

A Snapshot of Chappaquiddick Island

Buildings, Land and People

Prepared for the Chappaquiddick Island Association

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following pages are a snapshot of Chappaquiddick Island based on data gathered from the various Edgartown Town departments. A special thanks to the staff of the Assessor and Building departments for their time to provide data and answer questions, as well as the Board of Health and others who provided information on how their Boards handle issues of building on Chappaquiddick. A bulk of the data was based on information provided up to the end of 2016. Some of the building department data showed 2017 entries, but that is not factored into all aspects of this report.

Chappaquiddick has 1010 lots covering 3411 acres. Land owned by Conservation and Government groups accounts for 39.9% of all Chappy property. Land which has some type of residence/home on it accounts for 35 percent of the Island's acreage. There are 434 lots on Chappy that have at least one or more dwellings; all of the habitable buildings (houses and guesthouses) on those lots add up to 549. While some lots have guest houses, there are many that could add these additional homes. This is the case for lots of 3 to 5.99 acre; 104 of them have yet to take advantage of this right to build a 900 sq foot additional dwelling.

Vacant land accounts for about 13% of Chappy covering 109 lots (17 lots 6 acres or greater, 51 lots 3-6 acres, and 41 lots less than 3 acres). If built out, these lands could have an impact on the additional number of houses on Chappy (see the chart in the report below).

Chapter 61 lands, private property which receives tax incentives to keep their land open, encompasses 193 acres of land. These landowners, essentially two families, commit to Agriculture, Forestry, and/or Recreation practices to keep their property open. These lands could revert from their present uses to building lots in the future. Environmental limitations on some of these properties, and unknown other restrictions, may limit the overall buildout.

The Assessors department has identified a number of lots as unbuildable (234 lots-over 5% of Chappy). While their designation can be overturned, it appears that they have done a lot of research on why these lots are not eligible for development. The potential long term changes that could affect this and other density issues would be the advancement of technologies that would purify wastewater and possibly change the regulation that guide numbers of bedrooms and lot size as well as separation of waste disposal from drinking water/wells. At this point, though, the estimates for potential buildout on Chappy are assuming that the Assessors are correct on the status of these unbuildable lots.

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How many houses are there on Chappy? People ask that question all the time, and depending on who you talk to, you may get very different numbers. The data displayed in the following pages gives a “snapshot” of Chappy at the end of January. However, even with that snapshot numbers are changing all the time and depending on definition, they could be different. Overall, these figures will give a best approximation of housing on Chappy today and the potential for growth in the future.

CHAPPY LAND AND BUILDINGS - OVERVIEW

Breakdown of General Land Classifications

According to the most recent data from the Edgartown Assessors department, the 3411.4 acres of land on Chappy are broken down into 1010 lots.

- 434 Lots totalling 1195.96 acres have at least one residential building
- 109 Lots totalling 449.89 acres are undeveloped residential lots
- 214 Lots totalling 1360.24 acres are government or conservation land
- 234 Lots totalling 186.36 acres are deemed “vacant unbuildable” by the Assessors
- 11 Lots totalling 193.93 acres are private lots coded as Agriculture, Forestry or Recreation tax classification
- 8 Lots totalling 24.98 acres are club/recreational facilities.

Acreage

Clubs, Community

0.7%

Forestry, Ag or Rec

5.7%

Residential Non

5.5%

Residential Vacant

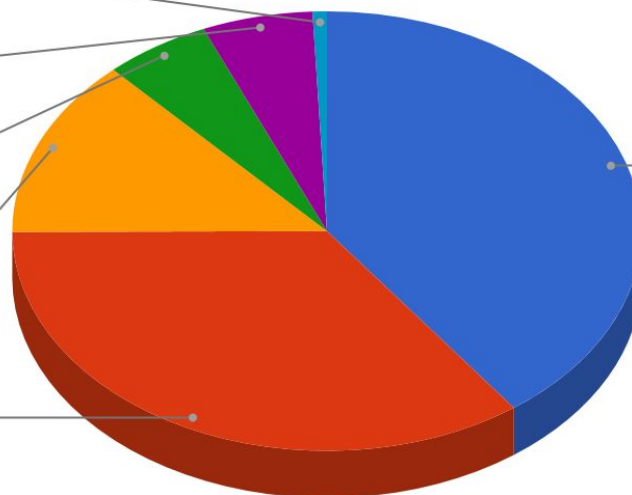
13.2%

Residential with

35.1%

Conservation/Gov

39.9%



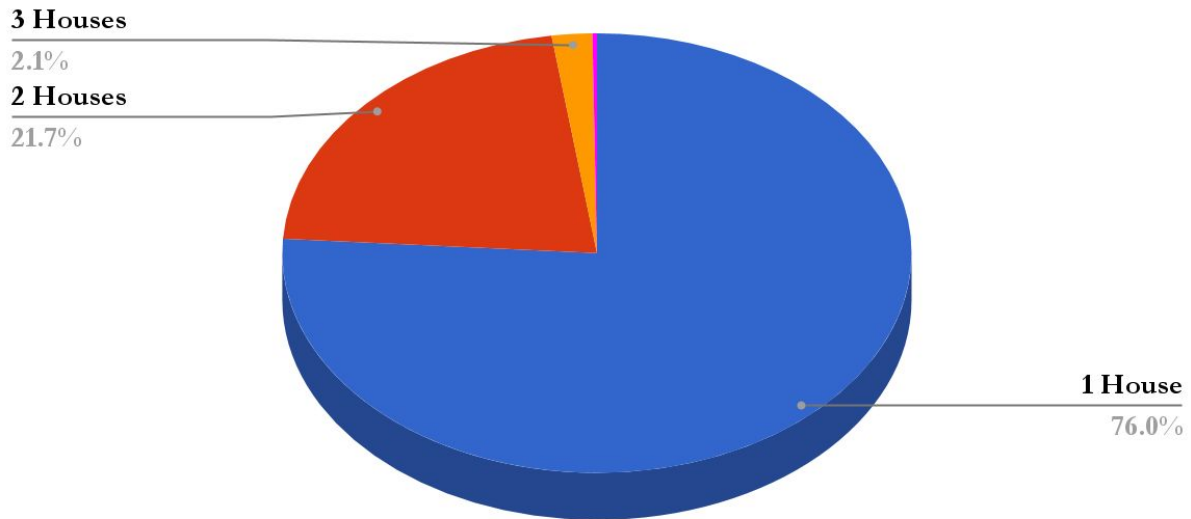
Lots with Buildings

There are 434 lots on Chappy that have at least one residential building, and many have two (main house and guest house); a few have 3 (either built before zoning or under special permit); and 1 has 4. All of these buildings add up to a total of 549 Single Family Residences (SFR) on Chappy.

- Lots with 1 house - 330
- Lots with 2 houses - 94
- Lots with 3 houses - 9
- Lots with 4 houses - 1

Calculated separately from these numbers are 5 residential structures that are on non-profit or government properties (categorized later in the report). For a breakdown of those lots see the section highlighting the Conservation and Government lands below..

Count



Vacant Buildable Land

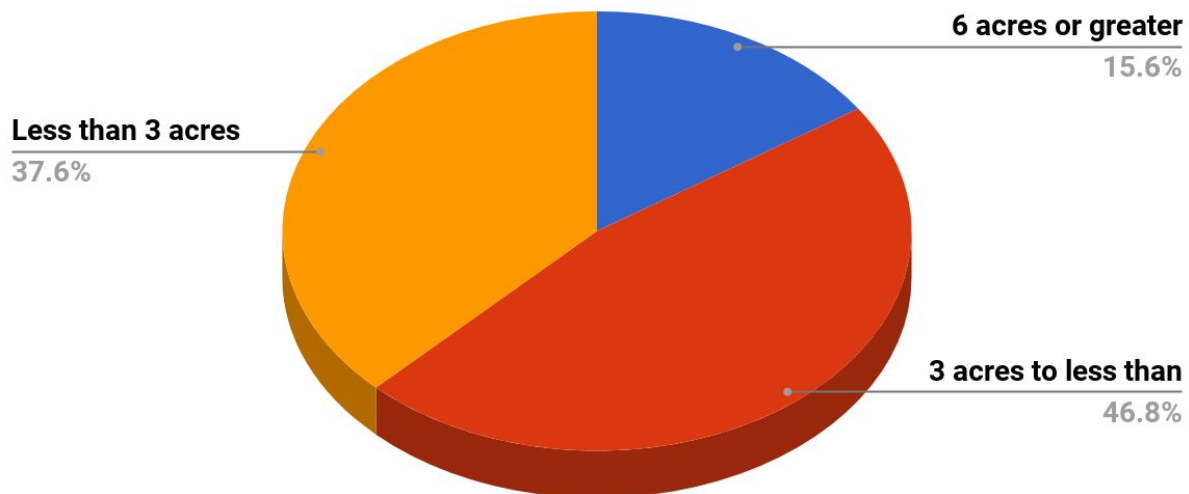
As seen above 13.2%, or just shy of 450 acres of land comprising 109 lots, are vacant parcels that could support residential building. These lots break down into three types:

- Lots 6 acres or greater - 17 Lots totalling 213.75 acres
- Lots 3 acres to less than 6 Acres - 51 Lots totalling 193.11 acres
- Lots less than 3 acres - 41 Lots totalling 43.02 acres

Size of these lots are important for the following reasons. These will be factored in when assessing future building potential.

1. Lots 6 acres and greater have the option of being subdivided if they meet the criteria set by zoning, health, conservation, and other local regulations. As long as the proposals meet all of the applicable regulations, these additional lots could also construct a house and guest house (guest house after 5 years) by right.
2. Lots of 3 acres but less than 6 would share all the same rights and responsibilities of the 6 acre lots for building (house and guest house), but could not be subdivided.
3. Lots less than 3 acres would need to be pre-existing (before zoning) non-conforming lots to be eligible for a building permit and would have to meet the other requirements of zoning, health, and conservation. Owners of substandard lots would need a special permit if they wish to build a guest house.

Count

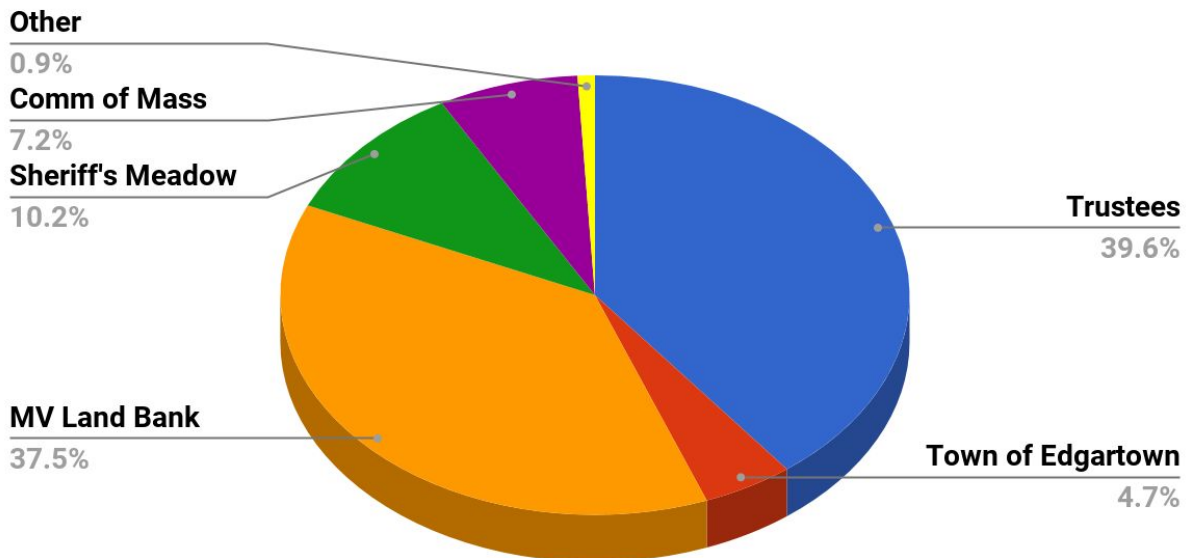


Conservation and Government Lands

The assessors have placed lands owned by governmental and private organizations conserving land into a category. These holdings are represented below and accounts for just under 40% of the land on Chappy.

- Trustees of Reservations - 25 lots totalling 538 acres
- Martha's Vineyard Land Bank - 59 lots totalling 509.7 acres
- Sheriff's Meadow Foundation - 75 lots totalling 139 acres
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts - 1 lot totalling 98 acres
- Town of Edgartown - 46 lots totalling 63.4 acres
- Under the "Other" category are the following
 - US Government - 2 lots- 2.18 acres
 - MV Preservation Trust - 1 lot - 5.17 acres
 - Vineyard Open Land Foundation - 1 lot - 3.2 acres
 - Dukes County Historical Society - 1 lot - .07 acres (monument)
 - New Chappaquiddick Cemetery - 1 lot - .43 acres
 - Jeffers - 1 lot - .9 acres
 - Floyd - 1 lot - .11 acres

Acreage



An additional note: A few of the properties below have houses or buildings in addition to the residential home count. The additional structures number 5 - 3 of which include a residential dwelling:

- TTOR - 2 separate residence buildings - 1 at Mytoi and 1 at Wasque
- MV Preservation Trust - 1 residence building
- Edgartown Fire Department - 1 structure with bathrooms and kitchen
- MV Land Bank - 1 structure with bathrooms (shellfish hatchery)

Vacant Unbuildable

These are lots determined by the Assessor's department for one or more reasons to not be buildable. Some of those reasons could be related to size of lot, setbacks for well and septic, covenants, deed restrictions, lot ownership issues, or other issues that would cause a permit denial based on zoning, health or other federal, state or local regulations. These lots break down into similar size categories as the vacant buildable land but include a more detailed breakdown for lots under

- Lots 6 acres or greater - 7 lots - 86.2 acres
- Lots 3 acres to less than 6 Acres - 4 Lots - 15.25 acres
- Lots 1 acre but less than 3 acres - 29 lots - 47 acres
- Lots less than 1 acre - 194 Lots - 37.91 acres

In the end, whether a building permit is issued will be determined by the building/zoning inspector. If applicants can provide the necessary documentation that would override the "unbuildable" status of the lot the inspector may issue the permit. The impact of these lots will be discussed in more detail in the section on build out potential.

Private Lots Under Chapter 61 Tax Designation

Chapter 61 allows landowners who meet the criteria to reduce their property tax liability by utilizing their land for Agriculture, Forestry, or Recreational purposes. While this does not remove the ability to subdivide or build on the property in the future, it does show a level of commitment by the property owner to hold the land from development. These lands total 193.94 acres spread over 3 different landowners. When considering future buildout, these lands will play a specific role in the calculations.

- Forest Land - 7 lots - 78.04 acres
- Agriculture Land - 2 lots - 64.1 acres
- Recreation Land - 2 lots - 51.8 acres

Lots Not Residential or Conservation/Government

These lots cover clubs and other non categorized lands. These lots also contribute an additional 2 residence and 1 gathering place to the list of non-residential properties (EYC and 1 of Chappy Beach Club lots).

- BB&W Golf - 2 lots - 14.81 acres
- Chappy Landing - 1 lot - .22 acres
- Chappy Community Center - 2 lots - 6.01 acres - 1 structure with bathrooms and kitchen
- Edgartown Yacht Club - 1 lot - 1.5 acres - 1 structure with bedroom and bathrooms
- Chappy Beach Club - 2 lots - 2.449 acres - 1 structure with bedrooms and bathrooms

THE POTENTIAL FOR ADDITIONAL LOTS, HOUSES, AND GUESTHOUSES

This next section will look at the variety of situations and the potential for additional lots and homes on Chappy. It is impossible to give an exact number of additional lots and buildings because of the many different scenarios that could occur. Some of these scenarios would include: rulings by town boards and officials; changes in regulations at the local or higher level; information about a parcel of land that could affect its status in the future; and the desire of property owners to pursue some level of development or conservation.

Overview

Build Out Potential					
		Range	Range	Range	
	existing Lots	Added Lots	Added Houses	Added GHouses	NOTES
Lots with Buildings					
>6 acres	28	20-32	20-32	36-48	1
3-5.99 acres	155	0	0	104	2
<3 acres	251	0	0	35	3
Vacant Land					
>6 acres	17	14-21	31-38	31-38	4
3-5.99 acres	51	0	51	51	5
<3 acres	41	0	19-39	3-4	6
Private Lots Ch 61					
All 11 lots	11	10-25	21-36	21-36	7
Town of Edgartown					
9360 Tax title lots	24	1	5-12	4-5	8
Totals	578	45-79	147-208	285-321	

1. Assumes all lots do not have any restrictions in deed or other that would prohibit subdivisions and additional guesthouses for those with 1 house on existing lots.
2. These are all existing lots between 3 and 6 acres that have only 1 house on them
3. 210 total lots under 3 acres but only considered 97 lots 1 acre or greater
4. The added houses and guesthouses assume a new house and guesthouse on the existing 17 lots as well as the possibility of houses on the new lots created by subdivision.
5. Assumes that each lot will be developed to the maximum (1 house and 1 guest house)
6. Some lots under minimal size for a 1 bedroom septic. Most too small to even consider a guest house. Used 2 acres as a benchmark for a guesthouse.
7. Too many factors to have a high degree of accuracy.
8. Of the 24 lots, 13 would not even support a 1 bedroom house, 6 would support a one bedroom house, 5 would support 3 bedroom homes, and 1 lot could be subdivided. This is all based on the wishes of the Town as to whether they will auction these lots off, put them into conservation or affordable house, or any combination of the aforementioned. (See Appendix D).

Lots With Buildings

As presented above, there are three categories of lots with houses: lots less than 3 acres which require a special permit and must meet a number of set back parameters to get a guest house; lots 3-6 acres which can build a guest house as a matter of right; and lots over six acres which can have a guest house by right, but could also subdivide to create additional lots. The numbers above reflect analysis of the 6+ acre lots and the existence of wetland and other features that could affect the ability to subdivide the land (wetlands can not be counted in any subdivided land to meet lot requirements) and are noted in Appendix A. The guest house analysis for the 3-6 acre lots first breaks out those with more than 1 house and then applies guest houses to those with 1 house (104 lots) (assumes no restrictions so maximum ability to add - see Appendix A). The less than 3 acre lots only considered those of one acre or greater based on the assumption that a lot smaller than 1 acre may have issues meeting the required setbacks and minimum 15,000 square feet of lot area for each bedroom on the property. Those houses were evaluated by existing number of bedrooms vs. lot space. The number of 35 is most likely high since many of the properties would only be able to add a 1 bedroom guest house (see Appendix A).

Vacant Buildable Land

There are 17 lots of six acres or greater that are considered residential (non conservation or government) that don't have houses. While they account for 213.75 acres, many of them are hampered by wetlands, previous subdivision, or possible restrictions. See Appendix B for a breakdown. There are 51 lots that are between 3 and 6 acres. Since these are vacant lots, by right these lots could build a house and guesthouse (they would have to wait for 5 years to build the guesthouse based on zoning by-laws). There are 41 vacant lots under 3 acres in size. Many of these are close to the minimum for a one bedroom house, and others would only meet a two bedroom house. Even meeting those minimums would still require adherence with setbacks from neighboring well and septic. For the larger lots (but still below 3 acres) a minimum of 2 acres is likely to comfortably get a house and guesthouse (3 lots - although one is most likely restricted- see Appendix B for breakdown). Additionally, there are 9 lots of exactly 1 acre which may denote a subdivided lot prior to the change from 1 acre to 3 acre zoning. At this time, it is very likely that those lots are no longer grandfathered for building (the applicant would have to show that the lot was either subdivided prior to original zoning or an approval from the ZBA to make it buildable).

Private Lots Chapter 61

Of these 11 lots, consisting of 193.93 acres, 10 are owned by two different families. It is possible that each family will wish to continue the tradition of tax relief by keeping their land open. It is also possible that these lots have other levels of restrictions that would limit or prohibit development, so the numbers concluded here may not be accurate. An additional issue is that almost 100 acres of the farm and forestry land is not officially delineated on the assessor's maps. To accommodate multiple uses and tax classifications and maintain the lot in its legal form, the assessors do a "paper" subdivision of the lot to denote the various use types. This approach does not reveal the specific areas given the tax break, and therefore resources like wetlands, etc. that could impact subdivision and buildability are unknown. Because of the size of the property it would also need to be referred to the

MVC which could also have an impact on the overall development numbers. So most of the number above for this class of land is more of a guess than anything scientific. See Appendix C for details.

Town of Edgartown Lots

The lots owned by the Town breakdown into 4 classifications:

- 14 Lots of 9300 = Vacant land under Selectmen - 23.28 acres
- 7 Lots of 9320 = Vacant land under the Conservation Comm. - 13.73 acres
- 1 Lot of 9351 = Town Public safety (fire station) - .23 acres
- 24 Lots of 9360 = Town Tax Title Land - 26.17 acres

Of these lots, the classification (9360-Tax Title land) is the most likely to add any buildings. Discussion from the Town has focused on a few of these tax title lots to be converted to conservation property as well as potential affordable housing lots. 13 of the lots are substandard for even a one bedroom house. Of the remaining 11 lots, 6 would be just able to support a 1 bedroom house, and the remaining 5 could support a 3 bedroom or better house.

1320 Unbuildable Vacant Land

The 1320 designation has been put on these lots by the Assessor's office based on multi step review. Some of the factors considered are the size of the lots, whether they are abutting other lots of the same owner, whether there are restrictions placed on the lot by deed or other instrument, previous decisions by a local board, located in wetlands or other non-buildable areas, etc. In reviewing the 234 lots that were deemed unbuildable, 7 were lots of 6 acres or greater. These all appear to be part of bigger subdivisions and most likely are in this state due to decisions made at that time. The 3-6 acre sized lots totalled 4 and appear to be either in dominant coastal/wetland area or designated unbuildable by owner agreement. The lots less than 1 acre number 194. However after searching through all these lots, only 23 of them were .344 acres or larger; the minimum for a 1 bedroom house. The other 171 lots were all too small to be used as a buildable lot (without connecting them to multiple other lots). After reviewing a number of these lots, it showed that many of them abutted properties of the same owner. With this in mind it appears that the designation by the Assessor's office of unbuildable is solid, but there is always a possibility that some of the lots may eventually be used or be a part of another lot for the construction of a house or guest house. See Appendix E for details.

Lots Not Residential or Conservation/Government

There are 8 lots in this category of uses, all of which have structures (except the 2 lots in use for the golf course). In the case of the golf course, a conservation restriction would negate any residential building. Two of the lots are being used for housing staff (or could be), and the rest of the lots are used for the operations of the club/organization. It is possible that at some point in time those operations would cease and the properties could revert back to a residential state, but the impact would most likely be on par, or possibly less intensive than under the present use. For that reason this category is not figured in the matrix above.

GUEST HOUSES

If you have a 3 acre lot on Chappaquiddick you have the right to build a guest house as long as it is no larger than 900 square feet of livable floor space. If you have less than 3 acres you can apply for a special permit to build a guest house. You will need to meet certain setback and separation requirements under the conditionally permitted uses of Article 7 of the Edgartown Zoning bylaws (See Appendix F). The zoning by-law requires that there be a five year waiting period between building your first and second dwelling on your lot.

You will notice in the data in Appendix G that some of the houses that are guesthouses may exceed the 900 square foot limit. This may occur from an appeals request to the ZBA or the homes could have been built before the zoning law went into effect. You may also notice that some of these guesthouses are part of a garage or barn. For purposes of this study, any building with a bedroom and bathroom was counted in as a guesthouse (see Appendix G which details house size)

The existence of guesthouses or second dwellings on a property break down to:

- Lots 6 acres or greater - 12 have guesthouse/second dwellings - 3 of these lots have 3 or 4 houses on them - these lots have very large acreage and were given permits/grandfathered to have these multiple dwellings on a single lot
- Lots 3 acres to 6 acres - 51 have guesthouses/second dwellings - 5 lots have 3
- Lots less than 3 acres - 41 have guesthouses/second dwellings - 2 lots have 3

To see the impact on buildout by guesthouses, refer to the chart in the section above which evaluates the potential for additional guesthouses on various sized lots.

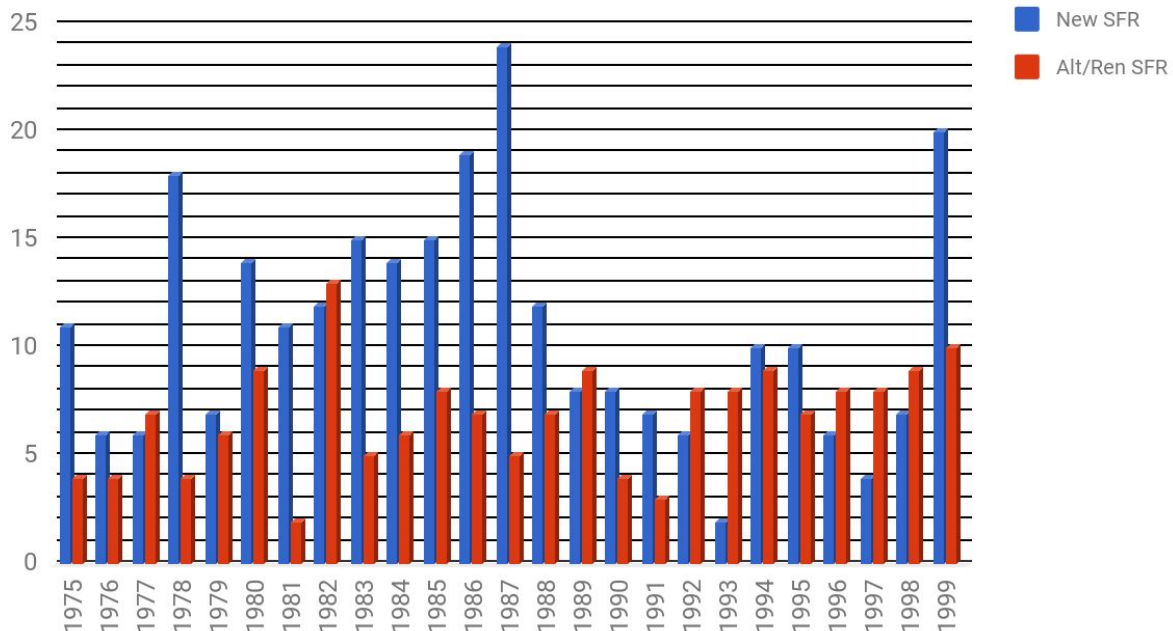
BUILDING PERMITS

One of the indicators of growth and trends are the various types of permits issued for construction during a given year. The data to follow was collected from the Edgartown Building department records in two phases: first in a previous study conducted in 2000 and this study. There are a couple of caveats to keep in mind when reviewing this data:

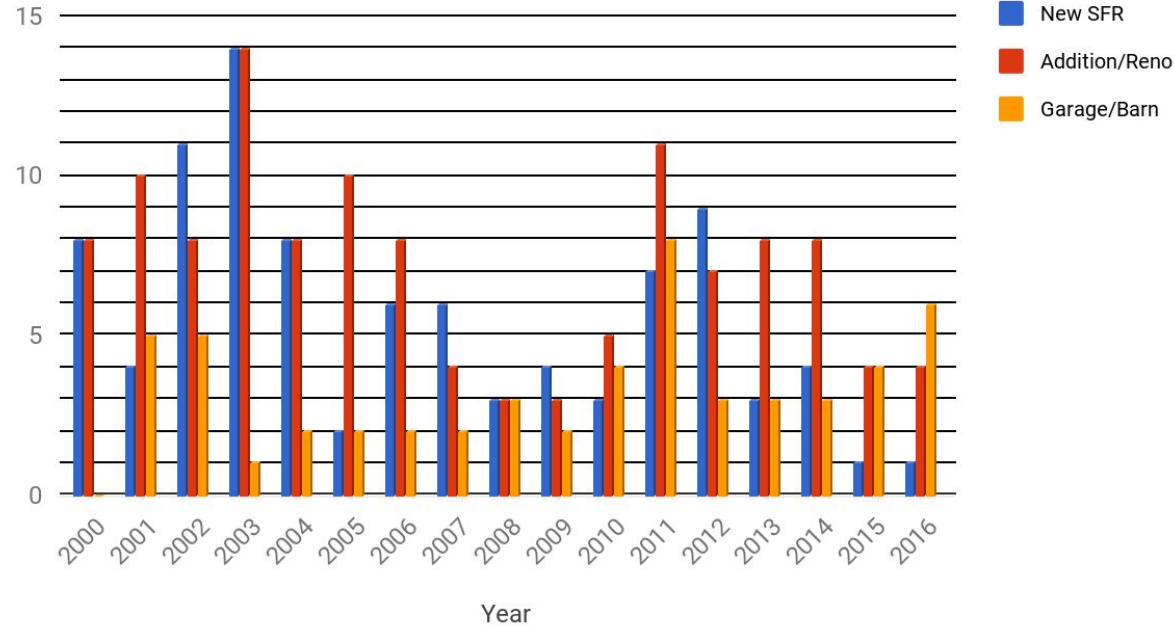
- Even though a permit is issued, it does not mean that the work was done. There are instances where permits will be issued multiple times for various reasons.
- The categorization of the permits is not always consistent through the 40 years of these studies. A lot with an existing building can sometimes be permitted as a renovation/alteration and sometimes it is considered a “new SFR”. In certain cases demolishing the building and putting up a new house was considered a new home, but if one was counting houses on Chappy that should be a “swap”, not an additional home.

1975-1999

New SFR and Alt/Ren SFR



New SFR, Addition/Reno and Garage/Barn



2000 - 2016

- Even though a permit is issued for a particular year, it can take a year or more to show up in the Assessor records. This could be based on the difference in time from permit to beginning of construction or the timeframe for completion. Some building projects have been known to take multiple years.

For a complete listing of all permits for new homes, renovations and barns/garages issued from 2000-2016, refer to Appendix H.

SQUARE FOOTAGE OF EXISTING HOMES

Appendix G has a complete breakdown of all houses on Chappaquiddick by size (gross and living area); number of bedrooms and bathrooms, as well as the approximate year it was built. They will appear in the report by street address and houses with more than one dwelling will appear in the second section of the report displaying data for the second dwelling. If the lot has three dwellings the third dwelling will appear in the third section on the report. There is one lot that will appear in the 4th section of the report for the 4 houses on the lot. The report also shows acreage of the lot.

DEMOGRAPHICS

A question of how many people live on Chappy year round was asked. Peter Wells of the Chappy Ferry estimated approximately 130 individuals living in 50 households. Since no official census is performed it is hard to know the accuracy of these numbers. Additionally, it would be helpful to set criteria for the definition of "year round" in case a count is done in the future.

The second question was about school aged children on Chappy. The following information was provided:

- Edgartown school - 10 students - provided by John Stevens, Principal
- MV Charter School - 3 students (all from the same family) - provided by Alex Taylor
- MV Regional High School - 3 students - provided by Ruda Stone

The total Assessed Valuation of Chappy properties.

- 2000 - \$268,636,400
- 2016 - \$947,078,340