

Planning Commission

Work Session Agenda

Cape Charles Civic Center – 500 Tazewell Avenue

July 19, 2021, 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
 - i. Introduction
4. Adjourn

CHAPTER 1

<i>Paul Grossman</i> <i>7/14/21 revision</i>

INTRODUCTION

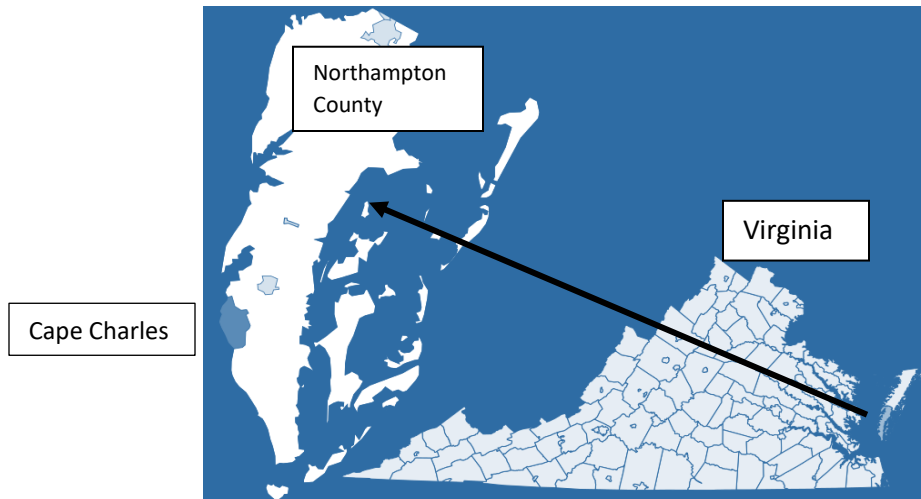
WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

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 50 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 October 15 to December 1, 2019 and received 215 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. Evaluate the increasing trend of number of vacation rentals for impact to town and determine controls needed, if any

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

The Christopher Newport University was contracted to survey the population of town residents and visitors regarding their perceptions of historic preservation in Cape Charles. In March of 2019, a number of charrettes and meetings with various constituencies was conducted along with an informal online survey. In-person surveys (total 83) were conducted during the height of the tourist season followed by a mailed survey to utility customers (resulting in 365 additional responses). The report was delivered to the Town on July 15, 2020 and generated the following key findings:

- Cape Charles residents generally value the historic nature of their town’s infrastructure, and generally believe that this creates both pecuniary and nonpecuniary value.
- Tourist value the town’s beach, but also believe Cape Charles should repair derelict buildings and should help lower income residents make historically appropriate repairs.
- Although many believed that preservation was valuable there was less agreement with the role of the government in financing it.

The Mayor, Town Council, Planning Commission and town staff developed and adopted a Community Strategic Plan on March 18, 2021, following three days of retreat and public comment session. Adopted was a Vision Statement as well as goals and near-term strategic plans providing important guidance to the Town Manager as he works with staff to draft the annual town budget, and for how to best use town resources throughout the year. These goals/strategies have been factored into this comprehensive plan revision.

Goals Developed

• To retain the small-town character of Cape Charles
• To maintain the authentic character of the historic district
• To protect and maintain the beach
• To protect and maintain the harbor
• To plan for coastal resiliency
• To protect and improve public green/open space infrastructure
• To retain and expand businesses in a business-friendly environment
• To advance a variety of housing options for younger families and workforce
• To meet our residents’ expectation for Town services

The following is a future paragraph once these action are completed.

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

VISION

The overarching vision for the Town of Cape Charles is:

Preserve our historical, natural, and cultural resources, while fostering a sense of community that enhances well-being and prosperity, now and for generations to come

(Reference: Town Council adoption on March 18, 2021)

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.

Comparison of content on Introductions in various comprehensive plans

Cape Charles	Mount Jackson (2017) Format	Lexington VA (In draft 2020)	Windsor (2016) Format
Vision Statement	What is a comp plan?	Welcome to Lexington	Town/ History
	Regional setting	About Comprehensive Planning	Location
Executive Summary Five bullets on public wants Town Infrastructure goals	Mt Jackson History	The Planning Process Relationship to Other Plans, Policies, & Ordinances	Scope and Purpose of Plan Mandatory Review Legal Status
	Population/ Projections	Plan Framework	
Provides references to foundational documents	Employment	Vision & Values	
	Commuting	Goals & Objectives	
	Town Gov't		
	Town Services		
	Services by others		
	Community Engagement Citizen and Youth Surveys Focus Groups		
	Vision Statement/Goals/Strategies		

Kilmarnock	Farmville (2020)	Tappahannock (2007)	Northampton County (2021)
Preface What is comp plan? Components Process What's included?	Legal Basis for Plan	Framework for Planning	Legal Basis for Comp Plan Planning Jurisdiction Relationship to Other Plans & Policies
Vision Statement Location Vision by subject	Plan Vision and Goals by subject	Definitions and Purpose	Creating the Plan (Meetings, surveys, drafting, public review, adoption)
	Community Engagement Community Workshops Stakeholder meetings Community Survey/highlights	Legal Basis for Comp Plan	Overview of Northampton County (Natural Resources, Tourism, Challenges, Vision)
	About Farmville	Past Comp Plan Effort	
		Components of Growth Mngt Program	
		Process for Plan Development and Adoption	
		Goals and Objectives Setting	
		Organization of Plan	