

Planning Commission

Work Session Agenda

Cape Charles Civic Center – 500 Tazewell Avenue

October 20, 2020 3:00 P.M.

1. Call to Order
 - a. Roll call and establish a quorum
2. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of agenda format
3. Order of Business
 - a. Comprehensive Plan update
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4. Adjourn

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

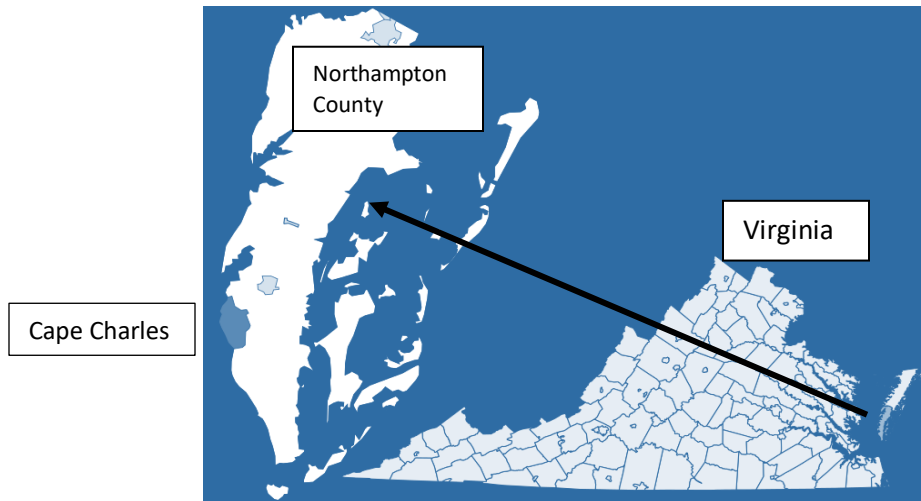
WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document that is designed to guide the future growth and development of Cape Charles over the next twenty or more years. It is the local government's guide to future community, physical, and economic development. All Towns, Cities, and Counties in Virginia are required by Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia to adopt a Comprehensive Plan. Section 15.2-2230 of the Code of Virginia requires localities to review its Comprehensive Plan on a five-year basis to ensure that it remains a relevant and usable vision for the community and is reflective of current conditions. This document should be relied upon by Town staff, as well as elected and appointed leaders, as they weigh the merits of land development applications, construct the Town's annual budget, and make many other decisions for the future of the Town.

It is important to note that the Comprehensive Plan is a vision for what the citizens and leadership of Cape Charles want the Town to be in the future. While the Comprehensive Plan sets planning policy for our community, land use and development are regulated through the Town's zoning and subdivision ordinances. The Comprehensive Plan guides amendments to these ordinances and should be used to make decisions on land use applications, such as conditional use permits and rezonings. The plan will serve as a guide for Town leaders and property owners as they make many land use, fiscal, and other decisions over the coming years. The primary goal of this plan is to protect and improve the Town by providing for the public health, safety, convenience, and welfare of its residents.

REGIONAL SETTING

The Town of Cape Charles is located in Northampton County on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The Town is situated on a small peninsula, bordered by the Chesapeake Bay to the west, King's Creek to the north and Old Plantation Creek to the southeast. With a land area of 2,817 acres and a population of approximately 1,000 residents, Cape Charles is the largest of Northampton's five incorporated towns in terms of both land size and population. Since its inception in 1886, Cape Charles has evolved into a dynamic town capable of meeting the needs of a diverse array of residents, visitors, and businesses.



CAPE CHARLES HISTORY

Cape Charles was laid out in 1883-1884 at the southern terminus of the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad. The town owes its existence to its harbor, which, following dredging, enabled the railroad company to transport loaded cars by barge across the Chesapeake Bay to Norfolk. The town developed quickly and became the largest community on Virginia's Eastern Shore at the turn of the century. Its buildings were constructed on a twenty-seven block grid dominated by a central park from which four landscaped streets extended. The remarkably intact architectural fabric ranges from small vernacular workers' housing of the 1880s to early 20th-century architect designed commercial, residential, and municipal buildings. The opening of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel occurred in 1964. At that time, development was arrested and the town became frozen in time.

While significant new development has occurred in recent years, Cape Charles has one of the best collections of historic buildings of any community on the Eastern Shore. The Town strives to preserve this rich architectural heritage. An architectural survey that identified historic properties in the Town led to the listing of the Cape Charles National Register Historic District in 1989.

In 1992, the Town annexed 2,191 acres of land from Northampton County. The annexed land's proximity to the Chesapeake Bay and other nearby amenities made the area a prime location for a new residential community. Two large tracts of land, consisting of 1,750 acres surrounding the original Town, are currently being developed. Two upscale golf courses designed by Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus have also been constructed, as well as a marina and commercial areas.

TOWN GOVERNMENT

Cape Charles is governed by a six-member Town Council, as well as by an elected Mayor who serves as the presiding officer at Council meetings. Each of these representatives is elected to a four-year term. Day-to-day operation of the Town and the supervision of Town employees is carried out by a Town Manager, serving at the direction of the Council.

PROCESS FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

The update of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan began in 2019. Since the 2016 Comprehensive Plan was considered a 'minor' update to the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, the Planning Commission also used the 2009 Comprehensive Plan with its detailed appendices. This current plan update is based on review of development trends in the Town which have prompted substantial changes to the 2009 and 2016 Comprehensive Plans.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Public input is essential for a Comprehensive Plan that is reflective of the community's vision for the future. A comprehensive plan community kick-off was held on July 15, 2019 with approximately x people in attendance. While topics of discussion included how best to engage citizens, critical stakeholders and questions/topics to ask about in surveys, input was requested at the meeting of top issues that the comprehensive plan should address and what major projects should be included. The results most commonly stated were:

1. Top Issues identified for plan to address

Streets – cleaning, parking, boats, drainage	Access to medical
Repair curbs and sidewalks	Coastal resilience
Extend availability of internet	Controlled growth
Walkability	Workforce housing
Vision for railroad property	Clean drinking water
Beach Plan	Maintain small town charm
Economic Development (Diversity and year-round)	Infrastructure -toilets, municipality complex
Preserve historic district	Recreation center

2. Major Projects suggested

Water and sewer analysis/treatment	Improve water quality
Streets – cleaning, parking, boats, drainage	Traffic and parking
Repair curbs and sidewalks	Public transportation
Community meeting space	Address flooding/resiliency
Company recruiting	Library updating
Workforce housing	Recreation Center
Parking strategy	Good internet service
Public restrooms	

A broad survey was conducted during the timeframe of x to x, 2019 and received x responses. Common concerns and desires expressed were as follows (not provided in any type of priority):

1. Preserve 'family centered' beach town
2. Preserve and enhance beach
3. Preserve Historic District
4. Preserve Central Park
5. Preserve open spaces
6. Preserve and enhance deep-water harbor
7. Preserve retail center
8. Need for economic diversity
9. Provide town walkability, sidewalks
10. Need for public facilities/restrooms
11. Enhance activities for youth
12. Improve water quality
13. Encourage affordable workforce housing
14. Development of off-street parking plan
15. Development of town recycling
16. Development of golf cart pathways, and need for enforcement for golf carts and traffic
17. Explore ways for access to medical centers
18. Ensure new water/wastewater is paid by developer
19. Explore development of Community Center

Summarizing Eastern Shore Regional Housing Workshop conducted by Northampton County - January 29, 2020 in Cape Charles with over 50 people in attendance:

1. What type of housing development is most needed on the Shore?
 - Strong desire for rental apartments, small single-family dwellings, duplexes, townhomes, condos.
2. What are the top three housing issues impacting the Eastern Shore?
 - Lack of housing available for rent
 - Lack of housing that is affordable
3. Identify the top most significant barriers to developing more affordable housing on the Eastern Shore.
 - Cape Charles zoning ordinances
 - Cost of housing/rentals within this beach community
 - High cost to refurbish older homes
 - Lack of incentive to build affordable homes
 - Lack of qualified workforce to build homes and apartments
 - Lack of full-time, year-round jobs
 - Lack of educated population relative to affordable housing

A draft of the 2021 Comprehensive Plan was published on xx, 2021. A public meeting was held on xx, 2021 to collect comments. Final 2021 Comprehensive Plan was provided to Town Council on xx, 2021 for acceptance.

VISION

The overarching vision for the Town of Cape Charles is:

The people of Cape Charles cherish and nurture the unique qualities of this small, historic town. At the same time, Cape Charles will reach for a future that gives all citizens the opportunity for prosperity, cultural enrichment, access to environmental treasures, and secure, sustainable homes. [2016]

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SETTING

The Cape Charles Comprehensive Plan is intended to capture a broad community vision of a future Cape Charles. Written statements that describe future expectations are necessary to describe that vision. These statements are intended to be easily understood and generally accepted among the residents and business interests in the Town. Goals and objectives are found in the subsequent chapters for each functional area of the Plan, e.g., land use, transportation, community facilities, etc. Some goals and objectives developed in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan process were retained. Goals are long-range, generalized statements that represent the ultimate desires of the Town. The situations and conditions called for in the goals would normally be achieved only through a sustained series of actions over a considerable period of time. The goal statements in this Plan are sufficiently broad to remain valid as people's values change over time. As these values change, the interpretation of the goals will change also. When this happens, the goals will remain in effect, but new objectives may be developed. Objectives comprise a proposed series of broad policies that are more immediate and specific in nature than are the goals. Objectives are intended to be intermediate steps that are taken toward achieving the goals. For each goal, several objectives can be provided.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into 9 chapters. These chapters deal with all aspects of land use in the Town. Detailed information supporting the summarized material presented in each chapter is provided in an appendix. Following this introductory chapter, Chapters 2 and 3 highlights past trends and future projections of demographics and housing, respectively. Chapters 4 through 8 are the Plan Elements. Each of these chapters includes a discussion of background and analysis, identification of issues, a statement of goals and objectives, and a

summary of implementation recommendations pertaining to each of the functional areas of the plan. Chapter 8 presents the central theme of the report, the Land Use Plan, which designates how, when, and where growth should occur. The other sections include discussions of Economy, Transportation, Community Facilities and Services, and Environment. The final chapter of the Plan sets forth implementation techniques including details concerning necessary actions and responsibilities for implementing the goals and objectives of the Plan.

Draft 8/5/2020 P Grossman

Housing

The housing stock in Cape Charles is clustered in three main areas. The traditional residential area is located in the Town's Historic District. Two other major clusters of housing are present in the north and south tracts of Bay Creek, where construction of several residential subdivisions continue.

Housing in the Historic District of Cape Charles consists of approximately 750 dwelling units, many of which are single-family houses built between 1885 and 1920. The houses range from small bungalows to larger homes and are grouped into neighborhoods which blend together but maintain distinctive character.

There are many excellent examples of Victorian, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Neo-classical styles of homes in the Historic District. The oldest houses, dating from the 1880s to the early 1900s are found in the center and eastern sections of the Historic District. The Town's Historic District Review Board reviews all construction in the Historic District to ensure construction of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings do not adversely affect the historic character of the area. The Town was originally laid out in a grid of 40 foot wide by 140 foot long lots with houses spaced close together. A limited number of vacant lots exist in the Historic District.

In more recent years, significant residential construction has occurred in Bay Creek. The development's north and south tracts span approximately 1,750 acres and will continue to bring a large number of new housing units to the area. Although the actual number of homes constructed will be driven by market forces, the Annexation Agreement of 1992 allows up to 3,000 dwelling units to be built in Bay Creek. Bay Creek has ten distinct neighborhood villages—each designed to take full advantage of the surrounding landscape. Home styles include condos, townhomes, and single-family homes. Many of the homes already built in Bay Creek, a gated-community, are marketed towards high income households, retirees, and seasonal home owners.

Single-family homes represent most of the housing market in the Town of Cape Charles. The town's housing stock has undergone major changes in a short period of time. Numerous single-family homes in the Historic District have been renovated and that trend continues. New residential construction has also taken place in the Bay Creek golf and marina resort communities.

The town has a large percentage of homes that are used as second homes, some of which are used as short-term rental units due to the high influx of tourists during the summer season. The U.S. Census categorizes 'vacant' to include houses for sale, houses for rent, seasonal/recreational and other. Based on the 2010 census, at least 30% of the entire housing stock was seasonal/recreational. It is expected that this percentage number would be equal, if not higher, at the present.

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Table X: Ownership of Cape Charles Homes (2018)

Occupant	% of Housing Population	Number of Housing Units (2018)
Fulltime Owner – occupied	30.1%	298
Fulltime Renter – occupied	28.9%	286
Vacant: Seasonal, for sale, etc.	41%	405
Total	100%	989

Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Despite the positive changes in the town's housing stock, some residents face major housing issues. Although rising property values have benefited many homeowners, increased rents and housing prices create difficulties for low and moderate income households. If current trend continues as expected, availability of quality housing will continue to decrease. An analysis of the town's census data shows that 41% of town households are cost burdened (i.e., households that pay more than 30% of their income for all of their housing expenses including utilities). For example, a household that had a \$30,000 income would be cost burdened if it paid more than an average of \$750 per month on their rent or mortgage, property taxes, property insurance, utilities and housing maintenance costs. The town needs to be concerned with planning for quality affordable housing as its economy grows. It is necessary to reduce the percentage of cost burdened households, one way of which is providing more affordable housing stock, since this will help encourage people to live in stable neighbors in town instead of moving out into the unincorporated areas of the county. This in turn will help keep the town economically viable throughout the year.

As described in the chapter on Cape Charles demographics, with the baby boomer (age 55-74) population increasing 36% to 45% of the total permanent population from 2010 – 2018, the Gen X (ages 35-54) decreasing from 20% to 15% and Millennials (ages 18-34) decreasing from 15% to 13%, the town's mix is moving towards an age disparity. Coupled with lower income buyers not able to compete for the housing within a gentrifying neighborhood such as Cape Charles, they are then forced to move to poorer neighborhoods that they can afford. With the increased housing costs within the town, this make it difficult to attract younger families. Again, Cape Charles has a need for a greater variety of housing types that are considered affordable.

Community Input

- Encourage development of affordable workforce housing (apartments, condominiums, single-family dwellings). *[Q5 Survey input 116/212 = 55%]*
- Desire for additional small single-family dwelling, duplexes, townhomes, condos. *[Northampton County Regional Shore Workshop in Cape Charles]*
- Need to address lack of housing available for rent and lack of housing that is affordable. *[Northampton County Regional Shore Workshop in Cape Charles]*

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Goals/Strategies

1. There is a need for a greater amount and diversity of housing types, including small and attached units, to provide greater housing options to those who seek more affordable housing through purchase or rent.
 - a. The Town should review the current zoning requirements to determine if there are any barriers to developers that would want to develop mixed-income housing. In addition, the Town should review the potential for providing incentive to developers for the inclusion of mixed-income housing.
 - b. The Towns should review the benefits of enactment of a mandatory Workforce Housing Unit (WHU) ordinance as authorized by Virginia Code § 15.2-2305 Affordable dwelling unit ordinances, and strategies other localities have taken (e.g. Town of Hilton Head on workforce housing options).

Appendix

Housing – Existing Conditions

The Town's housing stock has changed dramatically in recent years. There has been significant new construction and many older homes have been renovated. It is important to understand current trends and expected future changes when planning for housing in Cape Charles.

Housing Inventory

Housing patterns in Cape Charles are typical of small towns that developed around railroad lines in the early twentieth century. Most of the Town's older housing stock in the Historic District is located near the downtown commercial areas, which are centered along the previous railroad lines and harbor terminus. The inclusion of the Bay Creek golf and marina communities offer newer housing stock.

Nearly 78% of occupied homes in Cape Charles are single family units (69% single family detached, 9% attached). With the completion of new construction and rehabilitated buildings on Mason Avenue, more attached condominium units have been entering the housing stock.

Table X: Housing Inventory 2010 and 2018

2010 US Census			2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimate		
Total housing units	787		Total housing units	989	
1-unit, detached	612	77.8%	1-unit, detached	681	68.9%
1-unit, attached	35	4.4%	1-unit, attached	92	9.3%
2 units	24	3.0%	2 units	67	6.8%
3 or 4 units	32	4.1%	3 or 4 units	15	1.5%
5 to 9 units	29	3.7%	5 to 9 units	77	7.8%
10 to 19 units	25	3.2%	10 to 19 units	48	4.9%
20 or more units	16	2.0%	20 or more units	19	0.9%
Mobile home	14	1.8%	Mobile home	0	0.0%

Source: 2010 Census, 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Housing Projections

In order to determine the impact on housing for continued growth to the Town of Cape Charles, a rough housing projection was developed. Population projections typically are constructed around full-time residents and prepared for larger localities than Cape Charles. Given Cape Charles' smaller population numbers and the mixture of permanent residents and seasonal/ recreational occupants, forecasting housing needs contains many assumptions. Assuming an annual population projection increase of 1.6% (using 2010 to 2018 population growth numbers), an additional 240 full-time residents could live in the

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Town of Cape Charles by 2030. Given the current average household size of 2, another 120 dwelling units would be required to house this full-time population increase. However, one must also account for additional seasonal housing. Using a ratio of one 'vacant' house to every two full-time residential homes would result in a total of 180 additional homes projected for 2030. [Per U.S. Census terminology, 'vacant' homes are primarily seasonal/recreational in the case of Cape Charles.]

Although the Town of Cape Charles is enclosed on three sides by water, the Town would still have capacity to accommodate these additional homes within areas such as the remaining lots in the historic district, properties within the Bay Creek communities, future developable town owned property along Cape Charles Road (former Keck property, 18 acres), approximately 20 acres of developer's property along Old Cape Charles Road, and the potential development of the railroad property (approximately 40 acres) between the historic district and the harbor.

Accessory Dwelling Units

The Town of Cape Charles adopted ordinances in February 2019 that permitted accessory dwelling units under certain conditions with adequate safeguards to protect the character of the existing residential neighborhoods. This strategy is intended to stimulate new, moderate cost rental housing for both young and elderly households while preserving large, older homes and allowing elderly homeowners to stay in their homes. Among the conditions of approval for accessory apartments is that the accessory dwelling unit be "clearly subordinate to" the main unit. This is achieved by requiring that the unit be less than a specified percentage of the square footage of the original house. In addition, these units cannot be rented for less than 30-day length of stays in order to foster longer term residencies (as opposed to summer tourist related weekly rentals).

The number of permits issued to build accessory dwelling units since February 2019 through xxxx total six that demonstrates an interest in residents to provide additional in-fill housing units within the town.

Tenure

Close to 60% of the housing stock in Cape Charles is either fulltime owner-occupied (30%) or long-term renter-occupied (29%). According to the 2018 American Community Survey published by the US Census, there were approximately 584 fulltime occupied housing units in Cape Charles. The higher full-time rental-occupancy number is driven by the rental units of Sea Breeze, Myrtle Landing, and Cape Charles Lofts, approximately 138 units total. This is in addition to other downtown loft apartments, and single-family home full-time rentals. However, there are an additional 405 housing units that are classified as 'vacant' units per census statistics, those either offered for rent, rented or sold but not yet occupied, and those for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Cape Charles has a high number of units within the seasonal, recreational or occasional use category because of the desirability of the town as a tourism destination and short-term get-away. As shown in the decennial census and ACS survey numbers, seasonal and short-term rentals have increased in numbers.

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Table X: Cape Charles Housing Occupancy by Tenure

	1990		2000		2010		2018	
Owner Occupied – full-time	299	43.4%	253	34.3%	247	25.8%	298	30.1%
Renter Occupied – full-time	268	38.9%	281	38.1%	269	28.1%	286	28.9%
Vacant	122	17.7%	204	27.6%	442	46.1%	405	41%
a. For rent	31	4.5%	22	3.0%	50	5.2%	*	
b. For sale	11	1.6%	9	1.2%	40	4.2%	*	
c. Seasonal	7	1.0%	82	11.1%	290	30.3%	*	
d. Other	73	10.6%	91	12.3%	62	6.5%	*	
Total	689	100%	738	100%	958	100%	989	100%

*Data not broken down in ACS Survey

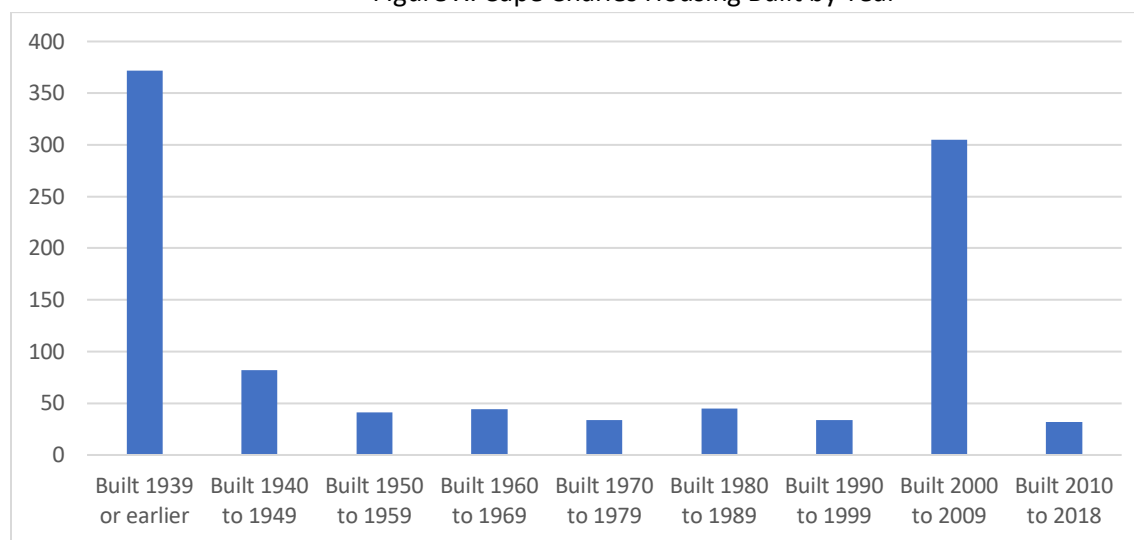
Sources: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, 2010, 2014-2018 ACS 5-year estimate

There was a request for **x** rental housing inspections in 2020.

Age of Housing

Cape Charles has a mixture of older and new housing. Given the town's history as a turn-of-the century railroad town, many homes in the Historic District were built before 1939. The decade between 2000 and 2010 saw a tremendous amount of growth as the Bay Creek properties developed. In fact, one-third of all housing in Cape Charles was constructed since the Year 2000.

Figure X: Cape Charles Housing Built by Year



Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-Year Estimate

In addition to renovation of older homes within the Historic District, new housing unit construction has continued at a healthy pace. In the year 2019, permits were issued for new residential construction as follows:

- 22 new single-family residential (10 in historic district and 12 in Bay Creek)

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- 8 new residential units over commercial property on Mason Avenue
- 4 new residential units in multi-family building
- 4 new apartments on Randolph Avenue

In the year 2020,..... (update at end of year)

Housing Conditions

The need to improve housing conditions in parts of Cape Charles has been a major issue in past decades and continues today to a much lesser degree. Dilapidated, abandoned, and seriously substandard housing is of concern to all citizens. Issues in the past had included problems with sagging roofs, missing siding, hazardous entryways, missing windows, deteriorating appearance, and unkempt yards and outbuildings.

In 1995, the Town was awarded Community Development Block Grant funding for rehabilitation of 30 substandard houses located in the northeast area of the historic district. The rehabilitation project, known as the Northeast Neighborhood Comprehensive Community Development Project, helped many of the Town's residents improve their housing conditions.

Building permit information indicates that a significant amount of renovation work for existing homes in the Historic District has occurred since the early 2000's.

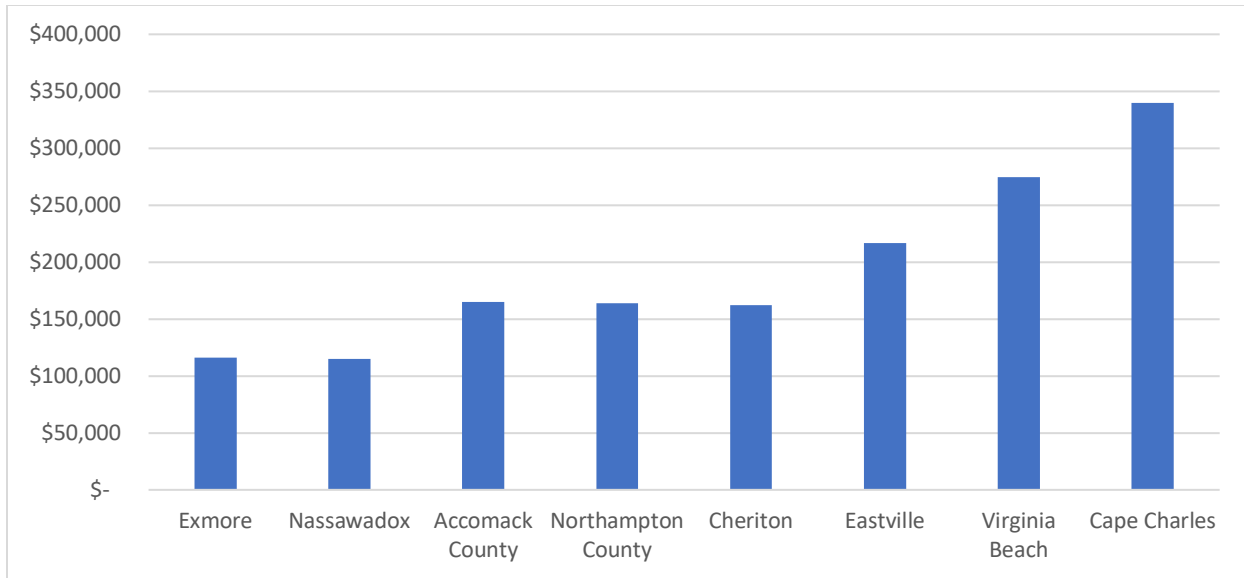
To help improve housing conditions, the Town also adopted an ordinance to enforce the repair or clearance of dilapidated structures. All existing buildings and structures must be properly maintained to protect the occupants from health and safety hazards that might arise from improper maintenance or use of the building. As noted in the Cape Charles Historic District National Register, between surveys conducted in 1987 and 2017, over 50 homes listed in the original register were demolished. Some have since been replaced. From 2016 through 2019, eight permits were issued to demolish additional residential homes and structures such as accessory buildings and warehouse within the historic district.

Housing Value

The Town of Cape Charles has the highest owner-occupied median housing unit value in the entire region at \$339,800 (2018).

Figure X: Regional Comparison of Owner-Occupied Median Single-Family Housing Unit Value 2018

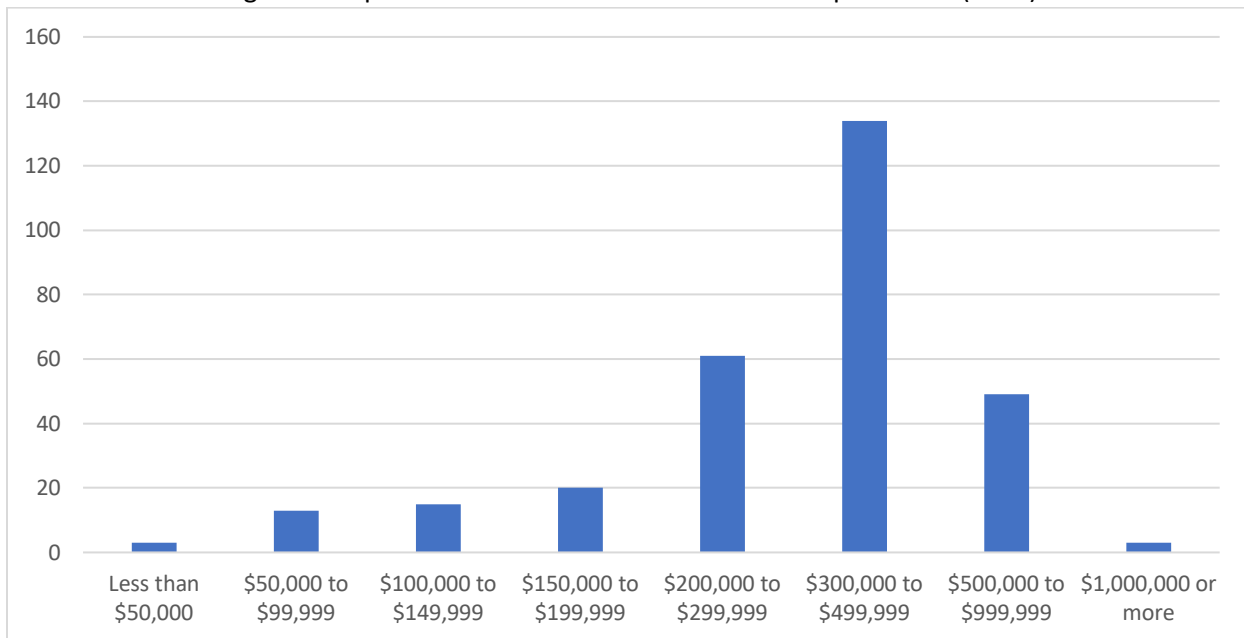
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Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-year Estimate

20% of all owner-occupied housing is valued about half a million dollars or more. Only 18% is valued below \$200,000.

Figure X: Cape Charles Home Value for Owner-occupied Units (2018)



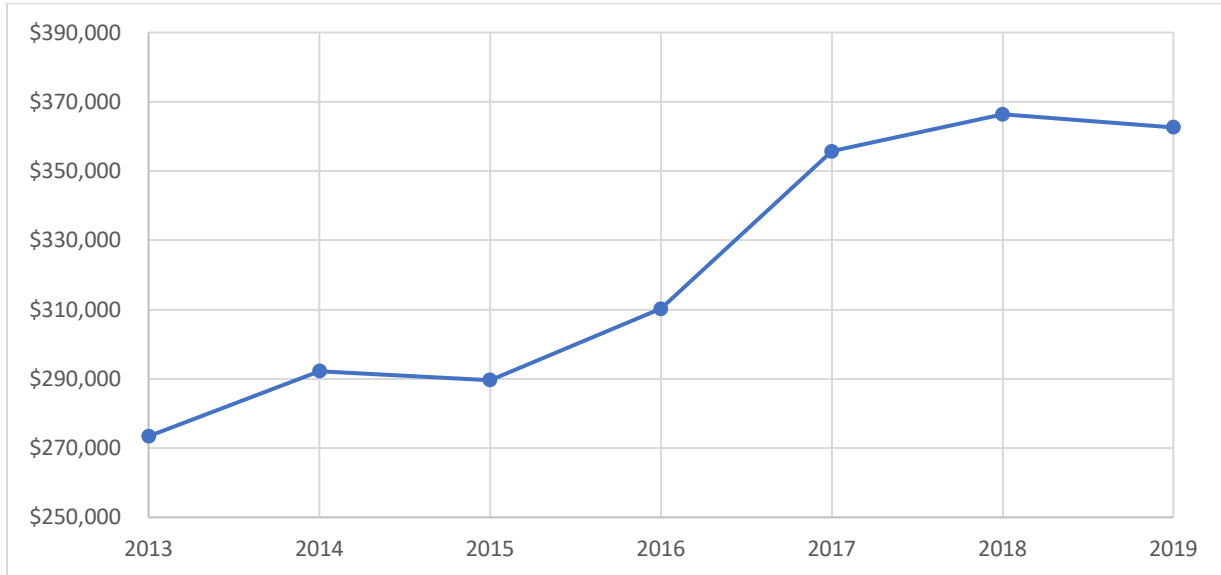
Source: 2014-2018 ACS 5-year Estimate

Market Trend

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Median list prices in Cape Charles have been steadily increasing over the past six years, from \$274,408 in 2013 to \$362,670 in 2019 (through October).

Figure X: Yearly Average Median Listing for Housing, Cape Charles



Source: Zillow

Rentals

The median estimated market rate rent across Cape Charles in 2019 is \$1352 monthly. This includes all types of housing available for rent (multi-family, single family residences, condos and co-ops). [Source: Zillow.] Two of the main reasons for introducing accessory dwelling units into Cape Charles were to increase the number of smaller units available for long-term rental and a lower rental cost based on these units being smaller in size (typically studios or one bedrooms).

Those housing units that are categorized as seasonal or recreational and available on a short-term basis can drive rental prices much higher as a result of the current high demand for short-term rentals during the summer tourist season.

Historic Resources

The Code of Virginia provides local governments with a number of tools that support the preservation of historic sites and structures. Included among them are the ability to designate historic districts and the authority to adopt local ordinances that govern the treatment of historic resources. The Town of Cape Charles is a Certified Local Government and has a designated historic district overseen by a historic district review board. The homes designated as 'historic' are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Affordable Housing

As a visitor destination with a large amount of second homeowners, the dynamics of the housing market in Cape Charles has the potential to impact overall affordability of housing. This has been a growing concern of the Town. Increased housing prices throughout Cape Charles have helped make the lack of affordable housing an issue. Cape Charles does have two income-based apartment complexes within the town;

- Washington Ave, Seabreeze Apartments - 28 units, family living
- Randolph Ave, Myrtle Landing apartments – 93 units, senior living

Housing costs can still be a burden for some households, including an increasing proportion of older adults. In 2018, nearly 19.9% of Cape Charles' population was estimated to be below the poverty line. The low-income apartment complexes noted above contribute in this high percentage number. Many low-income households pay a large portion of their income for housing. Generally, households are advised to spend less than 30% of their total income on housing costs (mortgages or rent plus utilities). However, 35% of full-time renter payers in Cape Charles spend greater than 30% of their income on housing. Homeowners in town can also be affected by high housing costs resulting in 24% of homeowners with mortgages and 12% of homeowners without mortgages also spending greater than 30% of their income on housing.

When people with money start renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste, that could be considered as gentrification. Although increasing the economic value of a neighborhood, this can have a negative effect in that it can exclude lower income residents due to the increased cost of rent or higher cost of housing. Lower income buyers thus cannot compete for the housing within gentrifying neighborhoods and are then forced to seek other neighborhoods that they can afford.

With Cape Charles having the highest owner-occupied median housing value in the region, the town has a need for a greater variety of housing types that are considered affordable. A greater diversity of housing types, including small and attached units, is one way to provide greater housing options to those who seek more affordable housing.

Workforce Housing Units

In recent years, rising housing prices have made it impossible for much of the workforce to live within the town's boundaries. This is a group of workers defined as earning between 80% and 120% of the Area Median Income (\$48,500 for Cape Charles) and includes such categories as town staff, teachers, fire fighters, police and service personnel (e.g., chefs, brew masters). Studies and surveys conducted by Cape Charles' Main Street organization indicate that there is a shortage of workers in supporting the needs of downtown merchants. Lack of affordable housing is a contributing factor in this shortage. This problem is also occurring at the broader Northampton County level. Similar to the discussion above on affordable housing, a greater diversity of housing types, including small and attached units, is one way to provide greater housing options to those who seek more affordable housing.

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Conclusion

The Town's housing stock has undergone major changes within a short period of time. Numerous single-family homes in the Historic District have been built and other renovated, and significant residential construction is taking place in the Bay Creek development. Many of the new and renovated homes are marketed towards high income households and are occupied seasonally, as indicated by the large number of residences that are vacant at times.

Despite positive changes in the Town's housing stock, some residents and prospective residents face major housing issues. Although rising property values have benefited many homeowners, increased rents and housing prices create difficulties for low- and moderate-income households. If the current housing trends continue as expected, the availability of quality affordable housing will continue to decrease. It is important to address these concerns when planning for the future of housing in Cape Charles.