for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use. Per 2010 Charleston County records, there are 824 vacant residential platted lots that are not yet built upon.

As shown below approximately 50% of the dwelling units on Kiawah Island were built over 25 years ago. Kiawah’s houses are still relatively young by national standards, but they are becoming of an age where maintenance costs and renovations are more commonplace.

**Figure VIII.1 Number of Structures Constructed
(5 year increments)**

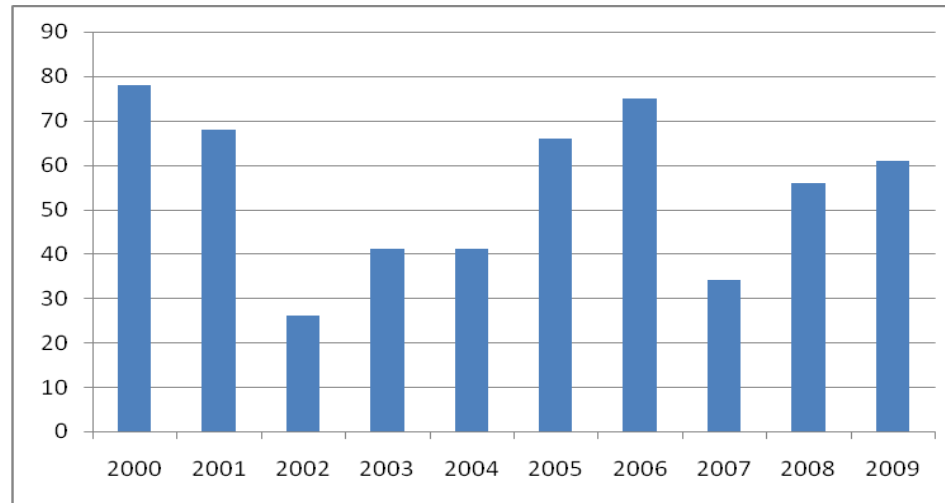
Years	Number of New Structures Built	
	No.	% of Total
1975-1979	754	22.4%
1980-1984	873	26.0%
1985-1989	433	12.8%
1990-1994	315	9.3%
1995-1999	379	11.3%
2000-2004	272	8.1%
2005-2009	341	10.1%
Total	3,367	100%

Construction Trends and Housing Occupation

Figure VIII.2 illustrates the number of Certificates of Occupancy (C/Os) issued for dwelling units from 2000 through 2009. Certificates of Occupancy (C/Os) are issued when a structure is found to be safe for habitation. Therefore, C/Os can be used as indicators of recent construction trends.



Figure VIII.2 Certificates of Occupancy Issued for Dwelling Units (2000-2009)



Source: Charleston County Building Services and the Town of Kiawah Island

Figure VIII.3 shows the total number of new construction permits issued since 1998, broken down by residential and commercial permits. The number of building permits issued in a given year is often different than the number of Certificates of Occupancy issued in that same year. This variance is due to the fact that not all structures for which building permits are issued are completed and issued a Certificate of Occupancy in a year's time.

In the past five years, a total of 378 new construction permits have been issued in the Town with a value of 407.2 million dollars. The majority of those permits, 364 (96 percent) with a value of \$397.1 million, were for new residential construction.

The largest number of permits issued in the past twelve years occurred in 2008 due in part to the construction of new condominium dwelling units. However, the highest construction permit value was seen in 2002 when construction on The Sanctuary began.



Figure VIII.3 New Construction Permits, 1998 – 2009

Year	Total Permits	Value of New Construction Permits (\$ in millions)	Total Residential Permits	Value of Residential Permits (\$ in millions)	Total Commercial Permits	Value of Commercial Permits (\$ in millions)
1998	96	57.6	94	57.5	2	0.1
1999	103	70.7	97	70.1	6	0.6
2000	70	55.3	66	54.4	4	0.9
2001	52	44.2	45	38.4	7	5.8
2002	53	106.9	51	60.3	2	46.6
2003	45	40.1	41	38.5	4	1.6
2004	83	68.3	72	61.6	11	6.7
2005	83	97.9	78	97.2	5	0.7
2006	75	72.3	71	63.2	4	9.1
2007	68	100.2	63	99.9	5	0.4
2008	122	98.1	122	98.1	0	0
2009	30	38.7	30	38.7	0	0

Source: Charleston County Building Services



According to the study entitled “The Economic Impact of Kiawah Island on Charleston County,” construction occurring in the Town between 2001 and 2003 supported 830 jobs and paid \$22 million in personal income.

Future Development Potential

The original development plan for Kiawah Island (September, 1975) established a cap of approximately 7,000 dwelling units. The Comprehensive Plan, Development Agreement and other Town Development Regulations (September 1994) reduced that level to approximately 5,600 dwelling units. Subsequent development agreements with Kiawah Resort Associates (2005) and the Resort (2010) suggest the final number will be in the 5,000 to 5,500 range.

Housing Affordability

In 2007, the South Carolina Priority Investment Act was passed by the General Assembly to address affordable housing by expanding the Housing Element to require municipalities: “(1) to analyze to ascertain non-essential housing regulatory requirements and (2) to analyze market based incentives that may be made available to encourage development of affordable housing.”

Barrier islands are, by their definition, limited by area and natural boundaries; this lack of land and the desirability of living in the small, exclusive gated community of the Town of Kiawah Island make the provision of market based incentives to add affordable housing challenging. Limited affordable housing is available, nearby on Johns Island, and this is important to Kiawah in terms of providing conveniently located housing for service personnel. Incentives to address housing affordability on and/or near Kiawah Island should be studied. To this end, the Town has partnered with Sea Island Habitat for Humanity and is sponsoring an affordable house to be built on the Sea Islands and surrounding areas. The sum of \$45,000 over three years was granted and payment of \$15,000 was made in 2010.

The Charleston County Comprehensive Plan notes that the affordability of homes on Johns Island is an area of concern, particularly for working families and low to moderate income residents. The median home value in the unincorporated county is 3.6 times higher than the median household income, putting home ownership out of reach for many County residents.



Key Issues

The following are the key issues related to the Housing Element:

- Controlling and containing growth and development consistent with the Town’s Vision and the Comprehensive Plan,
- Redevelopment of the existing housing on the Island, and
- Affordability of housing in and/or near the Town.

Goals

To help the Town further realize its Vision, the following goals should be considered when evaluating proposals for change:

1. Encourage development of a diversity of housing stock, types and styles that meet different needs of the population.

	Implementation Strategy	Responsibility	Time Frame
a.	Provide mechanisms to permit flexibility and innovation in residential project design to promote land use efficiency and environmental protection.	Town Council Planning Commission Planning Director	Ongoing

2. Increase the transparency and understanding for everyone involved in all phases of the development process.

	Implementation Strategy	Responsibility	Time Frame
a.	Provide forums necessary to facilitate increased information flow at all levels of involvement in the development process.	Planning Commission Town Administrator	Ongoing



3. Consider the affordability of housing on and/or near the Town.

	Implementation Strategy	Responsibility	Time Frame
a.	Develop information and consider (i) the affordability of housing in and/or near the Town, (ii) any nonessential housing regulatory requirements that add to the cost of developing affordable housing but are not necessary to protect the public health, safety, or welfare, and (iii) any market-based incentives that may be made available to encourage development of affordable housing.	Town Council	By 2015