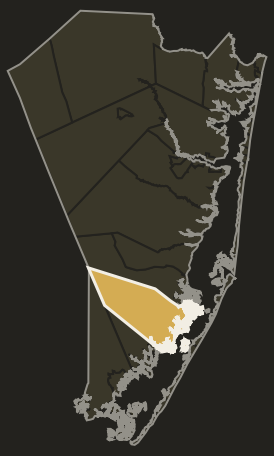
kw OCEAN LIVING
KELLERWILLIAMS. REALTY

AN IN DEPTH TOWN GUIDE

Living in Stafford, NJ

A short history, the sections of town, homes and taxes, where to shop and eat, things to do, and a moving checklist for your new home.



Frana & Silk Real Estate Group

Vincent Frana, Broker Associate · Zachary Silk, Sales Associate

FRANASILK.COM

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

Living in Stafford

1	At a glance	The basics
2	A short history	How the town came to be
3	Sections of town	From the bay to the pines
4	Homes and taxes	What you will find and what it costs to own
5	Groceries, dining and shopping	Where locals shop and eat
6	Getting around	Roads and commuting
7	Things to do	Parks, places and local events
8	Moving checklist	Setting up your new home
9	Questions people ask	Short, direct answers
10	Worksheets	To fill in on your visits

This guide goes deeper than our website: the history, the sections of town, a moving checklist and worksheets for your visits. Keep it, mark it up, and call either of us with questions.

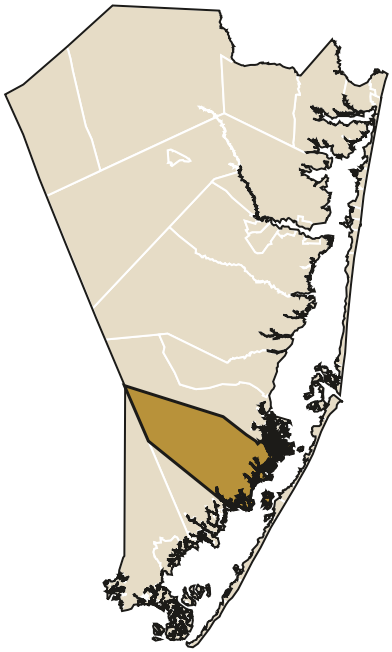
Vin and Zach

1

AT A GLANCE

Stafford at a glance

County	Ocean
Population	About 28,600 (2020 census)
Size	About 55 square miles, about 46 of it land
Setting	Bayfront lagoons, a busy Route 72 corridor, planned neighborhoods and Pine Barrens to the west
Main roads	Garden State Parkway Exit 63 at Route 72; U.S. Route 9; County Route 539



Stafford in gold, in Ocean County

Stafford, Manahawkin and Long Beach Island

Manahawkin is not a separate town. It is a community inside Stafford Township, and Manahawkin and Beach Haven West both use the 08050 ZIP code. Beach Haven West is also part of Stafford, on the mainland, despite a name that suggests the island.

Long Beach Island is a different story. Its towns, including Ship Bottom and Beach Haven, are separate boroughs and townships. Stafford is the mainland township that Route 72 crosses on its way to the island.

2

A SHORT HISTORY

The story of Stafford

Stafford was formed by royal charter on March 3, 1750, from part of Shrewsbury Township, while the area was still in Monmouth County, and was named after Staffordshire in England. It was incorporated under the state's Township Act on February 21, 1798, and joined the new Ocean County in 1850. For generations it was a rural township, with the village of Manahawkin as its hub.

The township once reached much farther. Parts of it became Union Township, now Barnegat, in 1846, Eagleswood in 1874, Surf City in 1894 and Long Beach Township in 1899. Growth came in the 1950s, when Beach Haven West and Ocean Acres began, the Garden State Parkway opened, and Route 72 grew from a two lane road called Bay Avenue into the main road to Long Beach Island.

KEY DATES

Timeline

1750	Stafford is formed by royal charter from part of Shrewsbury Township.
1798	Stafford is incorporated as one of New Jersey's original townships under the Township Act.
1874	Eagleswood Township is formed from part of Stafford, one of several towns carved from it.
1964	Stafford holds its first Founders Day, marking New Jersey's 300th anniversary.

3

SECTIONS OF TOWN

From the bay to the pines

Manahawkin. The township's old village and business hub around Route 9, Main Street and East Bay Avenue, with the municipal building, Manahawkin Lake and a mix of older and newer homes.

Beach Haven West. A lagoon community on the bay, begun in the 1950s, with homes on dozens of saltwater lagoons off Mill Creek Road. Homes here sit right on the water.

Mud City and the causeway. The low bayside area at the east end of Route 72 where the mainland meets the causeway to Long Beach Island, with homes close to the marsh.

Ocean Acres. A large planned neighborhood west of the Garden State Parkway, shared with Barnegat Township, with single family homes on wooded lots.

Adult communities. Age restricted developments such as Atlantic Hills, Perry's Lake and Fawn Lakes, with single level homes and association fees and rules.

Cedar Run, Mayetta and Warren Grove. Older place names along Route 9 to the south and deep in the Pine Barrens to the west, where homes sit on larger lots and building is limited by Pinelands rules.

> Stafford's homes sit in a handful of distinct areas, each with its own feel. Some of the names you will hear:

4

HOMES AND TAXES

What you will find

Lagoon homes in Beach Haven West, built from the late 1950s on, many on 50 foot lots facing the water.

Single family neighborhoods in Manahawkin and Ocean Acres, much of Ocean Acres built since the 1990s.

Adult community homes in age restricted communities such as Atlantic Hills, Perry's Lake and Fawn Lakes.

Second homes close to Long Beach Island, especially in the lagoon neighborhoods.

Worth knowing: Many Stafford homes near the bay, including much of Beach Haven West, sit in FEMA flood zones. That affects insurance cost, renovation rules and what a buyer's

lender will require, and New Jersey sellers must disclose a home's flood zone and flood history. West of the Parkway, Stafford is partly inside the state Pinelands Area, where Pinelands rules shape what can be built. We check the flood zone, elevation and land use rules for every Stafford home before it is priced.

Property taxes

1.465%
2025 effective tax rate, as a share of market value

$7,777
2025 average residential tax bill

A home worth $550,000 on today's market would pay roughly $8,058 a year at Stafford's 2025 effective rate. Your actual bill depends on your assessment, so we pull the real tax record for any home you are considering.

5

GROCERIES, DINING AND SHOPPING

Where Stafford shops and eats

Stafford has three supermarkets and two large shopping centers, so most errands stay in town. They are along Route 72 near Parkway Exit 63, and on East Bay Avenue and Route 9 in the older center of Manahawkin.

Grocery stores

IN TOWN	**ShopRite** 733 Route 72, Stafford (Manahawkin)
IN TOWN	**ALDI** 451 Martin Truex Jr. Boulevard, Stafford (Manahawkin)
IN TOWN	**Acme** 609 East Bay Avenue, Stafford (Manahawkin)
NORTH	**Acme** 912 West Bay Avenue, Barnegat

SOUTHWEST	**Acme**	425 Route 9, Little Egg Harbor (Tuckerton mailing address)

Checked October 2026. Stores open, close and move, so call ahead before a first trip.

Dining

Route 72. The main shopping and dining corridor, from the Parkway at Exit 63 east to the causeway, with shopping centers and places to eat on both sides.

Route 9 and Main Street in Manahawkin. The older village corridor, with local eateries and shops along the road through town.

East Bay Avenue. The road from Manahawkin toward the bay, with more everyday places to eat and shop.

Long Beach Island. East over the causeway, where restaurants line Long Beach Boulevard in Ship Bottom, Surf City and Beach Haven.

Ship Bottom and Surf City: East on Route 72 over the causeway, where restaurants line Long Beach Boulevard.

Shopping

Route 72 near Parkway Exit 63 covers most of it, with two large shopping centers, Stafford Park and Manahawkin Commons, holding big box stores, a movie theater and chain restaurants.

6

GETTING AROUND

Roads and commuting

The Garden State Parkway crosses Stafford with Exit 63 at Route 72. Route 72 is the only road onto Long Beach Island, crossing Manahawkin Bay to Ship Bottom, and Route 9 runs north and south through the center of the township. County Route 539 crosses the western pines. NJ Transit's 559 bus runs to Atlantic City, and Ocean Ride local routes serve Stafford and Long Beach Island. There is no passenger rail. Most daily shopping is along Route 72 and Route 9.

7

THINGS TO DO

Things to do in and around Stafford

Summer Concert Series at Manahawkin Lake Park. Monday evening concerts in July and August at Manahawkin Lake Park, 48 North Main Street, run by the Stafford Historical Society, with local vendors and special theme nights.

A. Paul King County Park. An Ocean County park on Manahawkin Lake with a swimming beach shaded by pines, fishing, a playground and a picnic pavilion.

Stafford Township Founders Day. The township's yearly late spring celebration, held since 1964, with a parade, family activities and fireworks.

Manahawkin Wildlife Management Area. About 1,642 acres of state land known for its mature bottomland hardwood forest.

Cedar Bonnet Island Trail. A nature trail on Cedar Bonnet Island along Route 72, on Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge land between the mainland and Long Beach Island.

Ocean County Library, Stafford Branch. The township's Ocean County Library branch, moving to a new building at 179 South Main Street in Manahawkin, next to the county's Southern Service Center.

8

MOVING CHECKLIST

Setting up your home in Stafford

Tick each one off as you go. Most of these take one phone call or a few minutes online.

- [ ] **Township municipal building.** Stafford Township Municipal Building, 260 East Bay Avenue, Manahawkin, NJ 08050.https://staffordnj.gov

- [ ] **Property taxes.** Tax office phone 609-597-1000. The tax collector is in the municipal building at 260 East Bay Avenue in Manahawkin. New Jersey property taxes are paid quarterly, due February 1, May 1, August 1 and November 1, with a 10 day grace period before interest is charged back to the due date. Not receiving a bill does not change the due date, so new owners should confirm with the tax office where bills will be sent.

- [ ] **Water and sewer.** Stafford Township Water and Sewer Utility. The township runs its own water and sewer utility, set up under Chapter 47 of the township code, and has been replacing sanitary sewer lines in Beach Haven West and Mud City. Call the municipal building to schedule a final reading and transfer the account. Some homes in rural areas may be on a private well or septic system, so confirm the service for each address.

- [ ] **Electric.** Atlantic City Electric. 1-800-642-3780 (customer service); 1-800-833-7476 (outages, 24 hours).

- [ ] **Gas.** New Jersey Natural Gas. 1-800-221-0051 (customer service); 1-800-427-5325 (gas leaks, 24 hours).

- [ ] **Trash and recycling.** The township collects household trash and recycling at the curb in township containers, on days set by the Superintendent of Public Works. Put materials out no earlier than 5 p.m. the night before and bring containers in by 10 a.m. the day after. Collection days are on the township calendar posted at staffordnj.gov.

- [ ] **Driver's license and voting.** New Jersey law (N.J.S.A. 39:3-36) requires drivers to report a new address to the Motor Vehicle Commission within one week, and the MVC prefers that you do it online. To register to vote or update your address, use the state's online voter registration or send a paper form to the Ocean County Commissioner of Registration or Superintendent of Elections. Registration closes 21 days before an election. The Ocean County Clerk handles vote by mail ballots.

- [ ] **Flood zone.** Look up any address on the FEMA Flood Map Service Center at msc.fema.gov. New Jersey sellers must disclose a home's flood zone and flood history. Many homes near the bay, including much of Beach Haven West and Mud City, sit in FEMA flood zones, so ask for the elevation certificate. Stafford takes part in FEMA's Community Rating System, which can lower flood insurance premiums; it entered in 1991 and was listed at Class 5 in the state's 2019 hazard mitigation plan. Ask the township for the current class.

- [ ] **Library.** Ocean County Library, Stafford Branch, 179 South Main Street, Manahawkin, NJ 08050.

Checked October 2026. Phone numbers and schedules change, so confirm with each office.

WHEN YOU SELL

The certificate every sale needs

New Jersey requires a Certificate of Smoke Alarm and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Compliance before a one or two family home is sold (N.J.A.C. 5:70-2.3). It is issued by the local fire safety enforcing agency after an inspection, so apply well before closing. Since February 3, 2025 (P.L. 2025, c.19), a portable fire extinguisher is no longer part of this certificate for one and two family homes. Stafford also requires its own resale certificate under Chapter 81 of the township code: ownership of a home may not be transferred until the Construction Official issues a certificate of occupancy finding it fit for habitation. Fireplaces must have chimney caps. The Construction Official acts within 10 days of a complete application and may issue a temporary certificate for up to 90 days if only minor items remain. Apply through the construction office at the municipal building.

9

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK

Questions people ask us about Stafford

Is Manahawkin its own town?

No. Manahawkin is an unincorporated community within Stafford Township, and it uses the 08050 ZIP code. Stafford Township sets property taxes and provides local services for Manahawkin homes.

Is Beach Haven West on Long Beach Island?

No. Beach Haven West is a lagoon community on the mainland in Stafford Township. The Borough of Beach Haven is a separate town on Long Beach Island. Beach Haven West homes pay Stafford Township taxes.

What Garden State Parkway exit is Stafford?

Exit 63, at Route 72. From there, Route 72 runs east through Manahawkin and across Manahawkin Bay to Long Beach Island, and west into the Pine Barrens.

How do you get to Long Beach Island from Stafford?

Route 72 is the only road onto Long Beach Island. It crosses Manahawkin Bay on the Manahawkin Bay Bridge and ends in Ship Bottom on the island.

Where is the closest grocery store to Stafford?

There are three in Stafford itself, all in Manahawkin: a ShopRite on Route 72, an ALDI on Martin Truex Jr. Boulevard and an Acme on East Bay Avenue. There is also an Acme on West Bay Avenue in neighboring Barnegat, and another on Route 9 in Little Egg Harbor near Tuckerton.

10

TO FILL IN ON YOUR VISITS

Touring the sections of town

Drive or walk each part of town at different times of day. Note the streets you liked, the traffic, the water and anything to ask us about.

Manahawkin	
Beach Haven West	
Mud City and the causeway	
Ocean Acres	
Adult communities	
Cedar Run, Mayetta and Warren Grove	

Is Stafford right for you?

HOW WELL DOES THE TOWN FIT?	GREAT FIT	OKAY	NOT A FIT
Getting to work and family	☐	☐	☐
Groceries and everyday errands	☐	☐	☐
Restaurants and things to do	☐	☐	☐
Parks and time outdoors	☐	☐	☐
Being on or near the water	☐	☐	☐
Flood zone and insurance	☐	☐	☐
Property taxes	☐	☐	☐
The kinds of homes available	☐	☐	☐
Traffic and summer crowds	☐	☐	☐
How it feels on the streets you saw	☐	☐	☐

Streets or homes to look at again

Questions to ask us

TALK IT THROUGH

Call or text either of us

Thinking about moving to Stafford, or selling a home there? Call or text either of us. We will tell you what we know about the town, honestly, and help you plan the next step.



Vincent Frana

Broker Associate

732-567-4147



Zachary Silk

Sales Associate

732-773-3257

More guides and our town guides at **franasilk.com**

kw OCEAN LIVING
KELLERWILLIAMS REALTY

Keller Williams Realty Ocean Living, 1513 Richmond Ave, Point Pleasant, NJ 08742. Office 848-241-6955.

© 2026 Frana & Silk Real Estate Group. Each office is independently owned and operated. Frana & Silk Real Estate Group is a team operating under Keller Williams Realty Ocean Living. Vincent Frana, Broker Associate. Zachary Silk, Sales Associate. Licensed New Jersey real estate professionals. In New Jersey commissions are negotiable. Frana & Silk are licensed real estate agents and do not purchase homes. Any direct as is purchase is made by an independent investment buyer. This guide is general information, not legal or tax advice. Keller Williams Realty, LLC, a franchise company, is an Equal Opportunity Employer and supports the Fair Housing Act.

Equal Housing Opportunity