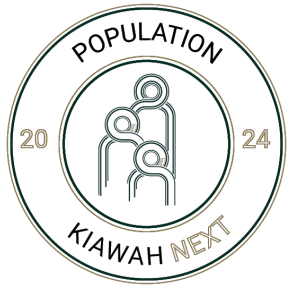




02



populationnext

Goal: Understand and Plan for Kiawah’s Population Mix.

Population

Considers historic trends and projections, household numbers and sizes, educational levels, and income characteristics.

Big Ideas

Regional Impact and Coordination

Objectives

P1 - Continue to gather relevant data on Kiawah’s present and future population.

P2 - Balance the needs of full-time residents, part-time residents, and visitors.

P3 - Understand and integrate the impact of Johns Island’s growing population on Kiawah’s diverse community dynamics.

Overview

The Town of Kiawah Island’s population profile is characterized by a blend of full-time residents, part-time homeowners, and visitors. This dynamic community expands and contracts throughout the year, with notable fluctuations during peak tourism seasons and holidays. This distinctive demographic composition presents both challenges and opportunities for long-term planning.

The Population element of this Comprehensive Plan aims to shed light on Kiawah’s demographics by examining historical trends, current data, and future projections. By understanding the needs and impacts of all segments of its population, this plan seeks to guide Kiawah’s future development in a way that serves the entire community while preserving the island’s natural beauty and high quality of life.

Growing Population

Population Growth on Kiawah and Johns Islands

Since 2000, Kiawah Island’s full-time¹ resident population has grown from 1,163 to 2,066 in 2023, a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 2.4%. Kiawah’s population grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, as many sought less densely populated areas with natural amenities.

In addition to full-time residents, approximately 7,000 part-time² residents who own second homes or vacation properties are seasonal residents. These residents significantly impact the island’s character and economy, especially during peak seasons.

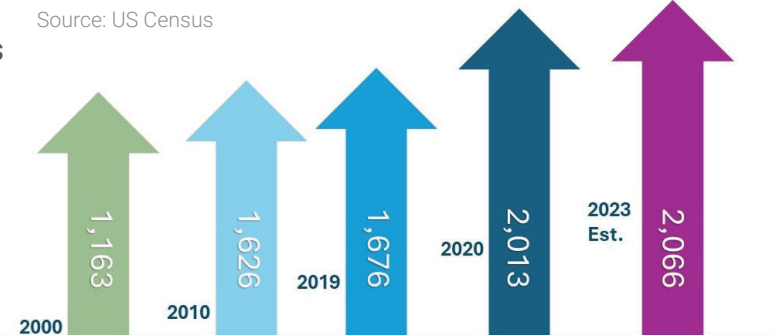
This blend of full-time and part-time residents underscores Kiawah’s attractiveness as a permanent and second-home community, presenting unique challenges for long-term planning and resource allocation.

Nearby Johns Island has experienced even more rapid growth. Its population increased from 8,607 in 2000 to 24,874 in 2023, a CAGR of 4.72%. This growth highlights Johns Island’s expanding residential appeal.

The combined growth patterns of Kiawah Island and Johns Island emphasize the

need for coordinated regional planning to manage development sustainably while preserving the area’s unique character and quality of life. Transportation infrastructure demands particular attention, requiring close collaboration between Charleston County, the City of Charleston, and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to address increasing traffic volumes and ensure safe, efficient mobility throughout the area. This multi-jurisdictional approach to traffic management and infrastructure planning is essential for implementing cohesive solutions that serve year-round residents and seasonal visitors.

Population Growth, Kiawah Island, 2000 - 2023



¹ Full-time residents:

Individuals who meet at least two of the following criteria:

- a) Registered to vote in South Carolina and Municipal Elections with Kiawah Island as their address
- b) Claim Kiawah Island as their primary residence for tax purposes
- c) Spend more than 183 days per year on Kiawah Island
- d) Hold a South Carolina driver’s license with a Kiawah Island address

² Part-time residents:

Property owners on Kiawah Island who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- a) Spend less than 183 days per year on Kiawah Island
- b) Have a primary residence elsewhere for tax purposes
- c) Are not registered to vote in South Carolina and Municipal Elections

Kiawah's Population Profile

The Town of Kiawah Island is experiencing a demographic shift that will influence long-range planning as its full-time resident population is aging in place. The median age has risen from 63.5 years in 2010 to 68.3 years in 2023 and is expected to surpass 70 within the next five years. Individuals aged 65 to 74 comprise 44.3% of the total full-time population.

This aging trend among full-time residents underscores the need for age-friendly infrastructure and services, including healthcare facilities, and tailored recreational and cultural amenities. The Town should explore initiatives that enhance the quality of life for older adults, such as implementing shared transit options to improve mobility around the island.

The Town of Kiawah Island exhibits a unique multigenerational dynamic that influences its character and planning needs. While the full-time resident population tends to be older, the island's appeal as a premier vacation destination attracts visitors from various ages throughout the year.

This diverse visitor³ profile includes:

- Families with young children **on summer** beach vacations
- Young professionals looking for luxury getaways
- **Groups** on golf **and tennis** retreats
- Retirees exploring potential retirement locations
- Multigenerational family groups gathering for reunions or holidays

The interplay between the older resident population and the diverse age range of visitors

creates a dynamic environment that requires flexible and inclusive planning. This dynamic may lead to increased demand for amenities and services that cater to a broader range of needs and preferences.

To address these varied demographics, Kiawah Island benefits from versatile community spaces that serve multiple purposes. Freshfields Village and the proposed Andell West are examples of developments that foster a vibrant community atmosphere and encourage intergenerational interaction. These areas combine residential, commercial, and recreational elements that cater to diverse needs.

The Town of Kiawah Island's approach to land use planning should aim to create a balanced, dynamic, and vibrant community that addresses the needs of its aging full-time population, and the more diverse part-time and visitor demographics. Strategic planning should prioritize age-friendly infrastructure, world-class amenities, enhanced connectivity, and regional collaboration to support the well-being and quality of life for all who enjoy Kiawah Island, now and in the future.

POPULATION

Kiawah's Household and Regional Impacts

Kiawah Island's residential landscape has experienced moderate growth over the past decade. According to the U.S. Census, the number of households on the island increased from 869 in 2010 to 1,133 in 2023, representing an annual growth rate of about 2.1%. One and two-person households overwhelmingly dominate Kiawah's residential population, accounting for more than 90% of all households. This pattern aligns with the island's appeal to retirees and empty nesters.

These figures represent only full-time resident households. Kiawah's housing is also influenced by part-time property owners, who comprise more than three-quarters of the island's property owners. This mix of full-time and part-time residents has implications for community services, infrastructure usage, and economic patterns. During peak seasons, the island experiences a significant population influx, temporarily altering its household composition and service demands.

Neighboring Johns Islands between 2010 and 2023, the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) has grown more rapidly than the Kiawah, adding 4,372 households, an annual rate of 4.3%. This increase significantly impacts Kiawah, putting pressure on shared resources, including the single access road, beaches, resort amenities, and Freshfields Village.

Kiawah's residential composition continues to evolve, notably with the scheduled Fall 2025 opening of Seafields. This development will offer 106 units, including 90 independent living units and 16 assisted living units. Seafields and the adjacent planned MUSC healthcare facility are located off the island but within the Town of Kiawah Island, adding new dimensions to the area's service needs.

These developments, both on and off the island, are critical to Kiawah's future planning. Given Kiawah's unique geography as a barrier island with limited access, the Town needs to carefully manage its existing infrastructure and services to handle fluctuating demands. This includes strategic planning for traffic management on the single access road, especially during peak seasons and events.

For off-island areas within the Town limits, coordinated planning is essential to ensure that services and amenities can effectively serve both year-round residents and seasonal visitors while minimizing the impact on the island's limited access points. Moreover, sustainable management of these changes requires stronger regional coordination.

By adapting to these dynamics, Kiawah can evolve mindfully, maintaining its unique appeal while meeting the diverse needs of current and future residents.

³ Visitors:

Individuals staying on Kiawah Island for a limited time (e.g., less than 30 consecutive days) who do not own property on the island. This category includes short-term renters and guests of residents.

Household Income Comparison*

Understanding the economic context of a community within its region is an important aspect of comprehensive planning. The following data is based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) 2022 5-year estimates, providing the most current official information available:

Median Household Income:

- Kiawah Island: \$214,250
- Johns Island: \$103,902
- Charleston County: \$80,401
- Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): \$77,460

These figures offer a snapshot of the economic landscape across the region. Kiawah Island’s median household income is higher than the surrounding areas, reflecting its unique position within the local economy.

Additional economic indicators for Kiawah Island include:

Per capita income: \$197,853

Median home value: \$1,423,900

For context, Charleston County has a per capita income of \$52,484 and Johns Island Census County Division (CCD) has a per capita income of \$50,833.

While income is just one aspect of a community’s economic profile, this comparison provides valuable insight into Kiawah Island’s economic standing within the broader Charleston area.

*Any Kiawah information is reporting for full-time residents only.



population objectives and strategies

GOAL:

Understand and plan for Kiawah’s population mix.

Objective MP1

Continue to gather relevant data on Kiawah’s present and future population trends.

Strategy MP1.1

- Conduct regular demographic studies to track changes in full-time and part-time resident populations and visitor trends.
- Analyze vehicle traffic data and pass issuance patterns to understand seasonal population fluctuations better.
- Collaborate with KICA to gather comprehensive data on community usage and needs.

Objective MP2

Address the needs of full-time residents, part-time residents, and visitors.

Strategy MP2.1

- Conduct regular surveys and community engagement sessions to identify the specific needs and preferences of full-time residents, part-time residents, and visitors.
- Implement a communication strategy that effectively reaches all population groups, including digital platforms for part-time residents and visitors, and local channels for full-time residents
- Plan for flexible-use spaces and facilities that can adapt to changing demands throughout the year,

accommodating both peak season influxes and off-season community needs.

Objective MP3

Assess the impact of Johns Island’s growing population on Kiawah.

Strategy MP3.1

- To stay informed of Johns Island’s growth patterns, participate in regional planning discussions through established channels like the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments.
- Collaborate with Johns Island Task Force and other Johns Island organizations to gather data on commercial and residential development.
- To develop forecasts for shared resource usage, such as roads, beaches, and commercial areas, consider Kiawah’s population mix and Johns Island’s growing community.
- Review and analyze traffic data at Kiawah’s entry points to assess regional development and growth impacts.