

# PART 1: EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section explores what Atlantic Beach is like today. Knowing the current conditions helps a community make decisions about what needs to change and what should be kept the same in the future. Some of the key initial findings are noted on this page. In the following pages, you will find more details on the following topics:

Residents – Page 2

Visitors – Page 4

Housing – Page 6

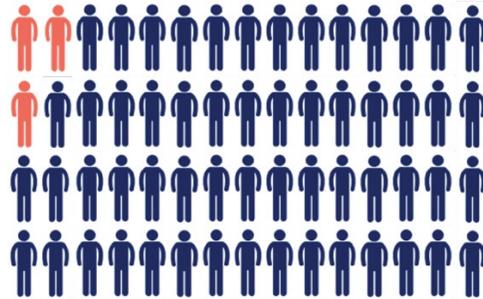
Economy – Page 8

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On a day during peak tourist season, there may be up to 18 visitors or seasonal residents for every one year-round resident in Atlantic Beach.



Only 1 in 5 homes is occupied by a year-round resident.



Development appears to have recovered from the Great Recession. A low number of homes available for sale and building permit records both indicate a strong housing market in Atlantic Beach.



Strong market demand and lack of vacant, buildable land means that infill and redevelopment will be more likely in future years. Infill and redevelopment will likely increase the Town’s total impervious surface – both on individual lots and within existing neighborhoods. Increasing rainfall and more impervious surface could lead to more instances of nuisance flooding in the future. These conditions mean that careful attention to development quality and innovative techniques to manage stormwater runoff will be very important for the Town’s continued prosperity.

# RESIDENTS

Atlantic Beach's year-round residents are what makes the Town unique.

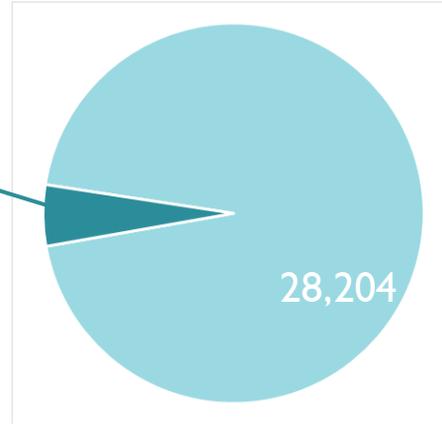
While this plan takes into account year-round residents, partial-year residents, and visitors, the people who live in Atlantic Beach and keep it running through the year warrant special consideration.

There are approximately

**1,536**

**year-round residents**

in Atlantic Beach as of January 2020. The Town has added about one new year-round resident per year in the past decade, for a growth rate of 0.5%.



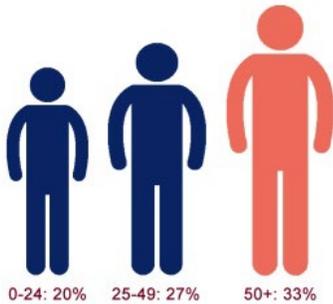
Total 2020 visitor population (seasonal residents & visitors)

Source: NC Office of State Budget and Management

The median age of residents in Atlantic Beach is:

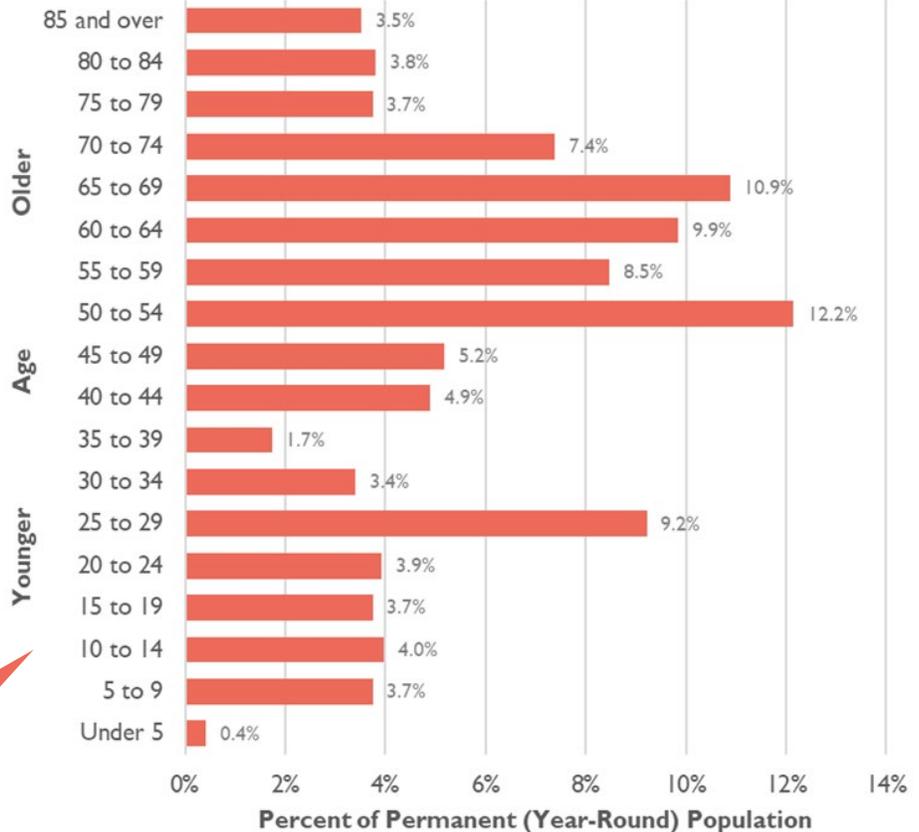
**56**

Nearly a third of Atlantic Beach residents are 65 years or older.



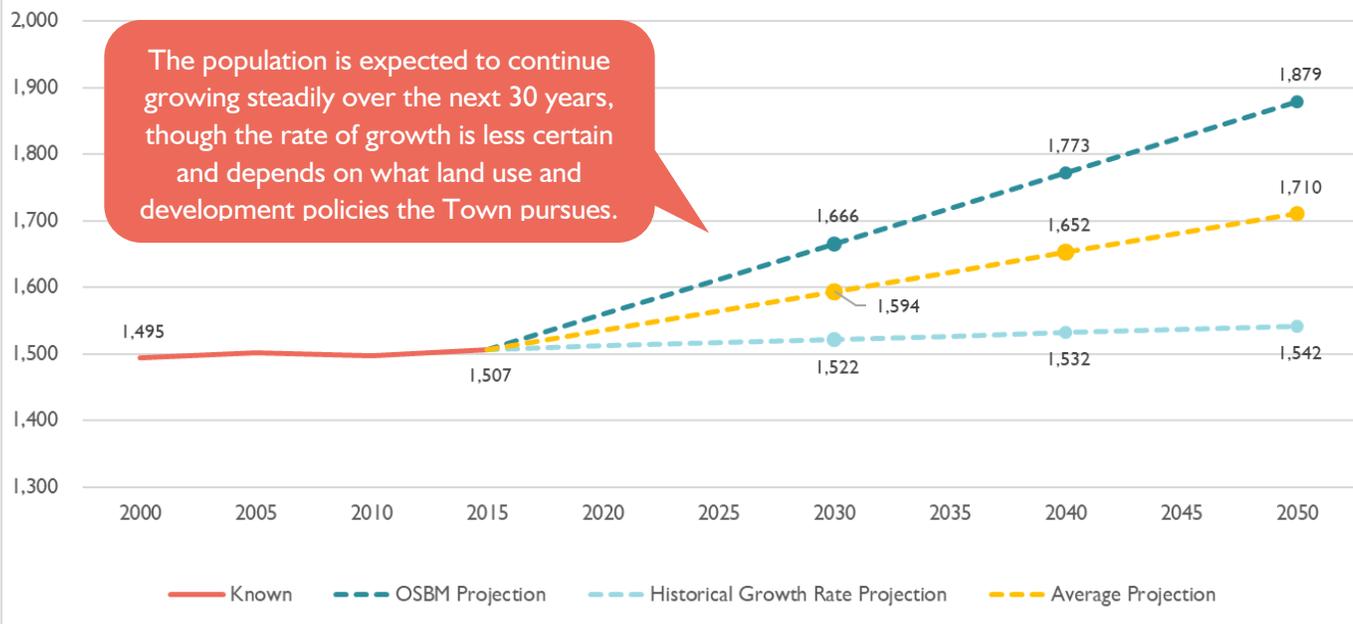
The age structure in Atlantic Beach reflects the area's status as a retirement destination.

**Age Structure of Year-Round Population**



Source: American Community Survey, 2018 Five-Year Estimates

### Year-Round Population Projection through 2050



Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management projections for Carteret County; American Community Survey, 2018 Five-Year Estimates.



It's interesting that Atlantic Beach has a lower median income than Carteret County, but less poverty and more education than the County or the State average. This could be because many retired seniors have fixed incomes.

### How Does Atlantic Beach Compare?

	Atlantic Beach	Carteret County	North Carolina
Median Household Income:	\$ 52,905	\$ 54,428	\$ 52,413
Living in Poverty:	7.1 %	9.8 %	14.0 %
High School Completion:	95.5 %	91.1 %	87.4 %

Source: American Community Survey, 2018 Five-Year Estimates.

# VISITORS

Atlantic Beach is known throughout the state as a destination for tourists.

The thousands of visitors and seasonal residents the Town hosts each year have an enormous impact on the Town's development, economy, and environment.

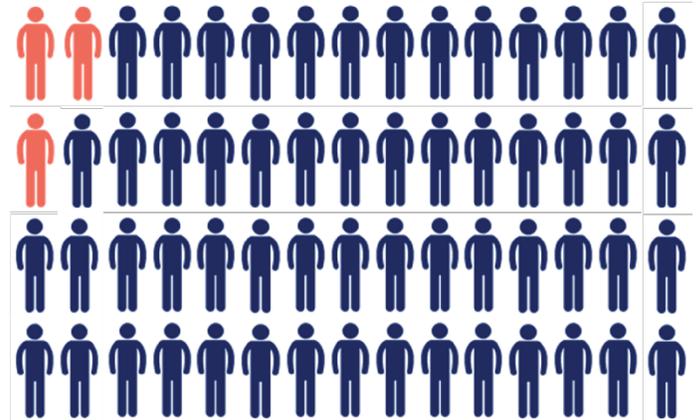
The estimated total **peak population** in Atlantic Beach (including year-round residents, seasonal residents, and visitors) is

# 29,560

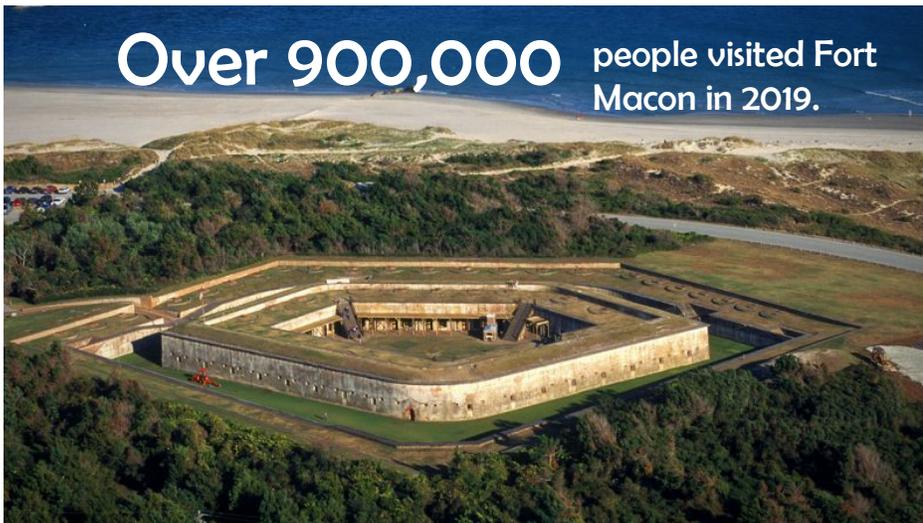
people. Note that this is not the population on an average day—it does not describe actual occupancy. It is an estimation of the largest number of people that could be staying in town on any one night. This number is used to inform the Town about the infrastructure and amenities it needs.

It is calculated using the number of rental properties in the town and multiplying by the average visitor party size, which in 2018 was 2.4 people for NC coastal areas overall, and Atlantic Beach's average home rental party size of 6.7 guests.

Another way of stating this is that on the busiest night of tourist season, there are more than 18 visitors or seasonal residents for each year-round resident. This ratio is used to make the projections for the total peak population shown on the following page.



Sources: Town of Atlantic Beach business records; Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina's 2018 NC Visitor Profile report; North Carolina Office of Budget and Management



Source: Fort Macon/NC Parks visitor counts

Town staff conducted a survey of 1,183 people in January 2018. Even in the off-season, about half of respondents said they were visitors to Atlantic Beach, and another quarter were seasonal residents.

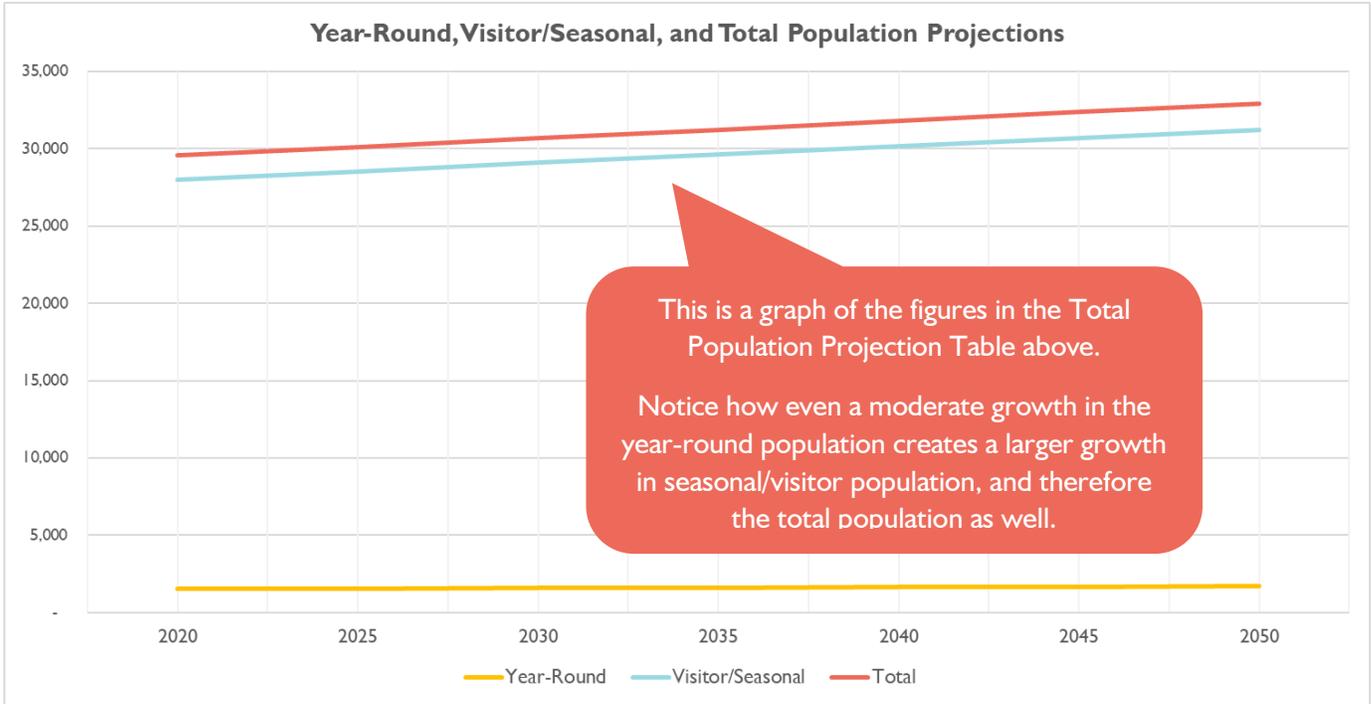


There are many ways to estimate the number of visitors the Town receives each year, and each method gives a slightly different answer. However, there is no doubt that seasonal residents and visitors outnumber year-round residents in Atlantic Beach most, if not all, of the time.

Total Population Projection (Year-Round Plus Visitors)							
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Year-Round Population*	1,536	1,565	1,594	1,623	1,652	1,681	1,710
Visitor/Seasonal Population**	28,024	28,554	29,088	29,622	30,154	30,683	31,213
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,560</b>	<b>30,119</b>	<b>30,682</b>	<b>31,245</b>	<b>31,806</b>	<b>32,365</b>	<b>32,923</b>

\* Calculated as the average of the OSBM population projection and the historical growth rate projection (the yellow dashed line in the graph on page 3 of this section).

\*\* Calculated by multiplying the year-round population projection by the current year-round to visitor ratio of 18.25.



The vast majority of lodging for visitors in Atlantic Beach is in single-family homes and condominiums – about 3,800 units!

By comparison, there are about 1,000 hotel and motel rooms, and 150 mobile homes available for visitors.



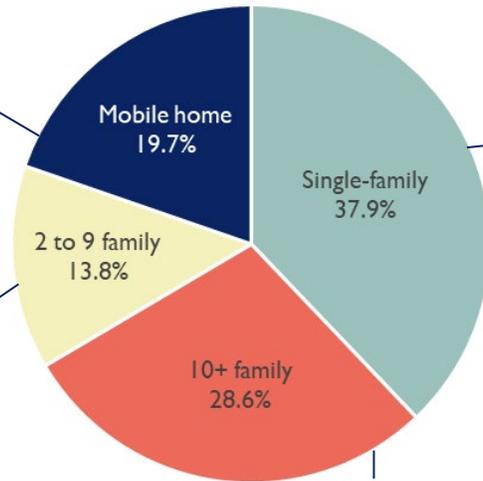
Sources: American Community Survey, 2018 Five-Year Estimates; Town of Atlantic Beach business records; Hotels.com

# HOUSING

The Town's housing stock forms the core of its developed areas.

The high number of properties used as vacation rentals or seasonal homes makes analysis of housing in Atlantic Beach different from many other communities.

Housing Units by Type of Structure



Most of the housing in Atlantic Beach is located in either single-family neighborhoods or large multi-family developments.

Atlantic Beach has very little vacant housing – only about 4% of the units in town, or about 200 units, are vacant.

Of these, most are available for rental. Less than 50 homes on average are up for sale.

The dramatic increase in home values and low vacancy rates indicate a very strong housing market.

Only 1 out of 5 housing units in Atlantic Beach is occupied by a year-round resident.



Median value of owner-occupied housing in 2018:

**\$357,800**

Median value of owner-occupied housing in 2000:

**\$160,200**

Source: American Community Survey, 2018 Five-Year Estimates; Census 2000

# Short-Term Rentals

Short-term vacation rentals are a relatively new form of visitor housing. Websites like AirBnB, VRBO, HomeAway, and others make it easier than ever for a homeowner to turn a residential property into a visitor-oriented property, either full- or part-time. Because of their growing popularity and their effect on available housing, they are an important trend for Atlantic Beach to watch.

There are approximately

# 415

homes used as short-term vacation rentals in Atlantic Beach.

Homes used as short-term rentals make up about

# 10%

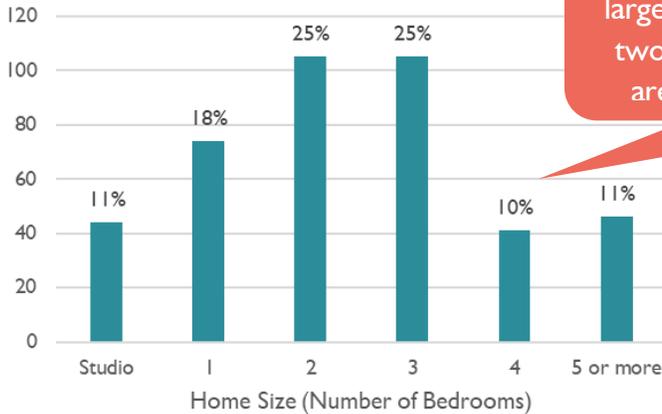
of the visitor-oriented housing in Atlantic Beach.

The average short-term rental in Atlantic Beach can host

# 6.7

guests per stay.

## Short-Term Rental Size



Many people think of short-term vacation rentals as large homes, but half of those in Atlantic Beach are two- or three-bedroom homes. Only about 11% are larger homes with five bedrooms or more.

Only 40% of homes used as short-term rentals are offered for rental full-time.



## Short-Term Rental Home Listings



Many homes are only listed seasonally as available for short-term rentals, and are likely owner-occupied at other times.

Source for data on this page: AirDNA.com

# ECONOMY

Atlantic Beach’s businesses provide employment, access to goods and services, and tax revenues to the Town.

Understanding the mix of businesses and the employment profile in Atlantic Beach helps inform decisions about future business recruitment, land use, and revenue planning.

As of October 2019,  
there were

# 193

business  
establishments in  
Atlantic Beach.

Of these...

# 94

are businesses that serve both year-round residents and tourists, including most of the restaurants and retail in town.

# 74

are businesses that primarily serve year-round residents, like salons, banks, insurance agencies, realtors, and construction companies.

# 25

are tourism-focused businesses, including visitor lodging, specialty retail, and charter fishing operations.

Source: Town of Atlantic Beach business registrations and staff classification

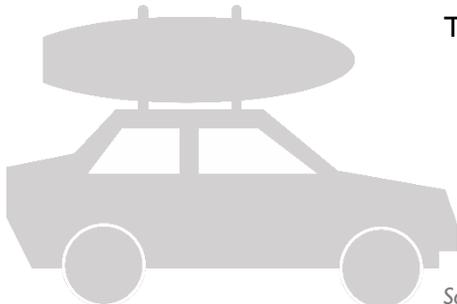
In 2018, the Town of Atlantic Beach collected over

# \$1.27

## million dollars

in occupancy taxes.

Source: Carteret County Shore Protection Office



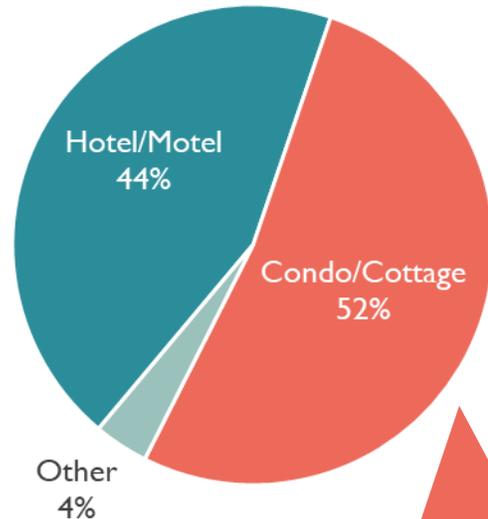
The average group visiting the NC Coast  
in 2018 spent

# \$1,240

over 4.5 nights.

Source: Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina's 2018 NC Visitor Profile report

## Source of Occupancy Tax, 2018



Though there are many more condos and “cottages,” or private homes, for rent than hotel rooms, hotels tend to be more expensive, so the tax collected from each are nearly equal.

Many more workers commute in to work in Atlantic Beach than commute out, or are unemployed. This indicates that Atlantic Beach has a healthy supply of jobs.



Source: Census.gov's LEHD On the Map analysis tool, using 2017 data.

The total number of workers in Atlantic Beach is

**885**

as of 2017.

The US Census Bureau estimates that there were between

**39** and **135**

unemployed people in the Town as of 2018.

Due to the relatively small size of Atlantic Beach, the unemployment figures are highly uncertain and only released yearly.



Many of those commuting out of Atlantic Beach work close by in Morehead City, Pine Knoll Shores, and Beaufort, but nearly a third travel over 50 miles each way to work.

**Top Industries for Atlantic Beach Resident Employment**

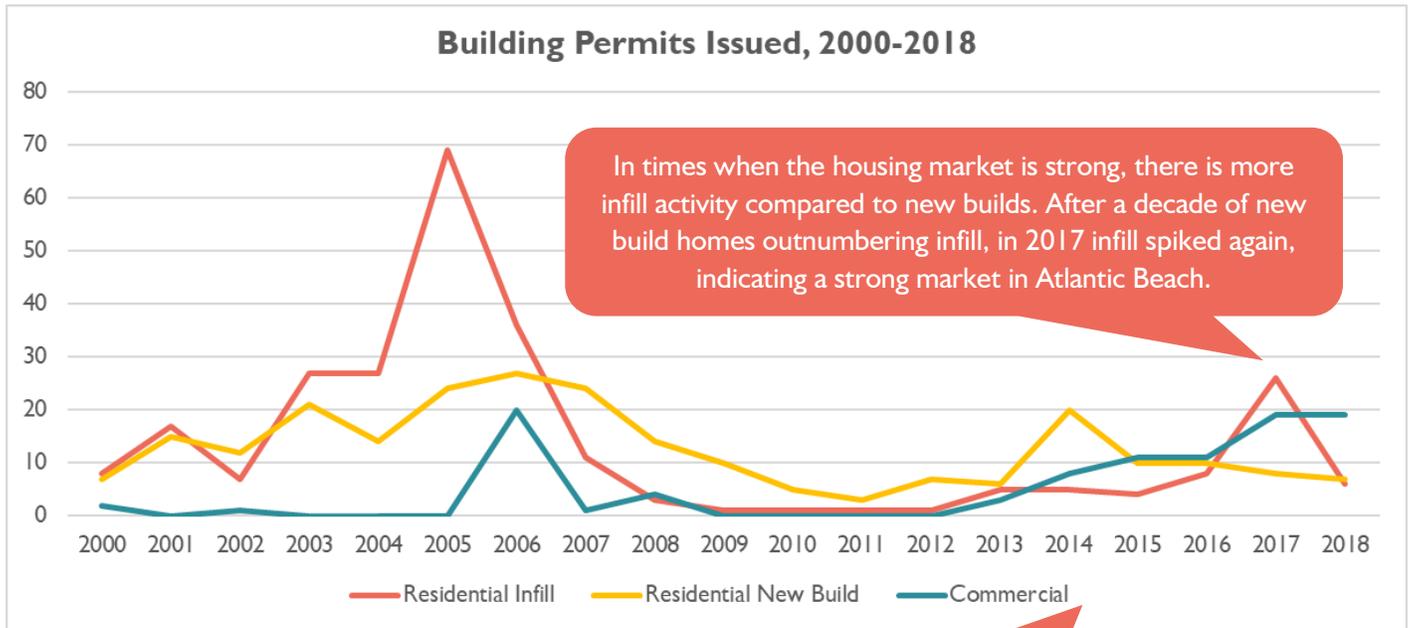


Source: American Community Survey, 2017 Five-Year Estimates

# DEVELOPMENT

Understanding development trends is key to planning for future land use.

It is particularly interesting how Atlantic Beach's housing market changes with respect to new builds versus infill, or demolished and rebuilt homes.



Source: Town of Atlantic Beach Building Permit Records, 2000-2018



# TRANSPORTATION

The ways that people move to and through Atlantic Beach affect the Town's economy, land use, and overall character.

This section draws on existing sources to provide a picture of the state of transportation in Atlantic Beach.

## Atlantic Beach Roadways by Maintenance Responsibility



The Town maintains

# 18.25

miles of roadways.

Source: Carteret County GIS

The annual average daily traffic on the Atlantic Beach Causeway was

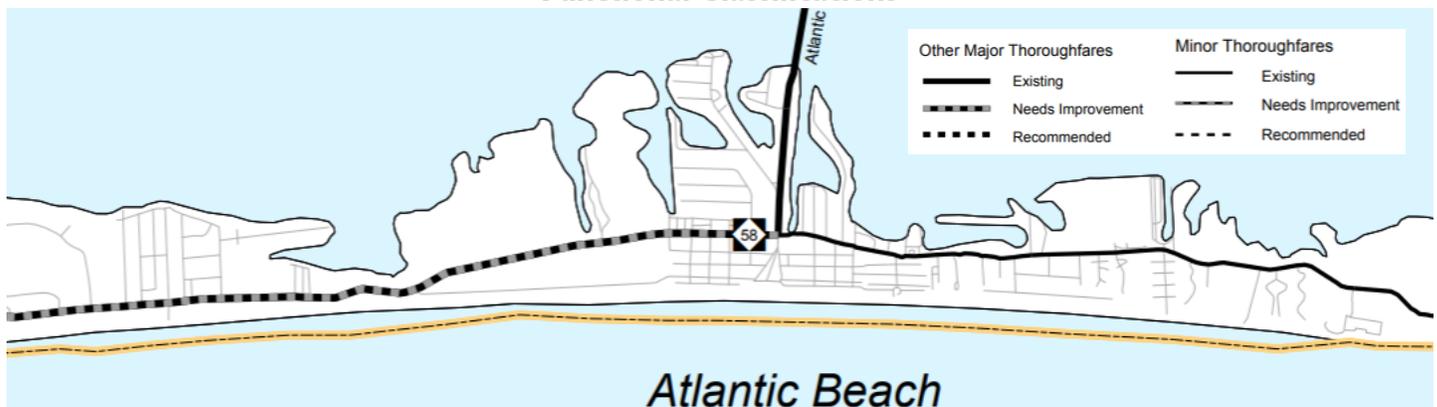
# 17,500

vehicles in 2018.

Source: NC DOT

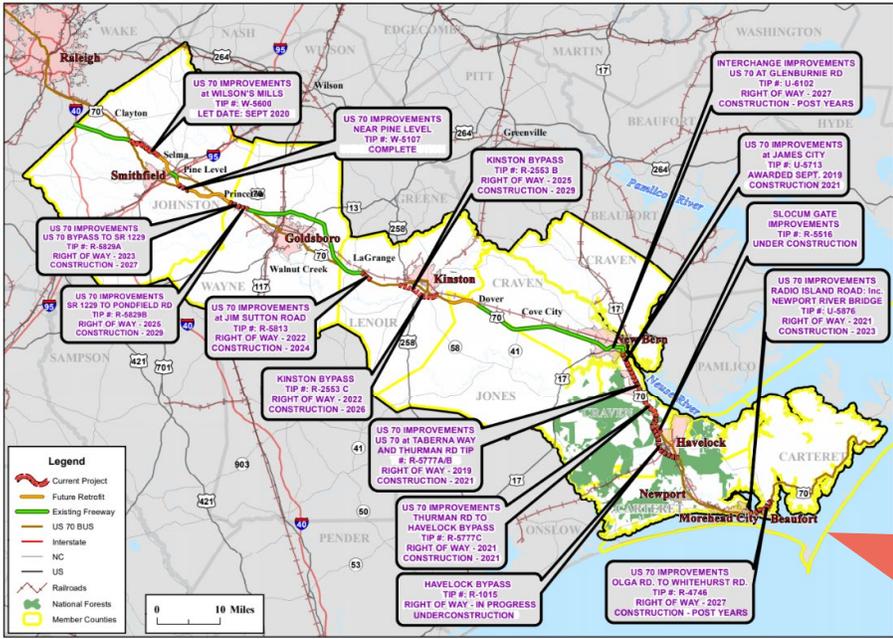
A high traffic count may cause worry about delays and congestion, but it is good news to local businesses that gain customers not only from people whose destination is Atlantic Beach, but also those passing through.

## Functional Classifications



Source: Carteret County Comprehensive Transportation Plan, last updated 2014

The segment of Route 58/West Fort Macon Road designated as "Needs Improvement" in the Comprehensive Transportation Plan is also identified as "near capacity," meaning that considering projections of future growth and roadway use, the road will need improvement to keep traffic moving.



The new I-42 corridor will upgrade US 70 and connect Raleigh to Carteret County, making the journey to Atlantic Beach faster for many in-state travelers, and making commuting from Atlantic Beach to other parts of the state more convenient as well.

After I-40 was extended to Wilmington in 1990, the area saw a population jump. This project could mean that the future population for Atlantic Beach – both year-round and seasonal/visitor – will be on the higher end of the projections on page 5 of this section.

## EXPLORE THE ROUTES

- RED LOOP:** Explore Atlantic Beach's West End on this loop that leads from the DoubleTree Hotel to the sound and passes by the soundside Pelican Street Pier. (1 Mile Loop)
- BLUE LOOP:** Start at the Boardwalk and take in ocean views by walking down Ocean Ridge and then coming back up Fort Mason Road past the Town Park. (3 Mile Loop)
- GREEN LOOP:** Go through the heart of town from the boardwalk to the bridge. Travel along the Causeway to the Bridge Side park and back. (2 Mile Loop)
- YELLOW LOOP:** Explore the east end of town by walking through some of our Cottage Districts and looping back through to the boardwalk. (3 Mile Loop)

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY TIPS

- Cross streets at marked crosswalks and intersections if possible.
- Obey traffic signals such as WALK/DONT WALK signs.
- Look left, right, and left-again before crossing a street.
- Wear bright and reflective colors. At night, wear light colors so you can be seen.
- Always walk ON the sidewalk – If there is no sidewalk, walk facing traffic so you can be seen.

## LEGEND

- Landmarks
- Bathhouses (Restrooms)



In the 2018 Citizen and Visitor Survey, many people mentioned that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure was one area that the Town could improve. The AB Loops effort takes steps toward meeting this goal.

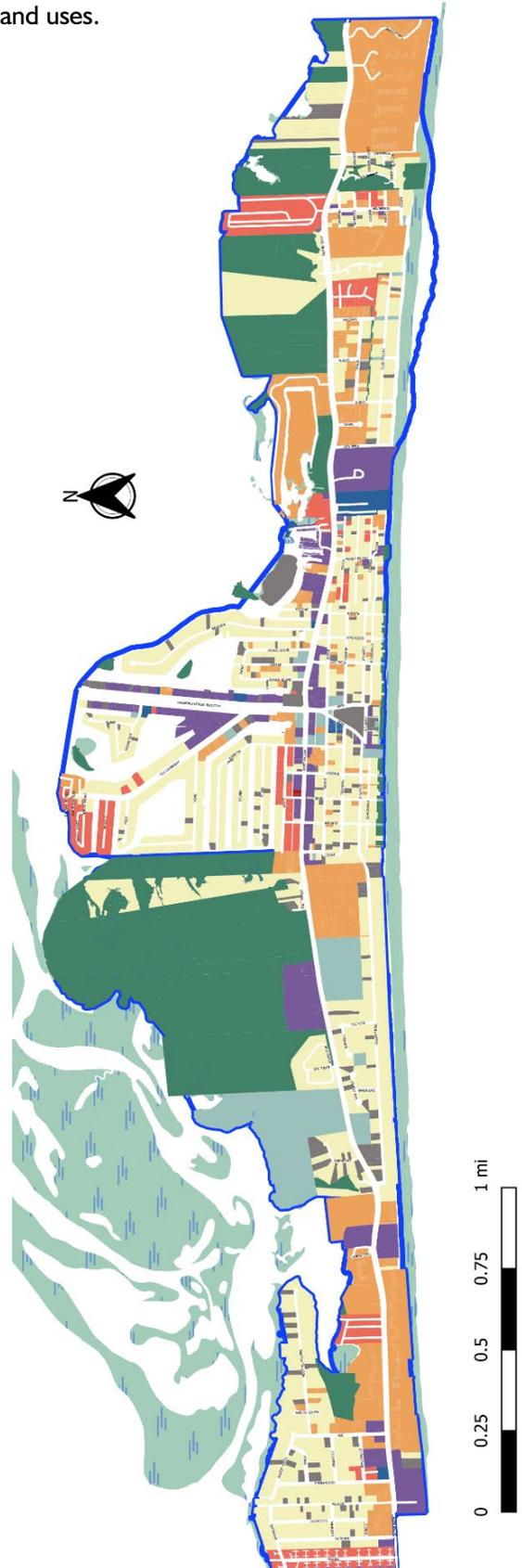
In 2018 the Town invested in signage, infrastructure, and maps promoting the “AB Loops,” four color-coded routes around town that are recommended for walking or biking.

# EXISTING LAND USE

How land is being used plays a key role in determining the character of the Town. This section provides information on the amount and location of different land uses.

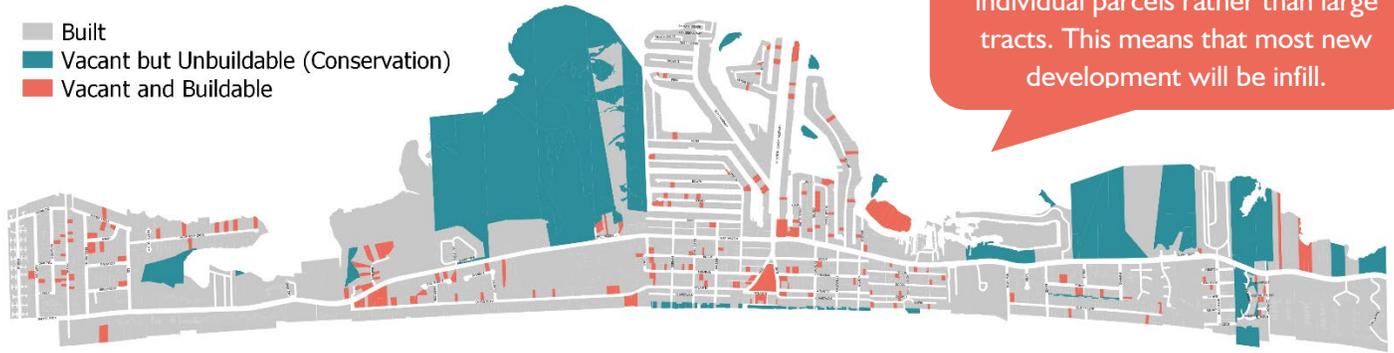
<p><b>SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL</b></p>	<p><b>31%</b> <b>431 ACRES</b> single-family detached homes and single-family attached homes (townhouses), including those used as vacation rentals</p>
<p><b>CONSERVATION (VACANT AND NOT BUILDABLE)</b></p>	<p><b>28%</b> <b>388 ACRES</b> includes wetlands and protected areas</p>
<p><b>MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL</b></p>	<p><b>18%</b> <b>247 ACRES</b> duplexes, triplexes, apartments, and condominiums</p>
<p><b>COMMERCIAL</b></p>	<p><b>7% · 95 ACRES</b> restaurants, retail, offices, and personal services</p>
<p><b>INSTITUTIONAL</b></p>	<p><b>7% · 95 ACRES</b> town-owned properties, churches, schools, utilities</p>
<p><b>MANUFACTURED HOUSING</b></p>	<p><b>6% · 80 ACRES</b> mobile and manufactured homes</p>
<p><b>VACANT AND BUILDABLE</b></p>	<p><b>5% · 63 ACRES</b> land that is buildable but with no buildings currently</p>
<p><b>MIXED-USE</b></p>	<p><b>1% · 12 ACRES</b> mixed-use developments</p>

SOURCE: TOWN OF ATLANTIC BEACH STAFF SURVEY



### Vacant Lands Map

- Built
- Vacant but Unbuildable (Conservation)
- Vacant and Buildable



Most of the vacant land in town is in residential areas, and is in smaller individual parcels rather than large tracts. This means that most new development will be infill.

Source: Town of Atlantic Beach staff survey

There are approximately

**63**

acres of vacant and buildable land in Atlantic Beach.

They are currently divided into

**226**

lots.

48 acres (116 lots) of vacant and buildable land are currently zoned residential.

11 acres (39 lots) are zoned commercial.

4 acres (21 lots) are zoned mixed-use.

The low amount and small lot sizes available for commercial and mixed-use development mean that the Town should expect most commercial and mixed-use development to be in the form of redevelopment.

### Likelihood of Redevelopment Map

Likelihood of Redevelopment

- High (includes vacant and buildable parcels)
- Medium
- Low
- Unbuildable/Conservation Lands

The map below was created by comparing each parcel's building value to its land value to identify the lots most likely to redevelop in the future (where low-value development is located on high-value land).



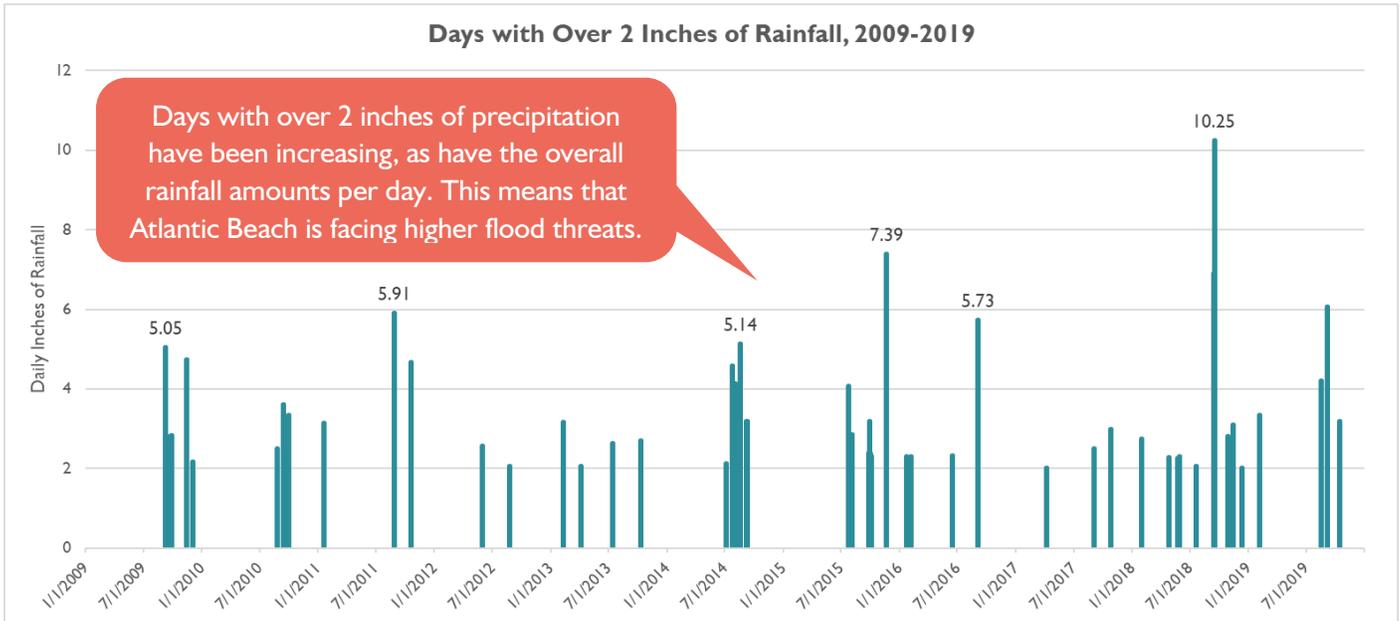
The western end of Town, areas along Fort Macon Road, and the commercial properties on the causeway and "the Circle" have clusters of properties that are likely to see redevelopment.

Source: Carteret County Tax Administrator's Office  
 NOTE: The classifications on this map were created for the purpose of giving a general picture of development and redevelopment potential in the Town. They are not intended as a plan or suggestion for redevelopment, only as an overview of the parts of town that might see new investment.

# ENVIRONMENT

As a coastal community, Atlantic Beach has unique assets and challenges.

Heavy rainfall events and sea level rise both contribute to increased risk of flooding, a key component in determining where future development or redevelopment should take place and what it should look like.



Source: NOAA National Weather Service and NC State University measure of daily precipitation at Atlantic Beach water tower, 2009-2019

## Flood Exposure Map

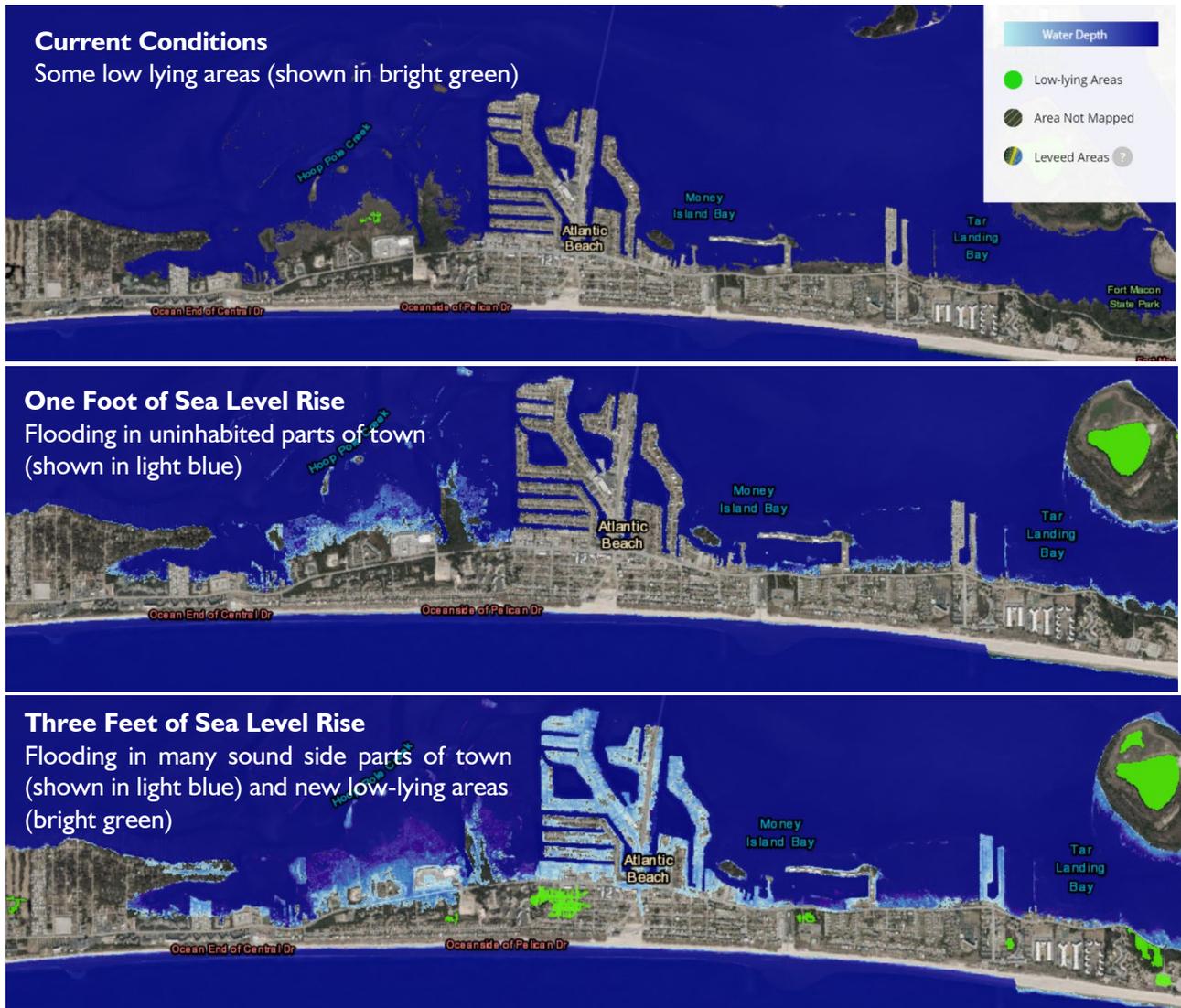
This map shows the places where the increased rainfall shown above will have the most impact in terms of flooding. Areas shown in lighter colors have lower flood exposure, and areas in darker orange and red have higher flood exposure, meaning they are more likely to flood first and more severely.



Source: NOAA Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper: <https://coast.noaa.gov/floodexposure>

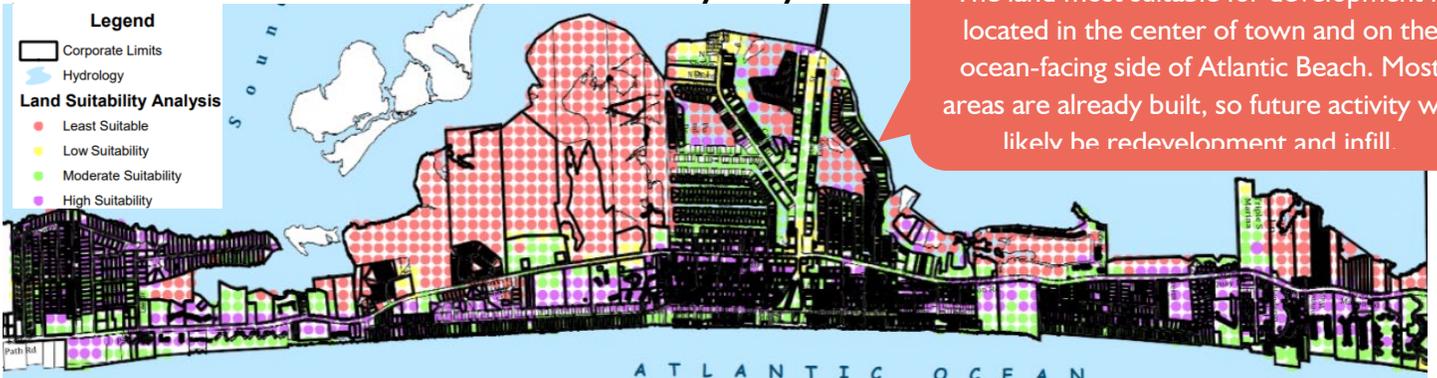
## Sea Level Rise Scenarios

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) estimates that sea levels are rising one inch every eight years, and that the rate of sea level rise has been speeding up. These images come from a tool that helps communities envision possible effects of sea level rise based on land characteristics.



Source: NOAA Sea Level Rise Viewer: <https://coast.noaa.gov/slr/>

## Land Suitability Analysis



Source: Town of Atlantic Beach CAMA Core Land Use Plan, 2008