

CHAPTER 1: Population Characteristics and Trends (text only)

Ocean City has experienced consistent, and in some time periods, remarkable growth. The number of both ~~year-round residents and daily~~ and seasonal visitors has increased ~~substantially~~ steadily over the years. The year-round population, in particular, has ~~shown a dramatic increase in recent years~~ remained stable within the past 15 years even during a national economic recession. US Census estimates of the permanent resident population in April are 7,172 (2000), 7,102 (2010) and 7,055 (2015) with less than 1% change between each period. This chapter reviews past changes in both year-round and seasonal populations, provides a profile of the characteristics of these populations, identifies expected future population trends and projections and assesses the implications of expected future population trends for purposes related to ~~future~~ community planning.

Goal:

To collect and utilize information regarding the demographic characteristics of Ocean City (both year round and seasonal) and to identify trends or changes which should be evaluated by the Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives: In order to achieve the population characteristics and trends goal, the following objectives are adopted:

1.1 Update population estimates and other data collected through the US Census and American Community Survey.

1.2 Review traditional and new methods of estimating peak seasonal population to identify trends or changes. Improve data collection and tracking methods.

1.3 Communicate information with other City Departments, Planning Commission, Mayor and City Council to support local decision making in other planning documents such as the Capital Improvement Plan, Code revisions, etc.

1.4 Reference data collected in Chapter 1 throughout the Comprehensive Plan to evaluate adequate public facilities.

1.5 Study seasonal visitor demographics by zip code origin to determine unique population characteristics.

1.6 Incorporate Town of Ocean City, MD Strategic Plan principles into the evaluation of demographic information.

The Town of Ocean City is a diverse and international community. This diversity is underscored by the wide range in characteristics of the seasonal visitor population and growing number of the stable base of year-round residents. These residents and visitors to Ocean City can be characterized as follows:

- Year-round residents
- Non-resident property owners
- Overnight visitors
- Day visitors
- Seasonal workers

The Town of Ocean City is a ‘hard to count’ community for the U.S. Census because of the high percentage of seasonal rental housing and the population survey count based on a single day in April, once every 10 years. The American Community Survey is completed more often, however the method of sampling representative sites does not adequately capture the dynamic seasonal changes that occur and data collected by zip code includes areas outside of the municipal boundary. The limited

Limited availability of data ~~requires~~ has traditionally meant that ~~the above groups population be~~ statistics are consolidated into two groups: year-round residents and seasonal visitors. ~~Despite this consolidation, available information provides a substantial amount of~~ Best available information from many sources is used to provide a basis for understanding and meeting present and future planning needs. This Chapter is organized in three parts, each providing discussion of:

- Population size and characteristics. Population size serves as the benchmark for planning the physical needs of the community. It provides the basis for estimating overall land and facility needs. Analyzing the characteristics of the population assists policymakers in making informed judgments regarding how the needs and service demands of the present population can best be met.
- Population projections. Population projections provide the basis for estimating future service, housing, and employment needs and determining how community demand for services can be expected to change over time. Projections are based on both recent trends and the capacity of the Town of Ocean City to ~~support future~~ adapt to growth and redevelopment. Given a wide range of variables that can influence future year-round and visitor population characteristics, projections should be considered less than precise, but nevertheless ~~invaluable~~ useful for estimating future demand for community facilities and services.
- Proposals for action. The proposals for action identify key items or issues to be addressed related to population. They are designed to implement the spirit of the Comprehensive Plan and facilitate the progress of Ocean City’s ongoing planning program.

Ocean City at Night (photo)

As a tourist destination with many scheduled special events and destination locations, the location of the population can be very important as well as the time of day or night. The downtown area of the Boardwalk provides a gathering point for thousands of summer visitors in the evening hours, and special events such as the annual Air Show will concentrate the visitor population and increase the demand for public services.

Healthy Eating Active Living

The Town of Ocean City is now recognized as a healthy community by joining with the HEAL – healthy eating and active living – Cities & Towns Campaign for the Mid-Atlantic, which champions local government policies that improve access to healthy foods and physical activity. ‘HEAL’ wants all Marylanders to live high quality, healthy lives and Ocean City works to maximize free resources that can benefit our citizens and the wellbeing of our entire community.

POPULATION SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS

Year-round Population

During its early years, Ocean City was a small resort community experiencing slow year-round resident growth. Through four decades from the period 1930-1970 the Town’s resident population grew by only 547 new residents. The Town’s population declined in the 1950s only to recover in the 1960s when the northern section of the island was annexed. The modest population decline in the 1950s has been attributed to permanent residents moving to the mainland, either selling or renting their high-value island property. ~~Since~~ During the 1970’s, 1980’s and 1990’s growth in the year-round population ~~has~~ increased dramatically steadily. ~~This~~ growth in the 1970s and 1980s period resulted from the increasing tourist economy enabling more households to be supported year-round by the summer trade, and the expansion of public facilities to serve an increasing population. In addition, there has been an influx of retirees who have found Ocean City to be a desirable place to live. ~~Over the past 34 years the year-round population has increased over 5 fold: from 1,493 residents in 1970 to an estimated 8,187 today.~~

Table 1-1

Figure 1-1

As a resort town, Ocean City is affected by the strength of the national economy. Year-round resident population has stabilized but generally not dropped significantly during recent recessionary periods in the early 1980’s and again recently beginning in 2008/09. Although the year-round resident population has increased almost 5 fold since 1970, current Census data indicates the resident population on April 1st may have stabilized around 7,100 persons.

Table 1-2

Table 1-2 compares the growth of Ocean City's permanent population to that of the County, Eastern Shore Region and the State of Maryland. ~~The substantially higher rate of growth in year-round population reflected in Ocean City probably influenced by a number of factors including its growing desirability as more than a resort community and its capacity to absorb year-round growth with existing housing stock and available infrastructure which has traditionally been required to support its visitor population. Traditional growth rates across the State of Maryland and especially on the Eastern Shore have been stable over the last 10 year period ranging from 1 to 1.5 percent annual average increase. The slight decline of year-round population in Ocean City is easily within the margin for error in the Census count and does not necessarily indicate a demographic trend.~~

~~It should be noted that~~ The Ocean City Office of Planning and Community Development has indicated the official ~~1990-2010~~ Ocean City population of ~~5,146,102~~ as determined by the U.S. Census ~~was considered substantially lower than~~ may not accurately represent the number of actual year-round residents ~~based on the single April 1st survey date and the seasonal nature of the resident population. However, for~~ For planning purposes ~~however,~~ the number of permanent residents ~~has been identified as an important indicator of stable residential neighborhoods, as a benchmark for providing minimum year-round public services, as a core employee workforce, and as a critical factor to maintain a strong base of registered voters and local governance. The permanent resident population is not as important in many other ways as the total maximum number of people in the Town-at any time, including both the permanent and transient population.~~

Seasonal Visitor Population

In a resort such as Ocean City, it is much more important to understand the demographics of the total population, including year-round residents and seasonal visitors, rather than only the ~~permanent resident~~ population. Planning for future development and for the provision of public facilities must be based on the total maximum population to be accommodated and served within a 10 to 20 year planning period. With recent efforts to expand events and activities for seasonal visitors throughout the year, there will be a need to evaluate the implications of an extended peak season and higher sustained service levels year-round.

Measuring the seasonal visitor population is a difficult task for any resort community. Since the 1970s, Ocean City has estimated its total population by a mathematical formula called "demoflush". Demoflush estimates population based on flow amounts through the sewage treatment system. When compared to other indicators of population, demoflush population estimates may seem to overstate the actual number of people in Ocean City, ~~but however it is~~ served as a valuable as a tool to compare population over time and by season since it provides a consistent methodology for estimating seasonal and year to year changes in population ~~through the course of the year and for estimation of changes from year to year.~~

Over the last 5 years, the Mayor and City Council have directed that an alternative way of estimating seasonal visitor population should be developed and calibrated so that the use of the

demoflush method can be phased out. The Tourism Commission has been collecting a consistent set of statistics since May 2012 that may allow the use of a tax revenue and room occupancy based approach in the future. With this Plan update, the traditional demoflush information has been updated for comparison purposes until a new method is adopted.

Table 1-3

Peak Day- Table 1-3 shows the peak ~~demoflush-seasonal~~ population for each year ~~since 1977~~from 1990 to 2015. This is the estimated number of people in Ocean City on the peak day in each year. The table indicates that ~~the a~~ peak day population of ~~162,900~~332,547 in 2010 ~~in 1977~~ virtually doubled some 10 years later to 332,400 by 1987 and a 25 year average of 326,658 with a maximum annual variance of 6%. ~~Since that time the peak population has remained relatively stable within the range of 320,000 to about 345,000 in subsequent years.~~

Table 1-4

Average Weekend- The average weekend population by month is shown in Table 1- 4. Since ~~1992~~1993 the year-round average weekend population has ~~shown only a slight increase of just under two~~ varied from 5 to 8 percent above or below the 24 year average and typically ranges from ~~153,000~~150,000 to ~~158,500~~160,000 over ~~the course of~~ the years. The average weekend populations through the summer months have remained quite stable through the 1992-~~2005~~2015 period. Most noteworthy are trends reflecting more substantial increases in average weekend populations during the peak season shoulder months and winter months. Through the period shown in Table 4, the months of January, ~~February, and March, April, October 2015, November and December~~ each recorded substantial weekend population increases ~~in excess of 23% or more of 13 to 18% above average.~~

Table 1-5

Shoulder Season- Information shown in Table 1-5 appears to confirm trends toward increases in visitor populations during the shoulder seasons (non-summer months). Table 5 shows the average weekend population during the summer season from 1992 through 2015~~05~~ has typically reflected virtually no change ~~remained constant although there was a 4 to 5% reduction in the last few years~~. In absolute numbers, the population for all seasons has increased over the past decade as a result of significant increases in average weekend populations in all other seasons, particularly the winter months where average weekend populations have grown by over 11.84% over the ~~past 11 years~~24 year average. These changes suggest that efforts to expand the traditional tourist season have been ~~somewhat~~ successful.

Annual- Total annual visitor population has been estimated at 8.1 million in 2009 (3.6M in the summer months), 7.6 million in 2012 (3.4M in the summer months), and 8 million in 2015.

As noted earlier, estimating the visitor population using the Demoflush methodology ~~probably may overestimates~~ the population. To illustrate, comparing the ~~2000-2015~~ average summer population ~~estimate~~ (~~286,213,277,932~~), less about 10 percent day visitors, to the number of housing units (~~26,320,30,119~~ as reported by the 20~~1000~~ Census plus about ~~9,500,10,000~~ hotel units) results in an average of 7.~~05~~ persons per unit. It seems more likely that, if the average unit contains 2 bedrooms, four to six people would occupy the average unit in the summer.

Thus, a population estimating methodology that incorporates persons per unit indicates that ~~between 170,000 and 240,000~~ up to ~~204,607~~ people are in Ocean City at any time during the peak season (~~based on an assumed 85% occupancy and~~ excluding day visitors ~~and non-resident workforce~~). Adding another 10 percent to account for day visitors who are not staying overnight, ~~and an estimated 5,294 non-resident employees~~) yields a maximum of about ~~264,000~~ ~~230,362~~ - as a total average summer population (about ~~835~~ percent of the Demoflush figure). This is probably a more accurate population estimate for purposes of planning for parks, recreation, police, fire and emergency medical facilities and services as well as Town administrative facilities. However, demoflush figures should be utilized as a basis for ongoing planning to assure adequate water supplies and satisfy wastewater treatment capacity needs ~~until another methodology is tested and approved.~~

Population Density

Total land area within the Town of Ocean City is approximately 4.~~46~~ square miles or just under ~~3,000,2,853~~ acres. Table 1-6 presents the population density (persons per square mile) for the year round population (1,5~~92,59~~ persons per square mile) and for the average weekend demoflush population by season (16,~~746,307~~ to 62,~~316,220~~ person per square mile, depending on the season). By way of comparison, the population density of Baltimore City is approximately ~~9,109,7,700~~ persons per square mile and the density within the City of Annapolis is approximately ~~5,300,5,700~~ persons per square mile.

Table 1-6

Resident Population Characteristics

It is common for a comprehensive plan to ~~reference the US Census as a consistent way to~~ analyze the various characteristics of a community's population, such as age, sex, race, ~~income~~ and education. ~~Since such data only exists for the year round population, some discussion is provided regarding the characteristics of Ocean City's resident population. Selected data from both the 2010 Census and the 2015 American Community Survey have been used to complete a current update of the Comprehensive Plan with emphasis on meeting the adopted goals and principles of Ocean City's Strategic Plan.~~ While such information can serve to inform many actions related to future planning, the size and characteristics of the community's visitor population ~~will continue to be~~ of greater import for planning purposes due to its much greater size which drives a much greater demand for public facilities and services.

As noted earlier, growth in the Town's resident population accelerated during the period 1990 to 2000 and then stabilized over the last 15 years near 7,100 residents. This stable rate of growth in the resident population is expected to continue. Worcester County also sustained an accelerated rate of growth during the 1990's. County population grew from 35,028 residents in 1990 to 46,543 in 2000, reflecting a 33% increase for the decade, and now has stabilized with 51,454 residents in 2010 and an estimated 51,540 in 2015 reflecting a 0.2% growth rate, a much greater rate of growth than had been evident in the County in previous decades. (See Table 1-7)

Table 1-7

~~While Ocean City remains a popular tourist destination, few young adults and households migrate here. For the most part those relocating to the Town are in pre-retirement and retirement age groups. Both Ocean City and Worcester County are similar to many other locations in the US where the population age 65 and older is growing much faster than the age 18 and under population. However, the year round population of working households in the surrounding County is also expanding. Ocean City completed a strategic planning process in recent years which resulted in the identification of certain demographic characteristics which are incorporated into the Strategic Plan vision, goals, principles, and strategies. More detailed information is available from the 2010 US Census which allows these characteristics to be measured and evaluated along with the traditional measures of change in population and community characteristics. One example is Strategic Plan vision principle # 4: Choice of today's families, and Goal #1: 1st Class Resort and Goal #3 More Livable Community for Residents to increase the number of year round residents. 2010 US Census data on these topics has been added with this update.~~

Age and Sex Characteristics of Year-Round Population

Table 1-8 presents a breakdown comparison of the age characteristics ~~for~~ of the year-round permanent population of Ocean City in 2000 and 2010. Based on the evident shift in population to increases in all age groups over 45 years, Table 1-9 has been modified to provide additional detail regarding this area ~~identifies the sex characteristics~~ of the resident population.

Table 1-8

Table 1-9

Table 1-10

Certain characteristics or trends regarding the age and sex characteristics are noteworthy. They include:

- The general population is remains evenly divided between males (51.43%) and females (48.37%). ~~However the male population represents a larger percentage of the population~~

than it did in 1990 when only 50.7% were males and 49.3% were females. Within the seniors age group (65 and older) representing 30% of the population, there is a larger difference between males 46% and females 54%.

- The population under 18 years of age represents a much smaller percentage of total population (~~9.1~~11.3%) than population under 18 years of age in Worcester County (~~20.5~~18.3%) and the State of Maryland (~~25.6~~23.4%)
- The school-aged population, in the age group 5-17 years of age, makes up ~~a mere~~only 6.38 percent of the total population as compared to the County school age population which represents ~~13.8~~15.3% of the total County population.
- The median age of the Town's population is ~~54.2~~47.2 years of age. This is substantially higher than the median age of the Worcester County population (~~48.1~~43.0) and the State (~~38.0~~36.0) From 2000 to 2010, there was an increase in all age groups over 45 and decrease in all age groups under 45. The age group 85 and older doubled in size over the 10 year period.
- ~~There is a significant difference between the~~ median age of men (~~52.5~~44.7 years of age) and women (~~55.8~~49.7 years of age) as compared to the County (~~47.0~~43.0 years of age for men and ~~49.2~~42.5 years of age for women) and State (~~36.4 for men and 39.3~~36.1 for women and 35.9 for men) demonstrates the general aging of the existing population and the attractiveness of Ocean City for seniors and retirees.-
- Probably the most important observation of the analysis of the age characteristics of the Ocean City year-round population is the large percentage of the population over 55 years of age. In Ocean City, 40.1% of the year-round population is over 55 years of age, compared to 33.0% in the County and 20.3% in the State as a whole. The trends demonstrating a substantial increase in this age group as a percentage of total population in the Town over the past 30 years are also important to note (Table 1-10).

In both Ocean City and Worcester County, the older population is growing almost three times as rapidly as the general population. From 1995 to 2020, the population age 55 and over is projected to increase by over 100% while the general population will likely increase by only 40%. The numerical and percentage increase in the retirement age group has been substantial, especially in the 1980s. It is likely to continue to be an important ongoing trend as the Town's year-round population continues to grow over time, and may require planning for various forms of assisted housing and place greater demands on emergency medical services and health care services in the future.

Key senior statistics compiled from US Census data at www.seniorcare.com are highlighted below to illustrate both the strengths and vulnerability of a growing segment of the Ocean City resident population.

Figure 1-2

Family and Racial Characteristics of the Year-Round Population

The 2010 Census provides greater detail about the family characteristics of households than in previous years. With a stable resident population of 7,102, it is important to track changes in family population (4,300 or 60.5%) compared to non-family population (2,802 or 39.5%). Over the last ten years, there has been a 2.5% decrease in resident family population. Census data estimates that 533 children under age 18 reside in Ocean City (59% in a two parent household, 41% in a single parent household).

Table 1-11 shows that the 2010 population by race of Ocean City continues to be overwhelming white compared to previous Census surveys. The black population has increased relative to the total, but only by 1% since 1980. Year-round residents of other races grew from 61 residents in 1990 to over 150 by the year 2000 and represented the greatest proportionate share increase in the total population from 1990 to 2000. This was primarily driven by growth in residents of Asian or Mixed Race origin. Significant growth in the Hispanic or Latino population is likely the result of increased efforts in the 2010 Census to collect this data, as well as a reflection of the natural progression of day trip visitors and vacationers to full time residents and resident employees. All minority populations increased by 1 to 6% with a corresponding reduction in the white population to 89% of the total year round residents.

Table 1-11

Educational Attainment of the Year-Round Population

Educational levels in Ocean City are high compared to have increased along with Worcesterthe County and Maryland in general. Table 1-12 shows the educational attainment level of the year—round population of Ocean City compared to the County and State. Among Ocean City's year-round residents, well over one-half (6055.5%) have some college experience as compared to 56.147.5 percent of County residents. Similar comparison with State-wide educational attainment levels shows the Ocean City population with slightly less educational attainment than the State as a whole (55.5 percent of Ocean City residents with some college experience versus 57 percent of State residents).As the area recovers from the Great Recession, a weak job market has led to increased educational attainment as more people stay in school gaining the skills and training needed to compete effectively. (Source: MDP Status Report on the ACS Survey 2005-2014)

Table 1-12

Income

The last 10 years included a great deal of economic turmoil in the Nation and Maryland with the peak of the housing bubble as well as the devastating Great Recession. By and large, Ocean City

has continued to thrive while many of the rural areas on the Eastern Shore have had a hard time recovering from lost income, unemployment, and cost burdens for homeowners and renters on fixed incomes. During this time, Maryland's median income fell by 3.3%, and Worcester County's unemployment rate increased 5.9 percent. (Source: MDP Status Report on the ACS Survey 2005-2014)

People who work in the service and hospitality industries depend on the tourist season for a majority of their income. ~~However, owners of businesses in these industries may make rely on making healthy enough profits during the summer season and in order to~~ sustain themselves through the year. ~~This situation is reflected in the distribution of income in the Town (Table 1-1314) illustrates increases of income levels over \$50,000 and reductions in all lower income levels indicating general upward growth in income over the last 5 years along with workforce reductions.~~

- The median household income is ~~\$36,549~~56,458.
- ~~Almost half~~Approximately 30% of the households make less than \$35,000 annually, which is ~~a significantly higher proportion than similar to in~~ the County at 31.7%.
- Around ~~284~~28% of the households have an income of above \$100,000.

Table 1-13

Visitor Population Characteristics

Since 1987, each summer, the Ocean City ~~Public Relations~~Tourism/Public Relations office conducts a non-scientific sample survey of vacationers to attempt to learn where the Town's visitors come from and to frame a profile of visitor characteristics. This information is important to the city government and to various private entities in their attempt to identify visitor needs, assess market trends, and identify service demands, business opportunities, and recreational offerings that respond to dynamic changes in visitor population interests over time. In ~~2003, the Public Relations staff interviewed 1,481 visitors at 4 pre-set locations in Ocean City. Recent years there has been an emphasis on the collection of zip code information in order to evaluate the effectiveness of location specific marketing efforts. Some of the key findings include:~~

- ~~83.7% of visitors surveyed indicated their visit to Ocean City was a return visit. Only 16.2% were first time visitors.~~
- ~~78.1% of interviewed visitors indicated they visit Ocean City each year. Only 21.8% were not perennial visitors.~~
- ~~46.1% of the sample surveyed indicated they have been visiting Ocean City for over 10 years.~~
- ~~44.1% of visitors indicated they would be visiting Ocean City only once in 2003. 23% indicated they had or would visit Ocean City 3 or more times during the course of the year.~~
- ~~Length of stay in Ocean City by visitors surveyed ranged as follows:
Weekend 20.9%~~

3 days—12.2%
 4 days—13.3%
 Week—38.5%
 Longer—14.1%
 Daytrip—0.7%

- The same survey conducted in 1994 found 50% of those surveyed stayed for one week with Daytrips representing a much larger proportion of visitors (6%).
- Among visitors sampled, just under half (49.1%) had visited Ocean City's Website. 50.8% had not.
- Accommodations selected by visitors during their stay included:

Hotel/Motel—39.4%
 Condo/Apartment—35.3%
 Camping—6.3%
 House—6.1%
 With Family—11.8%

- Total Household incomes for visitors interviewed were:

\$18,000 to \$25,000—9.1%
 \$26,000 to \$35,000—11.5%
 \$36,000 to \$50,000—22.6%
 \$51,000 to \$75,000—24.3%
 \$76,000 to \$95,000—19%
 \$96,000 or more—13.2%

- 33.6% of visitors drove Five hours or more to get to Ocean City
- The level of spending by visitors during their stay was wide ranging. 29.7% spent less than \$500; 26.8% spent between \$500 and \$1,000; 31% spent from \$1,000 to \$2,000 and 11.5% spent over \$2,000 during their stay.
- Visitors to Ocean City surveyed in 2003 were from the following states:

Delaware—2.1%
 Maryland—33.7%
 New Jersey—5.8%
 New York—6.2%
 Ohio—2.0%
 Pennsylvania—31.3%
 Virginia/DC—6.9%
 West Virginia—1.7%
 Misc. States—7.6%
 International—1.2%

- ~~Activities engaged in by those interviewed included:~~

Visiting the Boardwalk	96.7%
Fishing	28.2%
Golf	18.7%

Review of the results of ~~a similar survey conducted in 1994 standardized questions~~ indicates that the profile of the visitor population has not changed substantially over the past 10 years.

Geographic diversity was influenced recently with the impact of Hurricane Sandy on communities and beaches in New Jersey causing an increase in visitors from those locations, and more recently with targeted advertising to larger market areas in New York and New Jersey.

J-1 Visa students

Ocean City, Maryland maintains a long tradition of organizing and welcoming international students for summer seasonal employment under the J-1 visa work program. Each year approximately 4,000 young adults join the local population as both visitors and workforce. Meeting housing needs of this seasonal workforce is discussed in Chapter 6.

Short Term Visitors

Seasonal populations have different characteristics and impacts on the community depending on their length of stay: monthly, weekly, or weekend only. Over the last 10 to 20 years, Ocean City has adapted as family vacations became shorter, more frequent, organized around school and sport schedules, enhanced with new activities and special events, and reliant on homes, condos or hotels for lodging.

Current trends toward internet based reservation systems, short term rental of single family housing in established neighborhoods, and new hotel construction and competition from national flagship corporations demand new approaches. This demographic change of short term visitors will have positive and negative effects on the local economy and the stability of established residential neighborhoods.

Day trip visitors also have their own unique characteristics which change over time. Growth projections for West Ocean City and Berlin, suggest that there will be more shuttles to the beach from remote hotels and campgrounds and more demand for parking and public services from a non-resident population.

Non-resident property owners continue to play an important role in defining the future of Ocean City. Second home owners carry all of the expectations of their primary home communities plus the demand for high levels of outdoor recreation, entertainment and public services. Encouraging reinvestment and maintenance of all properties is increasingly important as construction from the early development years reaches 50 years old. A zip code map illustrates

the geographic location of existing non-resident property owners who consider Ocean City to be their second home

Figure 1-3

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population projections are based on assumptions and projected trends. They cannot necessarily consider unknown future changes in policies regarding growth or major market forces that can influence community growth over time. The projections of permanent and seasonal population which follow assume a continuation of current policies, and no major economic downturns. The projections are intended to provide a range for policy analysis and consideration of future facility needs.

Projecting year-round resident and seasonal population in Ocean City is complicated by several factors. The uncertainty about the accuracy of the Census and the small size of the year-round population compared to the total population decreases the accuracy and importance of projecting future year-round population.

Seasonal population projections present their own set of problems. Vacationers and seasonal workers are not counted by the Census, so historical counts rely on symptomatic data, such as wastewater flows, traffic counts or tax collections which can only offer a surrogate measure as a basis for projection. Future growth depends of a variety of economic and demographic characteristics. Finally, Ocean City's physical capacity (a largely built community with 985% of the land developed) and land use policies will have a major effect. It is likely that much of the change in the capacity of the City to absorb increases in the peak seasonal visitor population will be largely influenced by City redevelopment policies as much as new development over the next 20 years.

Regional and national trends will also influence future increases in population and/or the rate of occupancy for existing housing units. The National Coastal Population Report (March 2013) prepared by NOAA and the US Census is a reminder that 52% of the U.S. population lives in coastal counties in 2010. This report projects that Maryland coastal shoreline counties are projected to receive a 10% increase in population between 2010 and 2020 many of which will be age 65 and older based on past trends.

Year-round Population Projections

For planning purposes, the size of Ocean City's year-round population is ~~relatively unimportant~~ an important indicator of the community as a whole. The number of people in the city at any time is much larger than the year-round population and is of much greater import in influencing demand for community facilities and services.

~~Nevertheless the rate of growth in the Town's year-round population increased rather dramatically from 1990 to 2000 when compared to most previous decades; rapid growth from 1970 to 1980 being the exception. Likewise Worcester County sustained a much greater rate of growth through the 1990's. Population projections from MDP for Maryland jurisdictions (July 2014) incorporate projections for the Baltimore Region based on Rounds 8A from the Baltimore Metropolitan Council of Government's Cooperative Forecasting Committee. Worcester County is projected to increase population beginning at a rate of 1.18% between 2015 and 2020, and decreasing to a rate of 0.37% by 2040.~~

Table 1-~~14~~5 presents both the historic and projected year-round population. Given the unique characteristics of Ocean City as a resort community ~~it is difficult to develop a single set of year-round resident population forecasts that can be considered reliable. Therefore,~~ two alternative forecasts or projections are provided utilizing ~~two~~ different approaches ~~based on two varying assumptions~~. Assumptions made are provided to define the likely range of growth in the year round population that might be anticipated.

The projections provided in column one titled “*Proportionate Share*” (about 1% per year increase) are based on the assumption that the proportion of the Worcester County population that lives in Ocean City [(14.69% in 1990), ~~and~~ (15.4% in 2,000) ~~and (13.8% in 2010)]~~ will remain relatively constant at ~~14.5.4%~~ of the County population in the future. Population projections prepared by the Maryland Office of Planning for Worcester County are used to derive Ocean City “Proportionate Share” projections.

Projections provided in Column two titled “*trend growth*” assume that the rate of increase in the year-round residential population will be more affected by recent growth trends within the Town itself, which were approximately ~~1.53%~~ annually over the twenty-~~five~~ year period from 1990~~80~~ to 201~~500~~.

The actual rate of future growth in the Town of Ocean City will be influenced by a number of factors including the state of the national and regional economies over time, as well as the ~~success or failure~~ implementation of Maryland's ~~Smart Growth initiatives~~ Planning Visions as they are applied in Worcester County over time. It is likely that the rate of growth will fall somewhere between the two alternative projections provided with future resident population between 7,598 and 8,834 within another 25 years.

~~However, since~~ The Town of Ocean City has the capacity to absorb a surge in year-round population growth with existing seasonal housing stock and available infrastructure which has traditionally been required to support its visitor population, ~~it is not inconceivable that the trend growth projections may materialize.~~

Table 1-14

Total (Seasonal) Population Projections

The projection of future total, or seasonal, population is ~~more-also~~ important to planning efforts in Ocean City ~~than the projection of year-round population.~~ It is the total number of people in the city that impact the environment and demand for public services and facilities.

~~Projecting the future total, or seasonal, population is as difficult and uncertain as estimating the current total year-round resident population.~~ This plan ~~continues to~~ projects future ~~total-peak seasonal~~ population based on the demoflush population figures from 1994 through 20~~1505~~ (Table 1-15). Until such time that another method of measuring and estimating seasonal population is developed and calibrated, the demoflush data will be maintained for reference.

In this recent 6 year period the peak seasonal visitor population has been relatively stable with an average peak weekend day of 323,547.; ~~growing at a rate of less than one-half of one percent annually and~~ This plan ~~update projects-anticipates~~ that the trend toward a maximum carrying capacity for Ocean City will continue-be maintained in the foreseeable future, in part because of the successful expansion of shoulder seasons which allow visitors multiple opportunities to visit Ocean City rather than just during peak periods.

“Adjusted” population figures are presented which are 835 percent of the demoflush population. (See discussion on page 1-68.) ~~Both the adjusted peak population and the adjusted average weekend population are projected to increase at an average of 0.47 percent per year which reflects the increase from 1994-2005.~~ These projections assume that there is no major change in local policy toward or regulation of development, and that ~~some additional~~new hotel ~~facility construction and condominium development~~ and/or redevelopment will occur through the 20~~1505~~-20~~4025~~ period that will increase capacity to ~~absorb-attract~~ visitors during peak weekends.

Table 1-15

~~Growth within the area of Worcester County near Ocean City has an effect on Ocean City’s services, since many of the residents and property owners of Ocean Pines, West Ocean City, and the Route 611 corridor visit Ocean City regularly. Growth in West Ocean City, in particular, has accelerated over the past 10 years. This is partially accounted for by a 10-percent addition to the adjusted demoflush data for day visitors. The impact of the nearby area may become greater if growth in Worcester County reflects the “Visions” of the Maryland Planning Act of 1992 which encourages growth to be directed to existing growth centers. The growth policies of the recently adopted Worcester County Comprehensive Plan reflect this vision.~~

RECOMMENDATIONS-PROPOSED ACTIONS

Based on the historic data and projections presented in this Population Element, the following recommendations are made:

1. Continued growth in year—round population should be encouraged in order to provide the critical mass for expanded offerings of economic, social and cultural goods and services and to reflect the “Visions” of the Maryland Planning Act of 1992 which call for growth to be directed to existing population centers and suitable areas.
2. The Town’s ability to provide park facilities and health, safety, and other vital services should be coordinated with seasonal population growth over time.
3. The composition of seasonal and off—season population should be monitored regularly for market research purposes and to assure the Town’s range of services and facilities and visitor attractions and offerings are responsive to any changes in the characteristics of the visitor population over time.
4. Continued growth in the older population both in numbers and as a percentage of the total year-round population should be anticipated. This may prompt additional demand for medical and EMS services which should be monitored over time to assure such services are responsive to this special population need.
5. Projections of the resident and seasonal population should be reviewed and updated every five years since characteristic of growth in both populations are dynamic and have not always shown consistent patterns of growth. Adjustments to anticipated facility and service needs should be made accordingly.
6. Evaluate the implications of an extended peak season and higher sustained service levels year-round based on recent efforts to expand events and activities for seasonal visitors throughout the year. While the “Demoflush” method of estimating population is valuable in allowing comparison of levels from one year to another, the “adjusted” Demoflush figures should be used when greater accuracy is needed.
7. Develop aAn improved Demoflush formula, or other method of estimating seasonal population, should be developed which incorporates data known as the Tourism Metrics Report. Changes in water consumption have caused questions about the accuracy of demoflush previous methods and may not accurately predict future peak periods.