



**ANALYSIS OF LAKE HOUSE UTILIZATION: 2017-2022**  
**SIPOA BOARD FACILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE**

February 9, 2023

**BACKGROUND**

The growth in usage of the Lake House by Seabrook Island property owners has increased significantly since 2017. Although special operating policies and capacity limits were put in place for 18 months due to COVID, the strong upward trajectory of Lake House usage has resumed since pandemic restrictions were lifted in late 2021.

Between 2017 and 2022, 73 new homes were completed and granted certificates of occupancy. As of the end of December 2022, 67 additional homes were under construction. Twenty-five more have been approved but not yet started, and 54 have applications working through the review process. When all these new homes are completed, our community will be 94% built out. This is vivid evidence of Seabrook Island's changing and bright future, one that will pose new challenges and opportunities associated with this growth.

New construction is not the sole cause of the sharp increase in the usage of Lake House facilities that has occurred over the last six years, especially during peak demand periods of summer and holidays. Other contributing factors include the turnover of 928 properties in the last three years, which has brought an estimated 2000 new property owners to the Island. Compared to 2020 Census data, these new owners are significantly younger than the median age of Seabrook permanent residents.

These new owners are naturally inclined to use and experience the amenities to which they have newly gained access. Notably, the pandemic has brought a renewed awareness of the role that wellness and fitness play in maintaining good health and a feeling of well-being.

Many property owners have concern that the island’s amenities are overstressed too frequently. A widespread desire of property owners involves more events and venues that are reserved for the exclusive use of themselves and their accompanied guests. There are no SIPOA-managed amenities that can fully satisfy this desire, as the existing Oyster Catcher building and pool have limited capacity and offerings.

Because of these evolving trends, the past two SIPOA Boards have formed and directed subcommittees to accomplish thorough studies of usage demands on the Lake House and Oyster Catcher facilities. These efforts included the assignment to envision possible changes and additions to these facilities that will be needed to accommodate the anticipated future needs of property owners.

The findings below describe the results of this comprehensive analysis of facilities usage. The studies employed precise data provided by Lake House staff over the time period of 2017 through 2022. Because COVID restrictions severely suppressed usage of SIPOA facilities in 2020 and a large part of 2021, data from these years was excluded from the analysis.

## FINDINGS

### **1) Fitness class sessions (excluding usage of Lake House pools) showed rapidly expanding growth over the four-year analysis period—a near tripling from 466 to 1366, which represents an increase of 193%.**

- The expanding popularity of semi-private and personal training sessions is a notable driver of this growth: from 28 to 217—a nearly eight-fold increase over the analysis period. Because of space and ventilation requirements, nearly all of these new customized sessions to satisfy property owner requests are held in Live Oak Hall.
- At the same time, large group fitness sessions in Live Oak Hall grew nearly 150%. The combination of these growth stressors has caused Live Oak Hall usage to swell 191% over the analysis period—for fitness uses alone.
- Three years ago, there were few outdoor semi-private fitness classes. Ten one-hour classes are now held outside each week. This development is indicative of a growing demand for fitness experiences customized for type, intensity and age level.

- In spite of the strong recovery in demand in 2022 and a continuation of pre-pandemic growth trends, the Lake House staff believes there is some lingering “COVID shyness” that is suppressing usage by an unknown amount. Once this fades, they expect to see some additional demand from this factor.

**2) Growth in Lake House use for non-fitness (e.g., special interest groups and SIPOA committees) was significant as well. Meeting room usage grew from 1,019 in 2017 to 1,497 in 2022, with higher numbers every year. This represents an increase of 46% over the study period.**

- The greatest amount of this usage comes from card- and game-playing groups (e.g., bridge, mahjong).
- The overwhelming share of non-fitness meetings occurs in Osprey 1 and 2 (over 80%).
- Usage of Eagle’s Nest and Bobcat 1 and 2 is below capacity. However, these rooms do not represent viable alternative venues for group fitness classes due to limitations on size, volume and noise control.

**3) Demand for therapeutic spa services is consistently exceeding availability of appointments, as indicated by forward bookings running a minimum of 4 to 5 weeks, and as much as 8 to 10 weeks.**

- The current room for massage services is sub-optimal for the purpose, being a former small office that is cramped and inadequately ventilated.
- Noise from groups going to and from the meeting rooms can degrade the massage experience.
- These deficiencies are being addressed in part by the division of Bobcat 1 into two separate massage rooms. This arrangement, while an improvement, could be further strengthened by additional modifications proposed as part of the Renew 50 conceptual plans.

**4) Usage of the Oyster Catcher Community Center is increasing as some groups find it more accommodating because of better availability, larger spaces, better remote meeting technology, and on-site storage (e.g., space for supplies used by Backpack Buddies).**

**5) Unfortunately, both Lake House and current Oyster Catcher facilities possess significant obstacles for expansion to meet expected future needs and desires of property owners.**

- The Oyster Catcher building is over 40 years old and in a late stage of obsolescence. Roofing, interior finishes, siding, and persistent pool maintenance issues are indicative of a facility nearing the end of its useful life.
- The Lake House site is under a conservation easement administered by the North American Land Trust, a condition of the original donation of the site to SIPOA. It effectively prohibits any horizontal expansion of the current Lake House footprint.
- The Lake House roof and other critical structural components were not designed to accommodate a second floor. A vertical expansion of the Lake House would involve complete removal of the roof and would require substantial reconfiguration of the first floor to provide access to a second floor. This process would close all or most of the Lake House throughout the entire period of reconstruction (i.e., 18-24 months).
- The Oyster Catcher site is the only location inside the gate where SIPOA can undertake any meaningful renewal and expansion to meet expected future needs.

**6) The Facilities Planning Subcommittees for 2021 and 2022 have prepared independent projections of Lake House usage using several reasonable scenarios with different rates of demand growth. Assumptions and results have been reviewed by Lake House management staff.**

- All scenarios show Live Oak Hall approaching effective capacity. Demand for fitness classes is concentrated in the mornings. Days frequently occur in which 5 to 7 different activities (i.e., exercise classes or group meetings) happen in this space, especially during peak periods of the year. There is no obvious scenario in which this demand hits an inflection point and turns down. Rather, all indicators point in the opposite direction; i.e., toward continued growth.
- The current Facilities Subcommittee has evaluated the feasibility of re-purposing one of the meeting rooms for fitness classes. There are several significant hurdles that make this impractical, an important one being the intrusion of fitness class participants and noise into current meeting, library

and massage spaces. Even if one meeting room could be repurposed to accommodate some of the fitness activities taking place in Live Oak Hall, demand projections indicate that capacity constraints would likely recur in the 2027-2029 time frame.

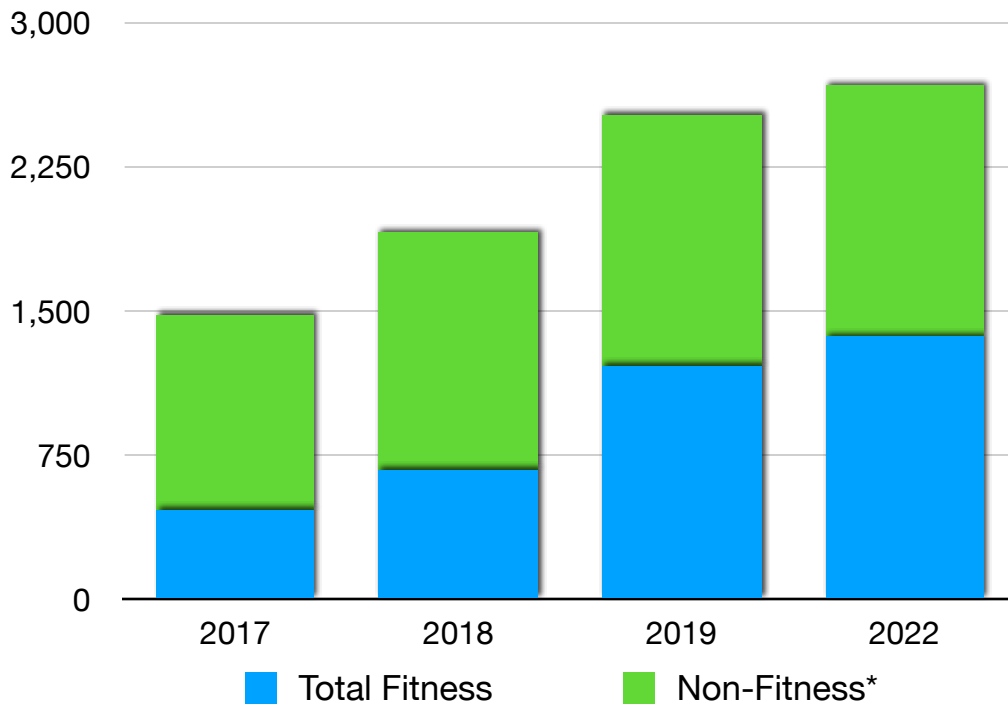
- Repurposing **two** adjacent meeting rooms and forcing more meetings to the existing Oyster Catcher facility. For this to effectively relieve demand pressures, all meeting times throughout the day would have to be equally preferable to users; the remaining meeting spaces in the Lake House and library would be unaffected by fitness class activity in their midst; and the existing Oyster Catcher facility and parking lot would be capable of accommodating a minimum additional 570 room uses that were booked at the Lake House in 2022. These conditions are not consistent with past history and current usage trends.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Current and recent usage trends extrapolated into the near term future suggest that the Lake House as currently configured will be challenged to meet the future needs and demands of a growing and active population of property owners.
- The Renew 50 Project is the Board's response to these challenges. It includes both conceptual proposals and an outreach program to Property Owners for the purpose of gathering and assessing their observations and suggestions.

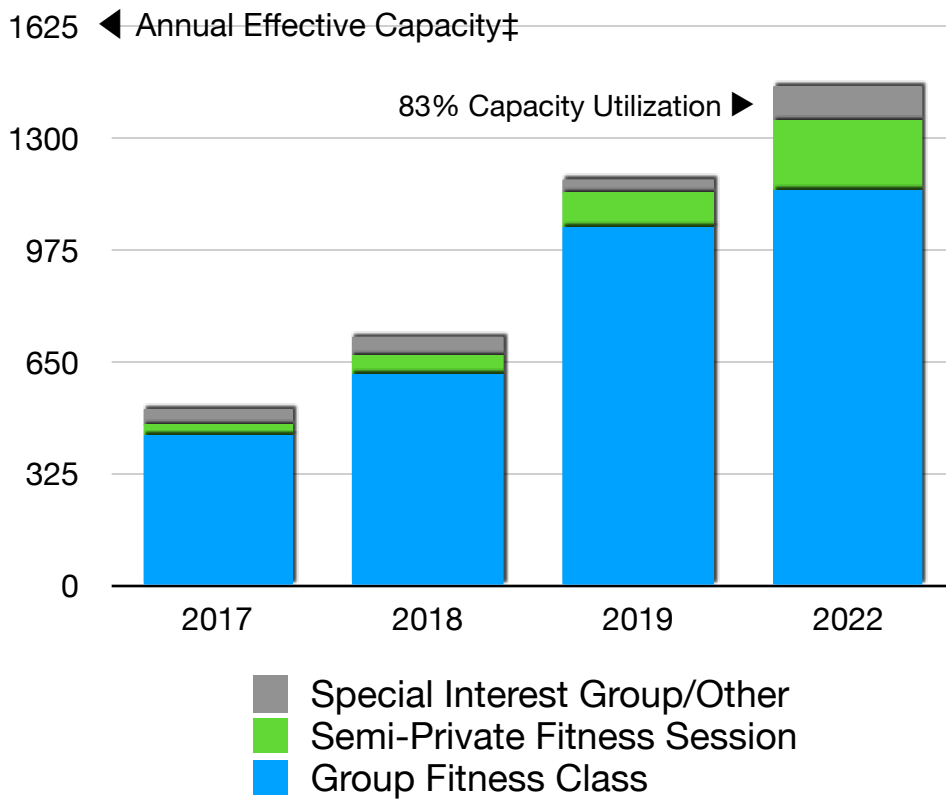
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**LAKE HOUSE USAGE  
2017-2022†  
By Type; All Rooms**



† 2020 and 2021 data not included due to COVID usage restrictions  
\* Includes Special Interest Groups, SIPOA Board/Committees, Private functions

## LIVE OAK HALL USAGE 2017-2022



‡ Calculated as 13 events every 2 days; 5 days/wk; 50 wks/yr

## LAKE HOUSE FITNESS USAGE 2017-2022

