

Chapter 9. Parks and Open Space

9-1. Local and Regional Facilities

Bethany Beach

Parks and open space in Bethany Beach can be categorized into several distinct types. First, the Town provides two public parks the Loop Canal Park and a second much larger public park, located at the northwest corner of S.R. 1 and Route 26, and a public playground area at the northwest corner of Garfield Parkway and Pennsylvania Avenue (land leased from the Disciples of Christ Church), and a public beach and boardwalk along the Town's eastern border. At the center of the Town's boardwalk is a public bandstand and plaza area. One of the Town owned wetlands areas, the 27 acre Natter Property, has been developed by the Town as a nature center and park and is seasonally staffed to provide educational eco-tours. In 2019 the Town purchased approximately 12 acres of wetlands and another adjoining 2.7 acre wetland parcel in 2021. The Town's intention is to keep these 2 properties free from residential development.

While these areas do not comprise a large percentage of the total parcels in Bethany Beach, all of these areas—particularly the beach—contribute significantly to the character of the Town and its economy. The total area of the Town is roughly one square mile (638 acres). The total area of the beach is approximately 24 acres, the Nature Center is an additional 26 acres and the new Town park, and the Maryland Avenue Extension, collectively account for an additional 73 acres of open space, most of which is used as Park and Recreational Areas.

Eastern Sussex is blessed with an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities. Aside from its own municipal parks and public beach strand, Bethany Beach residents are a very short drive, or walk, from municipal offerings in neighboring Ocean View, such as the John West Park. Just north of Bethany Beach's municipal boundary sits the Fresh Pond Trailhead. Also north, the Bayshore Campsites and Holts Landing State Park are a 15-20 minute drive. A few miles south, the Assawoman recreation area and the Fenwick Island State Park are within easy reach. While there is certainly no shortage of sun, fun, and nature, access to traditional athletic fields like soccer, tennis, and baseball, for youth are a short drive away. The Towns playground has a basketball court.

The Pyle Center Softball/Little League fields are 20 minutes west in Frankford. Ocean City, Maryland, hosts the nearest indoor general purpose recreation facility, featuring, pickleball and basketball with the Ocean City Tennis Center just a few minute further south on SR 1.

9-2. Recreational Facility Needs

Delaware is fortunate to have a recent statewide inventory and analysis of parks and open space. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, commonly referred to as SCORP, was released in 2018. Its development was a collaboration between Delaware State Parks and DNREC. The full report may be accessed at <https://destateparks.com/wwwroot/downloads/SCORP/SCORP%202018.pdf>

It methodically delineated the State into five regions. Surveys of residents of each, along with a consideration of demographic information, resulted in a matrix of recreational needs and priorities for each. Bethany Beach and all of Eastern Sussex fall into the SCORP Region 5.

Regardless of the region surveyed, there was a remarkable consistency in the survey responses. Walking and jogging ranked first across all areas with swimming at the beach a universal second place. Third to fifth place

showed some variability, but was commonly picnicking, visiting historic sites, swimming pool, bicycling, or fishing. Region Five's High priorities were: 1) Walking or jogging, 2) Swimming at the beach, 3) Fishing, 4) Visiting historic sites, 5) Bicycling, 6) Swimming in a pool, 7) Picnicking, 8) Dog walking, 9) Gardening, and 10) hiking. Interestingly, pickleball had yet to catch on and was only noted once across all regions, last place in Eastern Sussex County.

Given the results of the analysis and the abundance of compatible offerings within, or very near, Bethany Beach, the Town appears very well positioned to meet the current and anticipated recreational needs and wants of its residents and those of neighboring communities.

Although the Town is pleased to host offerings desirable to the region and the state, it is not content to stand pat. It continues to make investments in physical infrastructure and parklands, as well as to tirelessly advocate for, and pursue appropriate funds, to maintain its part of the beach that the SCORP shows is consistently ranked as among the most popular outdoor activities for all state residents.

Aside from physical investment, the Town continues to invest considerable human capital in outdoor, historic, cultural, and recreational programming. This effort to foster a year-round sense of place and belonging is discussed at greater length in the economic development and community character portions of this plan document.

Goal

Provide areas and opportunities for outdoor relaxation and recreation.

Recommendation

Maintain the 50-year Beach Replenishment Project. The importance of Bethany's beach and dune structure to the Town cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state and federal representatives, agencies and officials, as well as participation in the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

Recommendation

Continue to conserve, sustain, and enhance natural areas and resources for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. The Town should also encourage, promote, and educate citizens and visitors in achieving a "Green Bethany" by offering educational programs at its Nature Center and adopting best management practices as appropriate.

Recommendation

Evaluate Off-Season Recreational Opportunities. During the peak and "shoulder" seasons, the Town provides spaces and permits numerous outdoor recreation opportunities. However, many businesses are seasonal, as is the attraction of the beach. Consideration should be given to surveying year-round residents to determine their interests and suggestions regarding off-season recreation opportunities.

Chapter 10. Future Land Use

This chapter begins with a discussion of Bethany Beach’s existing land uses. It then focuses on the discussion of planning efforts that have been considered during the development of the Town’s future land uses. The future land uses are depicted, and the link between land use and the municipality’s zoning ordinance are provided. The chapter discusses recommendations concerning land use and zoning, concluding with a discussion on growth and annexation.

10-1. Existing Land Use

Existing land use is a snapshot of the town’s current development pattern. This development pattern is depicted on the Existing Land Use Map. The map identifies the land use for each parcel as of early 2021.

10-1a. Existing Land Use Designations

Table XX explains how land was classified into the uses shown on the Existing Land Use Map.

Land Use	Description
Open Space	Preserved public and private open spaces including parks, recreation facilities, and areas dedicated in connection with land development as well as areas where environmental considerations preclude residential development
Parks and Recreation	The public beach strand as well as town parks.
Residential	Areas developed with any type of dwelling unit
Vacant or Undeveloped	Undeveloped lots in recorded subdivisions, select homes or structures with no occupant for an extended time.
Commercial	Areas developed with retail, office, service, and similar use.
Institutional	Areas hosting schools, government, civic, and religious uses.
Transportation/Utility	Pumping stations, electrical substations, and similar uses.

As is readily apparent from the map, residential uses account for the vast majority of parcels and area within Bethany Beach. Open spaces also account for a significant area.

Existing Land Use	Parcels	% Parcels	Acreage	% Acreage
Commercial	40	1.79%	23.74	2.32%
Institutional	11	0.49%	29.04	2.84%
Open Space	10	0.45%	108.60	10.61%
Parks and Recreation	5	0.22%	28.06	2.74%
Residential	2118	94.77%	817.34	79.82%
Transportation / Utility	6	0.27%	3.71	0.36%
Vacant or Undeveloped	45	2.01%	13.49	1.32%
Total	2235		1024.0	

10-2. Planning Environment

The Comprehensive Plan effort has reviewed other applicable plans and policies that influence the Bethany Beach Area.

10-2a. Strategies for State Policies and Spending

Delaware’s Strategies for State Policies and Spending, prepared by the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination and adopted by Executive Order 42 by Governor Carney on July 23, 2020, identifies “Level of Investment” areas that are guidelines for land use as well as state investment. The 2020 Strategies Map, in the appendix, show Level of Investment Areas within the Town. Bethany Beach is shown to be almost entirely within the Level 1 and 2 zones. Small, marginal areas within appear as Level 3. There are also some areas “Out of Play.” Generalizing, the State is most supportive of new growth and redevelopment in Level 1, anticipates growth in Level 2, and is accepting of thoughtful, planned, adequately resourced development in Level 3.

10-2b. Sussex County

Work is underway on Sussex County’s plan update. The most recent plan was adopted in 2018 and amended as recently as the fall of 2022. The plan’s “2045 Future Land Use Map” identifies Bethany Beach as a municipality surrounded by “Coastal Area.” The map is available for review at https://sussexcountyde.gov/sites/default/files/PDFs/FutureLandUse_Final_01162019_HighRes.pdf

Generally, the Sussex Plan acknowledges the county’s pace of growth and anticipates numerous needs for improvements in infrastructure and services; namely, schools, water and sewer, transportation, health and social care, affordable housing, and public recreation facilities.

More specific to the Bethany Beach area, the County considers the surrounding “Coastal Area” to be a growth area, as well as incorporated municipalities. Here, the County plans to encourage the most concentrated forms of new development. However, the plan includes an important caveat regarding coastal areas in particular, cautioning that only “appropriate” types of concentrated development should be considered, given the environmental sensitivities. The plan calls for a range of housing types to be provided in the surrounding coastal areas, suggesting that the existing base density of 2 units per acre is largely appropriate, but not to the exclusion of medium and higher density development, which the plan

characterizes as 4-12 units per acre. The entire plan is available for review online at <https://sussexcountyde.gov/sites/default/files/PDFs/2018CompPlan-Final.pdf>

10-2c. Ocean View

The Town of Ocean View adopted a new comprehensive plan in March of 2020. Like the County, Ocean View is mindful of population pressures and the desirability of its location. Its stated goals indicate it seeks economic growth, economic diversification, thoughtful growth, and an enhanced sense of community. It also references improvements to services, particularly transportation.

Though it does have some identified annexation areas west of the canal and south of the existing municipal boundary, its plan states that its emphasis going forward will be largely on infill development. At present, the canal appears to be the de-facto boundary between Ocean View and Bethany Beach with neither documenting any interest or intent to go beyond. Still, Ocean View's desire to continue growing, thoughtfully or not, may continue to challenge the area's overall infrastructure and send an increasing number of visitors to neighboring Bethany Beach. Ocean View's 2020 plan may be accessed online at https://www.oceanviewde.gov/media/Departments/PlanningZoning/ComprehensivePlan/Ocean_View_2020_Comprehensive_Land_Use_Plan_certified.pdf

10-2d. South Bethany

The Town of South Bethany completed a comprehensive planning effort in 2016, which was updated as recently as 2022. Much like Bethany Beach, South Bethany is largely bound in by various natural and man-made features. Accordingly, it has no annexation intentions and is almost entirely built-out internally.

It shares Bethany Beach's concern regarding the Delaware coastline and beach replenishment, as well as an awareness of regional growth, development, and traffic pressures. With little left to build, the Town's plan shows a focus on service efficiency and quality, sound fiscal policy, safety, and active outdoor recreation. The Town's plan may be accessed online at https://southbethany.delaware.gov/files/2022/10/2022_CP_amendment_FINAL_5.7.22.pdf

10-3. Future Land Use within Town

The Future Land Use Map, in the appendix, illustrates Bethany Beach's desired configuration for, at least, the next five to ten years. The Town does not propose any significant changes to future land use from the most recent addendum to its plan. The only changes were a handful of housekeeping edits. Table XX (below) characterizes the continuing future land-use classifications.

Land Use	Description
Open Space	Preserved public and private open spaces including parks, recreation facilities, and areas dedicated in connection with land development as well as areas where environmental considerations preclude residential development
Parks and Recreation	The public beach strand as well as town parks.
Residential	Areas developed with any type of dwelling unit
Commercial	Areas developed with retail, office, service, and similar use.
Institutional	Areas hosting schools, government, civic, and religious uses.
Transportation/Utility	Pumping stations, electrical substations, and similar uses.

Bethany Beach’s classifications for future land use match the designations it chose to use for existing land use.

Future Land Use Type	Parcels	% Parcels	Acreage	% Acreage
Commercial	40	1.79%	23.74	2.32%
Institutional	11	0.49%	29.04	2.84%
Open Space	9	0.40%	100.93	9.86%
Parks and Recreation	6	0.27%	35.73	3.49%
Residential	2163	96.78%	830.84	81.14%
Transportation/Utility	6	0.27%	3.71	0.36%
Total	2235		1024.0	

10-4. Land Use and Zoning

The link between land use and zoning is important because Title 22, Section 702(c) of the Delaware Code requires that municipalities:

“...within 18 months of the adoption of a comprehensive development plan or revision thereof, amend its official zoning map to rezone all lands within the municipality in accordance with the uses of land provided for in the comprehensive development plan.”

Zoning is the chief means for implementing the Comprehensive Plan, consisting of a written document and a series of maps. The maps show districts or zones into which the municipality is divided to regulate the use of land. The document specifies the types of activities (uses) that can occur in each district either as a matter of right (in all circumstances) or under certain conditions (conditional uses). It also regulates building height, lot sizes, setbacks, yards and green space, the number and sizes of signs, and space for off-street parking. Some municipalities incorporate environmental protection standards in zoning ordinances, while others have stand-alone ordinances with cross-references to zoning standards.

Zoning works with subdivision regulations. Subdivision refers to the process of splitting up or assembling land for development. The regulations governing this process designate utility locations, street rights-of-way, open space, and common areas. They also outline the services, such as water, sewer, gas, and electricity, and amenities that a developer must supply prior to the sale of subdivided (or assembled) land. Increasingly, the distinction between zoning and subdivision regulations is becoming blurred.

Development plan approvals cannot take place without making sure that plans comply with zoning and subdivision codes. Over the past several years, there has been a trend in the state towards consolidated subdivision and zoning regulations into a single land use code.

10-4a. Bethany Beach's Existing Zoning Classifications

Bethany Beach makes routine updates to its zoning ordinance and considers its current land-use ordinances to be well developed and well suited, with continued revision, to implement its vision. Still, it is very important to keep two things in mind. One, the map that appears at the end of the linked document is **not Bethany Beach's Official Zoning Map**. It is a useful guide. Still, interested parties or development interests should view the Official Zoning Map and code at the municipal offices.

Second, this map depicts Bethany Beach's zoning as it was before the adoption, certification, and implementation of this Comprehensive Plan. As is discussed in the section above, municipalities have an 18-month window to update their zoning and subdivision ordinances following the adoption and certification of a new comprehensive plan. The discussion that follows is intended to demonstrate the suitability of the longstanding framework Bethany Beach has constructed within its land use ordinances in continuing to implement its future land use vision. The Town's code and map may be viewed at <https://ecode360.com/11903137>

Bethany Beach's zoning is quite straightforward, both in words, and in the continuity evidenced on its zoning map. Each classification is outlined briefly below.

- **R-1 Residential District** – By right, this district allows for up to four dwelling units per structure. Accessory buildings (deemed appropriate by the code) are permitted, as well as home occupation or home-based businesses (subject to conditions found elsewhere in the code). As is common in many codes, schools, churches, hospitals, libraries, playgrounds, and various utilities are permissible under a special exception or as a conditional use.
- **R1-A Boardwalk Residential District** – This district purposefully duplicates the requirements and standards of the R1 district, including the same by-right and conditional uses. The key differences are that street frontage is not required if there is sufficient boardwalk frontage. There is also a minimum lot area of 2,500 feet and additional verbiage detailing the repair and renovation of such structures. Structures in this district may be repaired, remodeled, or entirely rebuilt within the existing dimensions, provided that off-street parking is not reduced.

- **R1-B Sea Villas Residential District** – This district also purposefully duplicates the requirements and uses of the R1 district. Here a distinction is made for properties that do not abut a street on their eastern edge. These may construct or replace open decks or cantilevered balconies.
- **R-2 Residential District – Individual lots require 7,000 sq ft.** This district is heavily utilized west of SR 1 and is a bit more suburban in character, compared to the R1 zone. Otherwise, all by-right and conditional uses are identical.
- **C-1 – Central Commercial District** – This district, at present, applies largely to commercial properties east of SR 1, mostly in proximity to Garfield Parkway. All are subject to nonresidential design guidelines developed in 2008. With possible exceptions, lots must be 5,000 square feet. All residential uses allowed in R1 and R2 are allowable by-right, as well as apartments and commercial lodging, numerous types of retail, personal services, various types of eateries, and art galleries, as well as building supply and service type uses, provided there is no outdoor storage of materials. Mini-golf is allowable provided design guidelines and fence requirements are met. Pool halls, bowling alleys, auto sales and service, funeral homes, gas stations, social clubs, and some other uses may be considered by special exception or conditional use.
- **C-2 Neighborhood Commercial District** – This district, at present, applies to a handful of properties in the center of the Town, well away from the boardwalk. Like C1, they are subject to design guidelines. Bars, taverns, and other similar uses are generally not allowed. Also, residential uses are not allowed. Permitted uses include most common personal services, retail, and eateries.
- **CL-1 Commercial Lodging District** – This district, at present, applies to a handful of properties fronting the beach or abutting Atlantic Avenue. It is intended for lodging that may also offer fitness, conferences, or meeting rooms. Lots are required to be at least 3,750 square feet. Stand-alone bars are generally not allowed.
- **(MORE) Municipal, Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Educational District** – This district regulates municipally owned or controlled property and is intended for outdoor recreation, education, and beautification.

As of the date of this plan's adoption, the Existing Zoning Map and the descriptions of the existing zoning categories (above) represent the state of the Town's ordinances and maps at a fixed point in time. Bethany Beach reserves the right to amend its ordinances or the zoning of various parcels, so long as such changes are consistent with the intent of the comprehensive plan. The above discussion

is for informational purposes only and documents the Town's successful and mature efforts at land use control. The Town's code and maps may be reviewed at <https://ecode360.com/11902959>

10-5. Community Development Plan – Future Land Use and Growth

Bethany Beach considers itself largely built-out internally and bound by a combination of natural or common-sense boundaries externally. Though there is considerable room for economic growth and population growth, the Town feels that most of this will likely be accomplished during a gradual transition to a year-round, permanent resident model. The Town is not dead-set against any geographic expansion, but considers the prospect of such growth in the next ten years so remote as not to warrant serious consideration. In any event, were such an unexpected and impactful opportunity to arise, it would almost certainly be prudent to do so in the context of a fresh comprehensive plan and community strategy.

10-5a. Community Development Plan – Foundational Policy Statements

Community Vision

A thriving year-round residential community that seeks to preserve its family-friendly, small-town character and beauty while maintaining its roots as a quiet and safe beach resort for all.

Position on Housing Growth

“Bethany Beaches welcomes ongoing investment, care, and renovation of its existing residential properties, as well as conscientious redevelopment consistent with the town’s code and the community character.”

Position on Population Growth

“Bethany Beach is in the somewhat unique position where the full-time residential population does not correspond closely to the number of homes. The population is actually far less than would be expected, given the number of homes. However, more property owners are moving to Bethany Beach as full-time residents. The Town cherishes its identity as a quiet, family-friendly beach community and is open for such year-round population increases and welcomes all who would consider making this wonderful community their home.

10-5b. Community Development Plan – Future Land Use in Town

Over the past two-plus decades, development pressure in the coastal area of Sussex County has had a measurable effect on the character and environment that defines the Town of Bethany Beach. Over this period of time, most of the land that was available for development within the Town has been subdivided and developed according to the Town's existing regulations, Town codes and development plans. In keeping with the long-term vision of the Town, established by the Town's previous Comprehensive Plan document, Bethany Beach has been successful in maintaining its quiet, residential atmosphere.

Moving into the future, it seems most appropriate to respect the integrity of this long-term vision that was set forth nearly a half-century ago and remains just as valid today. Therefore, the future land use plan for the Town will reflect the desire to maintain land use patterns and development characteristics rather than to initiate any significant changes. In light of the high and increasing development pressure in the region, the maintenance of the existing content and character of the Town will probably be as challenging to the

community and the officials of Bethany Beach as would be by attempting to do any major overhaul of municipal land use or community design. No major land use changes are anticipated in the future land use plan. This is shown on the Future Land Use map in the appendix. The existing areas of residential use should be maintained, with potential future higher-density development channeled to considerable areas already zoned for this type of use.

Institutional uses and their existing intensities should be maintained within the current zones in which they are permitted. The two existing commercial areas and the commercial lodging district in the Town should be maintained as such and dramatic intensification of these commercial uses should be discouraged in order to maintain consistency with the low-density, community-centered character of the Town. The existing institutional land uses (MORE) will be maintained, and the areas now devoted to parks and open space will also remain intact, with incremental expansion of these important uses being desirable.

10-5c. Community Development Plan – Growth and Annexation

The basic shape and extent of the municipal boundaries of Bethany Beach have not changed significantly since the Town's founding in 1901. The last notable adjustment to the Town's boundary took place in the 1980s, when the Town redrew the municipal border north of the Loop Canal and west of S.R. 1. The Town of Bethany Beach has no plans to annex additional land into the Town's municipal boundaries in the foreseeable future. Should such an unlikely eventuality present itself, the Town would prefer to embark on the evaluation within the confines of a robust planning effort that would replace this document.

The last geographic addition of any type involved the Bethany Beach Loop Canal, which has been a central part of the community since the community was founded in the first part of the 20th century. The Loop Canal was the last bit of "road" that visitors to Bethany Beach had to traverse to reach the Town's pristine beaches. The Loop Canal was constructed by early Bethany property owners and developers and remained an integral and necessary part of the community for many decades. In time with the construction of east/west and north/south roadways in the area the Loop canal became more of a scenic feature of the community rather than a necessary and well-traversed waterway. Regardless, the Loop Canal is an important and historic feature of Bethany Beach.

Although the Loop Canal has always been within the limits of corporate Bethany Beach, the ownership of the Canal and its banks had remained in the hands of private owners. In 2016, the Town was successful in obtaining ownership of the remaining part of the Loop Canal.

10-6. Goals and Objectives

Goal

Preserve and enhance the established character of the Town, continue effective land use policies, and remain engaged in addressing development in the surrounding area that may affect the Town.

Recommendation

Maintain effective land-use ordinances and provide for appropriate development. The Town should continue to consider regulatory efforts to incentivize appropriate development and redevelopment of homes consistent with the community character. The Town zoning map and related ordinance should be updated, as needed, to reflect the future land use changes.

Recommendation

Continue to base any requests for annexation on the best interests of the Town and its property owners. The Town is satisfied with its established municipal boundaries and there are no current areas of annexation concern. As in the past, any request for annexation by communities outside the corporate limits of Bethany Beach will be based on an informed assessment of the best interests of the Town, its residents and property-owners.

Chapter 11. Implementation and Intergovernmental Coordination

11-1. Post-Plan Requirements

This section summarizes the provisions of the Delaware Code that must be complied with following adoption of this Comprehensive Plan.

- Section 702(c) – Adopt comprehensive rezoning within 18 months after adopting this Plan.
- Section 702(e) – Within five years following adoption, review this plan to determine if its provisions are still relevant.
- Section 702(f) – Submit annual reports to Office of State Planning Coordination (OSPC) each July 1.

11-2. Intergovernmental Coordination

Though Bethany Beach is somewhat affluent, it is still a very small town with limited staff. Unlike some Delaware municipalities of similar size, Bethany Beach is confronted with some sizeable issues; many without easy or obvious solutions. These would include sea level rise, beach erosion, housing affordability, regional growth pressure, emergency preparedness, water quality, an aging population, and the constant press of visitors from in and out of state that may tax local and state infrastructure. Notable areas where collaboration will remain essential include:

- Ongoing assurance of adequate police, fire, and EMS services and mutual aid agreements
- Ongoing cooperation with DNREC and the USACE regarding beach replenishment
- Continued engagement with the same agencies regarding potential structural and engineering improvements to address ongoing flooding
- Continued engagement with DelDOT to address traffic volume and speed and facilitate convenient access of Delawareans to the State's beaches
- Partnering with DNREC in any upcoming pollution control strategy for the Town's watersheds
- Ongoing involvement in any State or County initiatives concerning the National Flood Insurance Program
- Engagement with Sussex County, neighboring municipalities, and the Delaware State Housing Authority for innovative approaches to Eastern Sussex's housing affordability issues
- Ongoing engagement between Sussex County and the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District

- Involvement with the Delaware League of Local Governments and/or the Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT), and the Association for Coastal Towns (ACT) for issues such as municipal street aid, beach replenishment, other municipal priorities, safety, and environmental and coastal issues.

11-3. Implementation

Below are the Town's identified goals and recommendations specific to intergovernmental coordination. In practice, the majority of Bethany Beach's priorities will require a measure of collaboration. The full list of all plan goals and objectives are listed in the first chapter of this document.

Goal – Intergovernmental Coordination

Work collaboratively to address local and regional challenges that impact the future of the Town and other Delaware coastal communities.

Recommendation

Continue Intergovernmental Coordination and Cooperation – The Town should continue to work regionally to address common challenges, particularly as related to beach communities to include, for example, continuing to be an active participant in the Sussex County Association of Towns (SCAT), the Delaware League of Local Governments (DLLG), the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT), the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA), as well as informal workgroups and formal training and networking opportunities, such as those provided by the Institute for Public Administration (IPA) at the University of Delaware. In addition, the Town should continue its close relationship and ongoing communications with local, state and federal representatives, officials and agencies.

Recommendation

Maintain the 50-year Beach Replenishment Project. The importance of Bethany's beach and dune structure to the Town cannot be overstated. Aside from the obvious economic impact and community identity the beach strand provides, the beach and dunes are vital buffers in protecting lives, property and infrastructure from waves and tidal surges, especially during storms. The Town should continue its efforts to ensure the beach is replenished, consistent with existing assurances. Examples of effective engagement are the Town's ongoing relationship and communication with local, state and federal representatives, agencies and officials, as well as participation in the Association of Coastal Towns (ACT) and the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA).

Recommendation

Continue to explore and pursue grants and low-interest loans for the Town. As a faithful steward of taxpayer dollars, the Town government routinely seeks state and federal grants and loans. At various times, these have been applicable to infrastructure, town services, the beach, and a host of other areas.

Recommendation

Continue Intergovernmental Coordination and Cooperation – Wastewater collection and treatment services are performed by Sussex County through an agreement with the Town of Bethany Beach. The

Town is in the Bethany Beach Sanitary Sewer District, which feeds into the Sussex County Regional Wastewater Facility near Ocean View. The Town has an agreement with Sussex County for the treatment of up to 3 million gallons per day (mgd). Considering that the Town's current maximum finished water-delivery capacity is 2.3 mgd, this arrangement fits well with the current and future needs of the Town. The Town should continue to work with Sussex County to ensure adequate and uninterrupted services.

Recommendation

Continue to meet or exceed Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) stormwater regulations. The Town has a detailed stormwater management improvements strategy and regularly performs necessary upgrades and repairs. Significant updates to the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Code (Chapter 453 of the Town Code) have been modified to meet or exceed state and federal standards. Further code adjustments could be required if state or federal standards are amended.

Recommendation

Continue to explore infrastructure and policy approaches to ameliorate flooding and drainage problems. The Town's storm resilience fund, study of a potential mechanically activated steel dam in the Loop Canal and tidal gate at Fresh Pond, the existence of an active committee on stormwater and tidal flooding, the "Green Bethany" initiative, and the project to identify ways for residents to minimize stormwater impacts, are examples of the forward-thinking steps the community has, and will, take to address flooding. The Town may also consider policies developed by other coastal communities, such as Lewes' recent sea-level rise initiative. The "Green Bethany" initiative and this subject are addressed further in the "Environment and Sustainability" chapter of this Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendation

Maintain National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Class 8 (or better) rating. Flood insurance is a significant cost for property owners in Bethany Beach. Because of this, the Town participates in NFIP's voluntary CRS incentive program which recognizes community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum program requirements. As a result of the Town's actions, FEMA has approved a 10 percent rate reduction for properties in Special Hazard Flood areas. The Town should continue to adhere and adapt to NFIP requirements in order to retain the current discount.

Recommendation

Support local affordable housing initiatives. Continue to explore avenues of encouraging or supporting affordable housing within, or in proximity to Bethany Beach, particularly for the vital workforce needed as the Town evolves into a year-round destination.

Recommendation

Continue to Coordinate with the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to improve traffic safety. The SR 26 streetscape project is one example of local coordination with DelDOT to promote traffic safety. Other examples include: the installation of overhead lights in the median and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at several intersections on SR 1. The Town should also continue working with DelDOT on a plan to build a pedestrian pathway along the west side of Kent Avenue, connecting the Town's planned pedestrian and bicycle pathway along the south side of Collins Street with another pathway along the south side of the 300 block of Wellington Parkway with another RRFB on Kent Avenue at the Library. The Town should continue this partnership by coordinating with DelDOT's

designated planner for Sussex County. The Town values its relationship with DeIDOT and has consulted with DeIDOT during the development of this plan.

Local Roadway Safety. The Town should continue to work with South Bethany, Sea Colony and Middlesex and DeIDOT on a study of traffic on SR 1 with a goal of lowering the speed limit through those communities to 30 mph from 35 mph and another study of traffic on SR 26 to determine if the data justifies the lowering of the speed limit on that State Road as well. The Town should also continue to work with DeIDOT on its goal of lowering the speed limit on municipal streets from 25 mph to 20 mph.

Recommendation

Intergovernmental Coordination. Funding for local roadway maintenance and improvement (most notably through the Municipal Street Aid Fund and the Community Transportation Fund), are critical to towns like Bethany Beach. In addition to working closely with DeIDOT, the Town should continue to pursue political avenues, including working with elected State representatives and the Delaware League of Local Government (DLLG), to secure adequate funding.

Recommendation

Continue to base any requests for annexation on the best interests of the Town and its property owners. The Town is satisfied with its established municipal boundaries and there are no current areas of annexation concern. As in the past, any request for annexation by communities outside the corporate limits of Bethany Beach will be based on an informed assessment of the best interests of the Town, its residents and property-owners.