

2.3.6 Quality of Life and Livable Communities

Introduction

The Eastern Shore is located at the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, bounded on the north by Maryland, on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the south and west by the Chesapeake Bay. It has a land area of 696 square miles and 263 square miles of water area. The peninsula is connected to the Virginia mainland to the south by the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT). A string of barrier islands protects the peninsula on the East Coast. The Eastern Shore enjoys a mild climate. Snowfalls are rare and most of the rainfall occurs in winter and spring months.

The rich historical heritage and natural beauty of the Eastern Shore has created a distinctive lifestyle valued by its residents. The availability of natural resources –waters abundant in seafood, productive soils, woodlands, and long season for agriculture, produced an economy based on agriculture, aquaculture and seafood harvesting. The rural setting where people live on farms or in low density residential towns and villages allowed easy and open access to the natural environment supporting both economic and recreational needs of the community. During the last few decades, however, retirement and second homes have substantially increased causing a change on the Eastern Shore. Tourism is beginning to have an impact, as more and more visitors want to share the Shore’s natural habitats, scenic vistas and relaxed, slower-paced way of living.

This topic report will present an overview of various factors that contribute to quality of life on the Eastern Shore. Assets, needs, and issues of concern, based on a review of recent planning studies, and county comprehensive plans, are also presented to provide information on local goals and priorities. Quality of life is a broad topic—other issues relating to it have been covered in the topic reports on transportation, economic development, tourism, natural resources, and agriculture.

Current Conditions and Trends

Population Trends

Location	% Change 1990-2000	2000	1990	1980	% Change 1980-1990
Accomack County	21%*	38,305,*	31,703	31,268	1.4%
Northampton County	0.2%	13,093,	13,061	14,625	-10.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census – * Error in census data for Accomack County for 2000

Historical trends in population show that both counties had a very stable population (from 1930-1990), however, since 1990, there had been a ten percent increase in population in Accomack County. County officials consider the 2000 Census data to be in error, noting no basis for an increase of over 20%. Specifically the data showed that one block (the northern part of the County near New Church) increased by more than 3,000 people, or 29%. County officials estimate the overall population increase in Accomack County at about 10% for the decade.

The population increased slightly in Northampton County (less than 1%). The Planning District has a high proportion of its population consisting of senior citizens (65 and over) and can be considered a “retirement community.”

Population by Year, Selected Towns Along the Eastern Shore

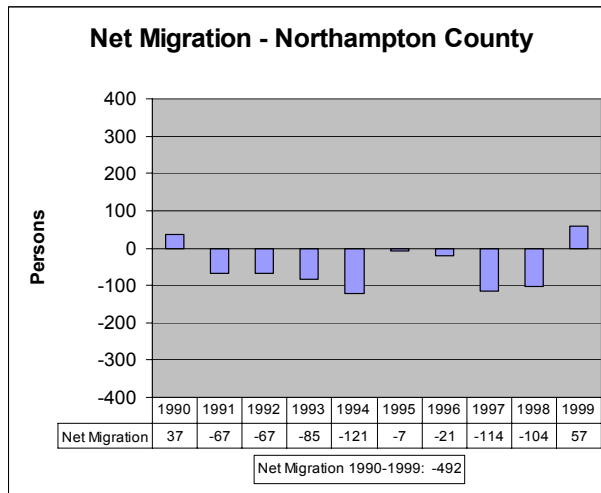
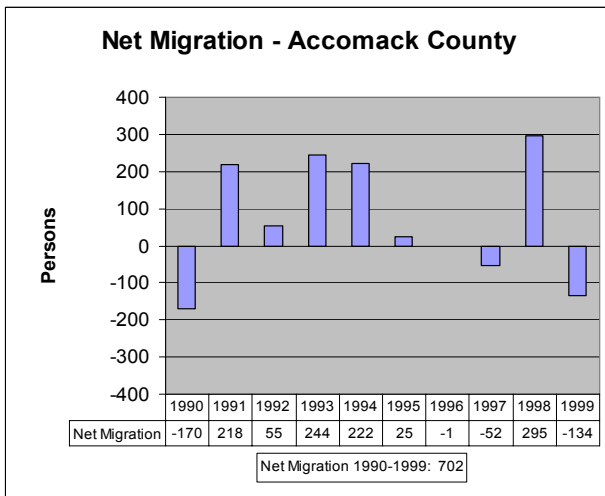
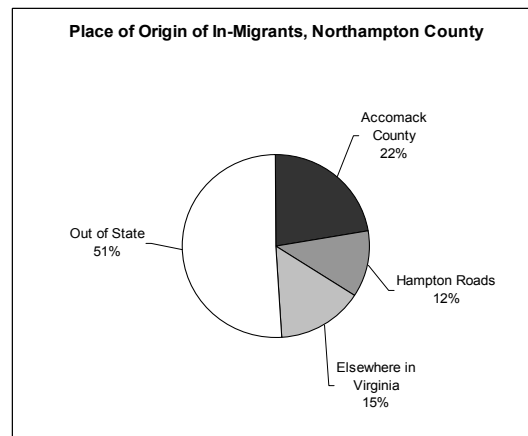
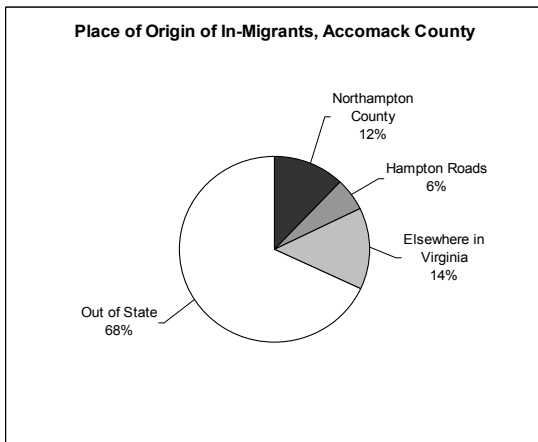
Towns	2000	1990:	% Change
Hallwood	290	228	27%
Chincoteague	4,317	3,569	21%
Accomac	547	466	17%
Bloxom	395	357	11%
Eastville	203	185	10%
Belle Haven	480	440	9%
Parksley	837	779	7%
Onancock	1,525	1,434	6%
Melfa	450	428	5%
Exmore	1,136	1,115	2%
Nassawadox	572	564	1%
Cheriton	499	515	-3%
Painter	246	259	-5%
Onley	496	532	-7%
Saxis	337	367	-8%
Tangier	604	659	-8%
Wachapreague	236	291	-19%
Cape Charles	1,134	1,398	-19%
Keller	173	235	-26%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The largest increase in population occurred in Accomack County, where Hallwood increased by 27%, Chincoteague increased by 21%, followed by Accomac, which increased by 17%. The towns of Cape Charles and Wachapreague experienced almost a 20% decline in population, while the other towns increased slightly.

Trends in Migration (1989-1999)

According to Internal Revenue Service Data (IRS) based on address changes from tax returns, both Accomack and Northampton Counties experienced a significant number of residents migrating from out of state to the Eastern Shore over the past ten years. Overall 22% of in-migrants to Northampton County came from Accomack County while only about 12% of in-migrants to Accomack County moved from Northampton County.



The level of in and out migration has remained relatively constant on the Eastern Shore through the decade of the 1990s. Accomack County experiences a greater number of in-migration than out-migration, while Northampton County was the reverse, with more out-migration on balance than in-migration. Over the decade Accomack gained approximately 702 persons through migration and Northampton lost approximately 492 persons.

Household Size

Accomack County:

	1990	1980
Housing Units	15,840	13,815
Number of households	12,563	11,600
Number per household	2.46	2.67

Northampton County:

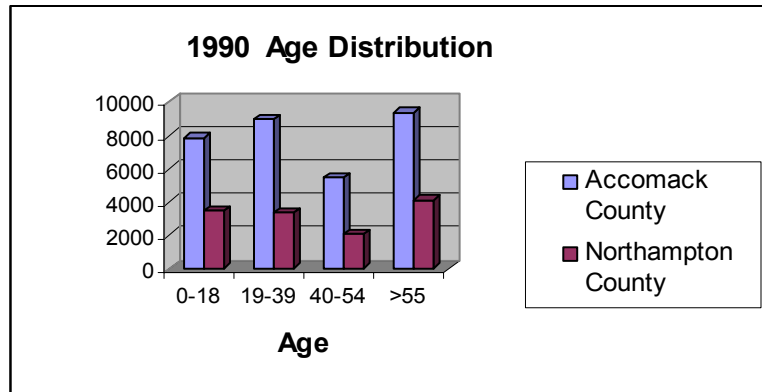
	1990	1980
Housing Units	6,183	6,132
Number of households	5,129	5,394
Number per household	2.5	2.7

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Both the number of housing units and number of households increased from 1980 to 1990, while the persons per household decreased in both counties. This could be evident of the increased migration of retirees who are interested in living on the Eastern Shore.

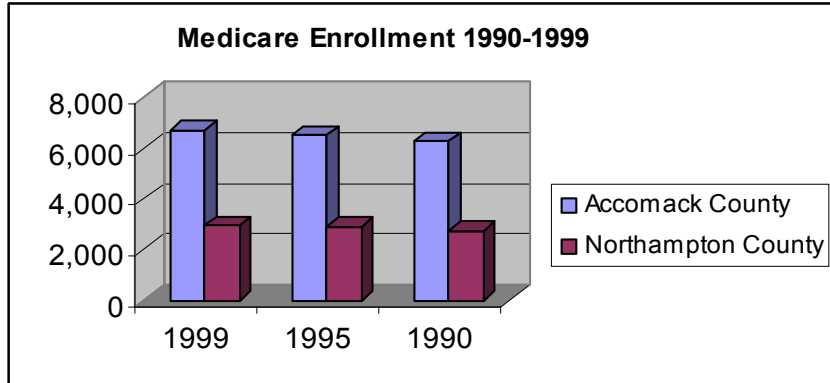
Age

The population of the Eastern Shore is older than the population of Virginia as a whole. The percentage of the population age 65 of greater is higher in the region than in the state, due to migration of retired persons to the Eastern Shore. The highest number of people are in the age group of 55 and over in both counties. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)



Medicare Enrollment

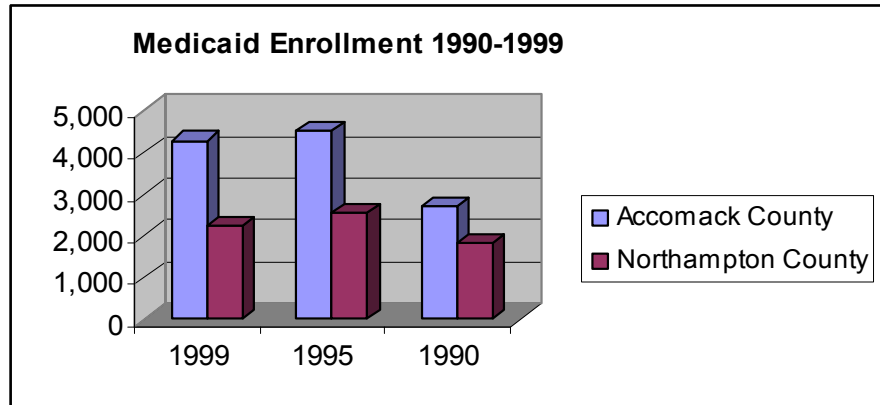
About 22% of the population in Northampton County is enrolled in Medicare in 1999, while about 17% of the population in Accomack County is enrolled in the program (down 2% since 1990).



Source: Health Care Financing Administration

Medicaid Enrollment

About 11% of the population in Accomack County is enrolled in Medicaid, which increased about 3% since 1990. In Northampton County 17% of the population is enrolled in Medicaid, up about 4% since 1990.



Source: Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services

Race

Accomack County

Race	2000	1990
White	62%	65%
Black	31%	34%
Other	7%	1%

Northampton County

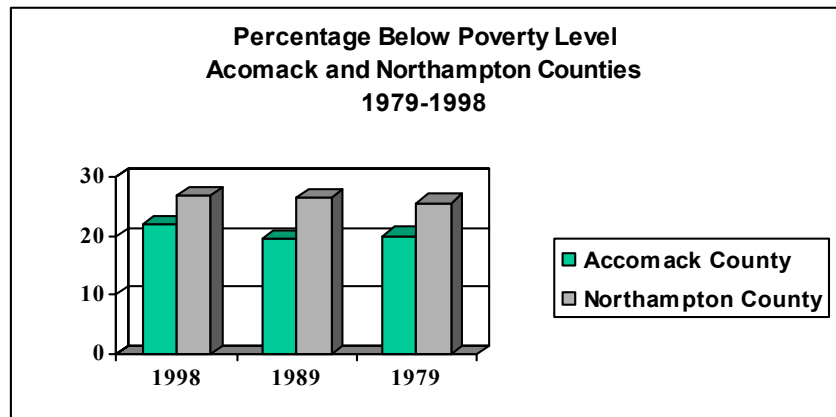
Race	2000	1990
White	53%	52%
Black	43%	46%
Other	4%	2%

The white and black populations in both Counties remained relatively stable while other minority populations increased slightly in both counties. This may be due to the reporting changes in 2000 Decennial Census, where for the first time respondents were allowed to classify themselves into more than one racial category.

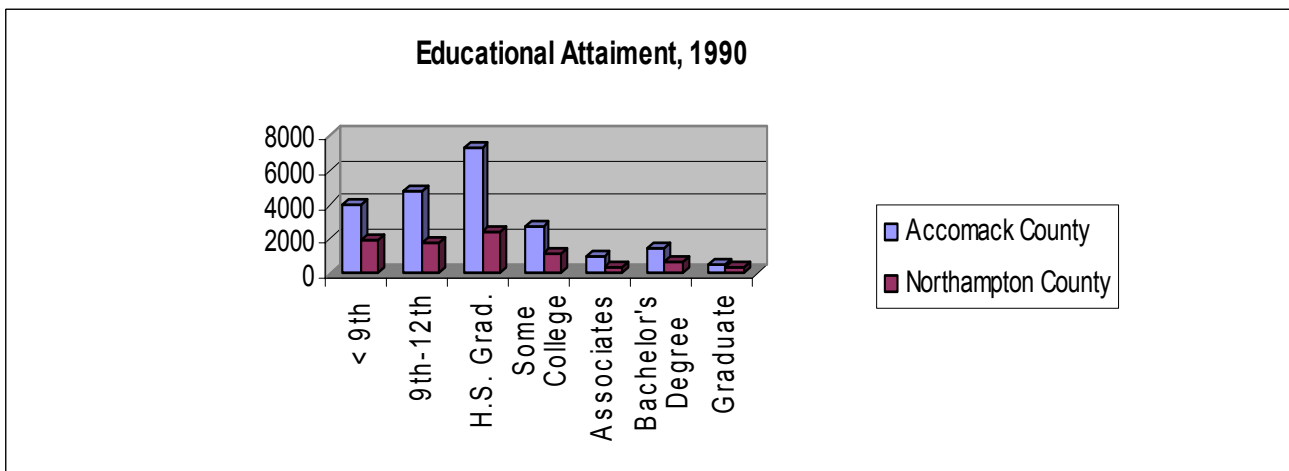
Income/Poverty

The number of persons below the poverty level increased slightly in both counties over the past 20 years.

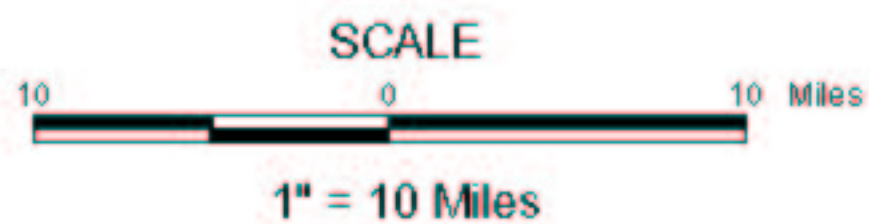
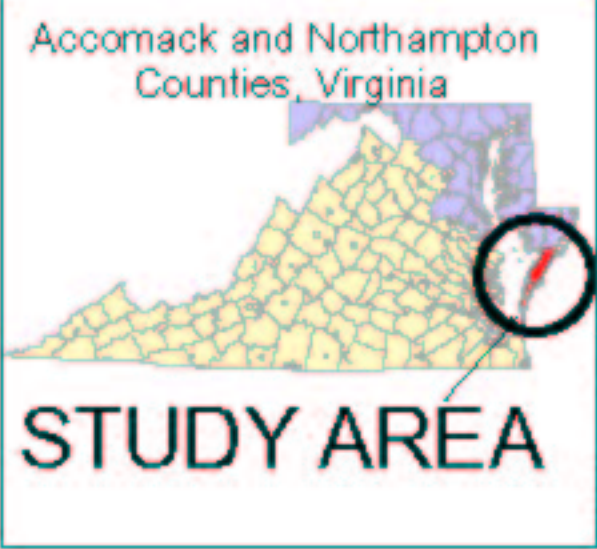
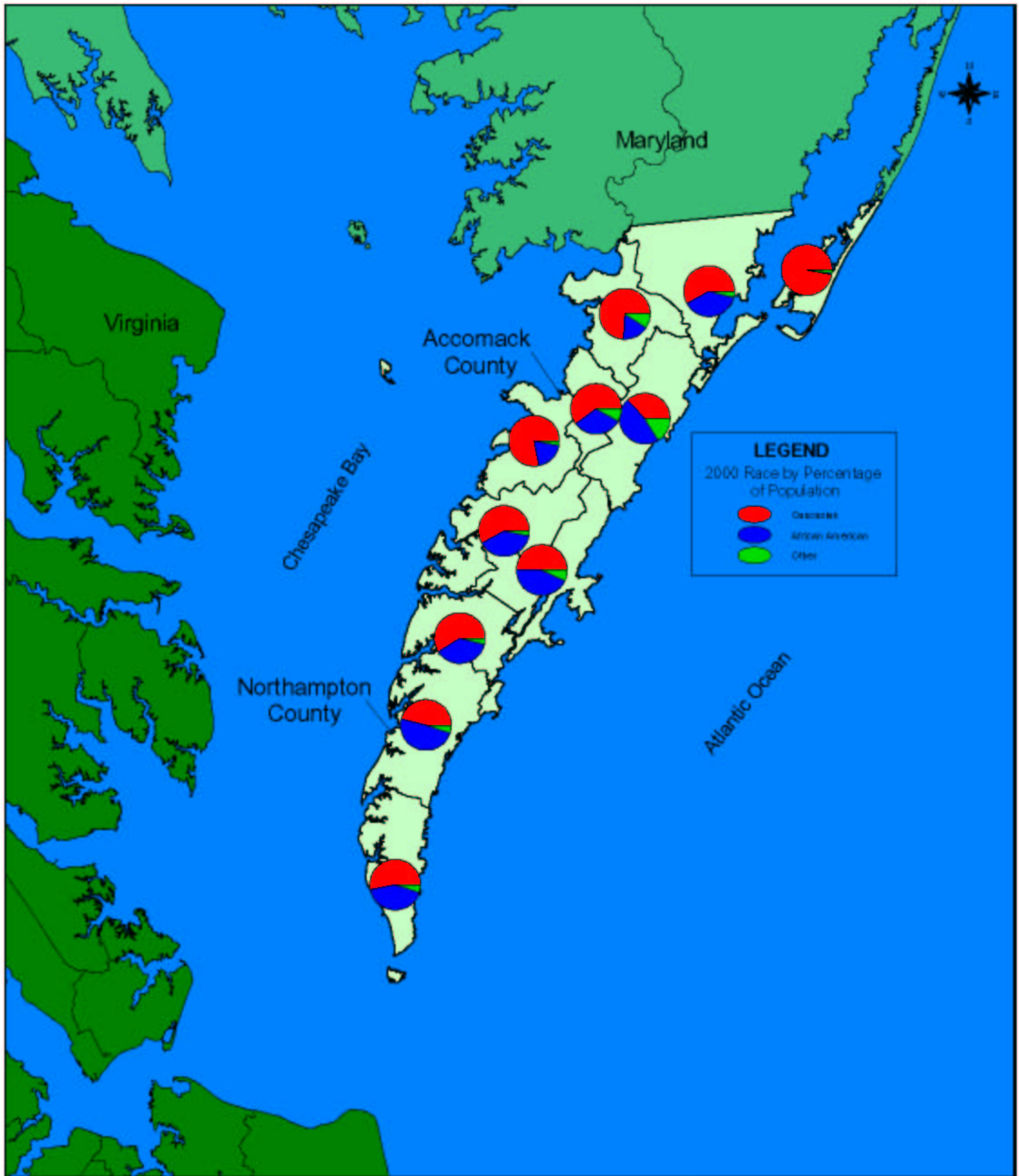
For Northampton County, according to the 1990 Census, Per Capita Income is \$10,176 and the Median Household Income is \$18,117. In Accomack County, according to the 1990 Census, the Per Capita Income is \$10,506 and the Median Household Income is \$20,431. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)



Educational Attainment



The greatest number of people fall into the “High School graduate” category for both Counties.



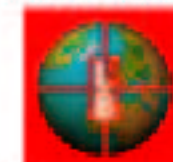
Sources:
 1998 TIGER/Line Files, Disc 1. US Census Bureau, Department of Interior.
 1999 A-NDPC Transportation GIS Database CD.
 2000 TIGER/Line Files, www.geographynetwork.com

TITLE RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POPULATION, 2000

LOCATION: Accomack and Northampton Counties, VA

CLIENT: ANDPC

DATE: March 2001 **FILE ID:** JR2332 EastShore.apr



THE LOUIS BERGER GROUP, INC.
 100 HALSTED STREET
 EAST ORANGE, NJ 07018

Housing

Accomack County - Detached single unit homes are the predominate housing type. There are also 3,208 mobile homes or trailer units, comprising 25% of the existing housing stock. 74.8% of the housing units are owner occupied, while 30.4% are occupied by renters.

The median value of owner-occupied housing increased substantially between 1980 and 1990. The median value in 1980 was \$26,700, while in 1990 it was \$52,700, due to the increase in construction of new homes in the mid to late 1980s. Since 1990, there has been a growth in the development of new homes for retirees accompanied by a tripling of property value. Also, the median rent for housing increased from \$335 in 1990 to about \$500 in 2000.

However, 7.5% of the county's housing units are considered substandard. Various organizations throughout Accomack County have been involved in rehabilitation and substandard housing has been diminishing.

For the Year 1998, the real property tax rate for Accomack County is .75 and the personal property tax is 3.22. (Source: *Accomack County Comprehensive Plan, August 1997*).

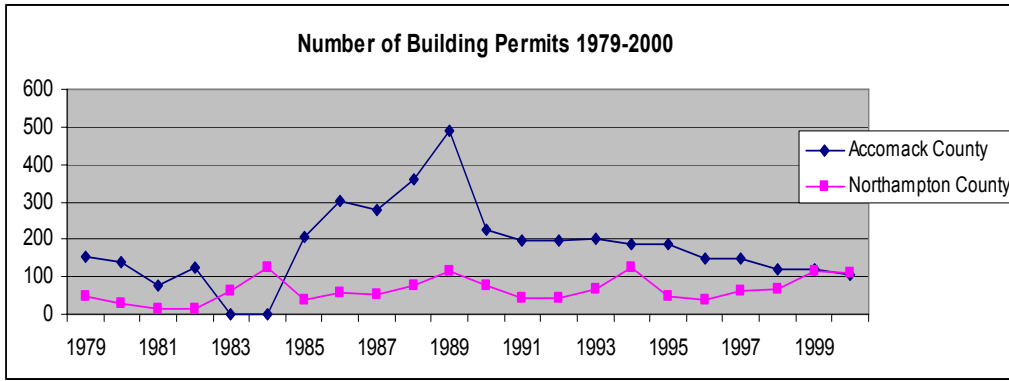
Northampton County - The housing market in the County can be divided into long-term residents and retirees/second homebuyers from outside the areas. Of the 6,1183 housing units in the County, 17% are vacant, 78% of the housing units are single- family detached and 14% are mobile homes.

The median assessed value of a single family home is \$57,700 and the median value of a new home is \$77,500. The housing stock in Northampton County has a lower median value than Hampton Roads. Most undeveloped areas in the county rely on water and septic, so mobile homes are common.

Cape Charles and Northampton County are known for low taxes. Property owners will find a low rate of \$0.61 per \$100 of assessed real estate in the county and \$0.37 per \$100 of assessed real estate in Cape Charles. Real property values appear to be rising. The real estate tax rate has varied substantially over the past nine years:

Year	Tax Rate
1991	\$.76
1992	\$.94
1993-1998	\$.68
1999	\$.61

Although the real estate tax rates are currently low, residents are concerned that it will rise if there is substantial residential development. About 25% of the housing stock in Northampton County are substandard. (Source: *U.S. Route 13 Corridor Plan, Eastern Shore of Virginia, Wilbur Smith Associates, 1999*)



During the mid-to-late 1980s, a significant number of high-end vacation homes were constructed on large lots on the bayside of Onancock, Belle Haven and other bayside areas. This caused the number of building permits issued in Accomack County to dramatically increase to almost 500, while the previous years less than 200 permits were issued. Housing construction has now leveled off to a rate of 310 units per year in Accomack and less than 50 permits per year were issued in the last 2 years for Northampton.

Over the last 25 years, 50% of new housing built was in the form of modular units and mobile homes. This segment represents 25% of the total housing inventory. This was due to the replacement of older, substandard housing by modular units and the construction of new high-end homes in waterfront areas. Less than five percent of the Planning District’s housing consisted of year-round multi-family units. Migrant farm labor dwellings are not counted in the census inventory of housing. Property has been sold mostly to second home buyers in Northampton County, while in Accomack County, most of the property has been sold to retirees. (Source: U.S. Route 13 Corridor Plan, Eastern Shore of Virginia, Wilbur Smith Associates, 1999)

Number of Building Permits By Selected Towns:

Year	Chincoteague	Onancock	Cape Charles	Eastville
2000	32	2	15	0
1999	40	0	0	0
1998	49	0	0	0
1997	30	0	0	1
1996	15	5	0	0
1995	38	4	0	0
1994	49	0	0	0
1993	41	2	0	1
1992	55	1	0	2
1991	30	0	0	N/A
1990	41	1	0	N/A

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The greatest number of building permits were issued in the town of Chincoteague located in Accomack County. Cape Charles issued a large number of permits only recently in 2000, attributable mainly to the Bay Creek development project.

Fiscal Issues

Percentage of Dollars Spent on Various Services 1997

Accomack County	Northampton County	Virginia Beach	State of Virginia – Average	Category
6%	9%	9%	9%	Public Safety/Legal
8%	5%	20%	16%	Transportation/Utilities
57%	61%	50%	47%	Education
14%	9%	2%	5%	Welfare
9%	7%	9%	8%	General Administration
6%	9%	10%	14%	Other

Source: Census of Governments, Public Use Microfile, 1997; County Data Includes Incorporated Towns and Educational Districts

In 1997, spending on the provision of education services was the largest expense incurred in both counties, as well as in the City of Virginia Beach and for the state as a whole. The percentage spent on welfare is significantly greater in Accomack County than in Virginia Beach and is higher than the state average. Transportation/utilities are a smaller expense in Accomack and Northampton Counties and are significantly higher in Virginia Beach as well as the state.

Per Capita Expenditures, 1997

Category	Accomack County	Northampton County	Virginia Beach	State of Virginia – Average
Public Safety/Legal	101	162	152	189
Transportation/Utilities	127	81	350	324
Education	919	1049	865	941
Welfare	224	158	41	108
General Administration	152	112	149	160
Other	90	164	180	284

Source: Census of Governments, Public Use Microfile, 1997; County Data Includes Incorporated Towns and Educational Districts

The highest category of dollars spent was on education for the two counties, for Virginia Beach as well as for the state. It is the highest in Northampton County. Accomack County spends the least on public safety, while Northampton County's per capita expenditures are significantly lower in transportation than Accomack County, Virginia Beach and the state average. Per capita expenditures on welfare are highest in Accomack County when compared to Virginia Beach's expenditures which are significantly lower in this category. The other categories are relatively similar.

Percentage of Revenue Earned From Various Sources (%), 1997

Category	Accomack County	Northampton County	Virginia Beach	State of Virginia – Average
Property Taxes	32%	26%	31%	33%
Sales Taxes	4%	4%	4%	4%
Motor Vehicle Taxes	1%	1%	1%	1%
Other Taxes	2%	4%	11%	8%
Other Non-Tax Revenue	11%	4%	20%	20%
Federal Intergovernmental	50%	61%	33%	34%

Source: Census of Governments, Public Use Microfile, 1997; County Data Includes Incorporated Towns and Educational Districts

The highest percentage of revenue earned is generated from intergovernmental transfers from the Federal Government (largely for county administered entitlements). It is 20% higher in Accomack County and about 30% higher in Northampton County when compared to Virginia Beach and the state average. In addition, property taxes generate a higher percentage of revenue for the Counties as well as for Virginia Beach and for the state. It is relatively constant in all parts of the region. All other categories are relatively the same for the Counties, Virginia Beach and the state.

Per Capita Revenue by Source. 1997

Category	Accomack County	Northampton County	Virginia Beach	State of Virginia Average
Property Taxes	599	523	693	776
Sales Taxes	85	74	79	93
Motor Vehicle Taxes	12	13	15	16
Other Taxes	43	80	231	185
Other Non-Tax Revenue	203	86	448	457
Federal Intergovernmental	945	1221	736	782

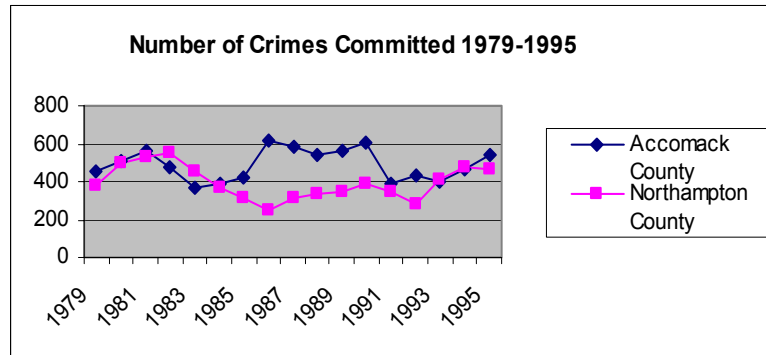
Source: Census of Governments, Public Use Microfile, 1997; County Data Includes Incorporated Towns and Educational Districts

The highest amount of per capita revenue is generated from federal intergovernmental services for both counties, Virginia Beach and for the state. The next highest income generator is from property taxes. Accomack and Northampton Counties have lower property tax revenues when compared to Virginia Beach and the state average. Per capita income generated from other taxes is significantly higher for Virginia Beach and the state than for Accomack and Northampton Counties. Other categories such as sales and motor vehicle taxes are relatively similar for the region.

Crime

The number of crimes committed in Accomack County underwent a substantial increase between 1985 and 1991, then dropped by 50% and leveled off since 1995.

Within Northampton County, the number of crimes committed leveled off between 1985 and 1991, however from 1993-1995 the number of crimes has increased slightly. (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census)



Employment

Northampton County

Employment	1996	1990
Civilian Labor Force	5,402	5,679
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	5.3%
Wages		3,375

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Accomack County

Employment	1996	1990
Civilian Labor Force	14,806	15,044
Unemployment Rate	9.1%	5.4%
Wage		8,759

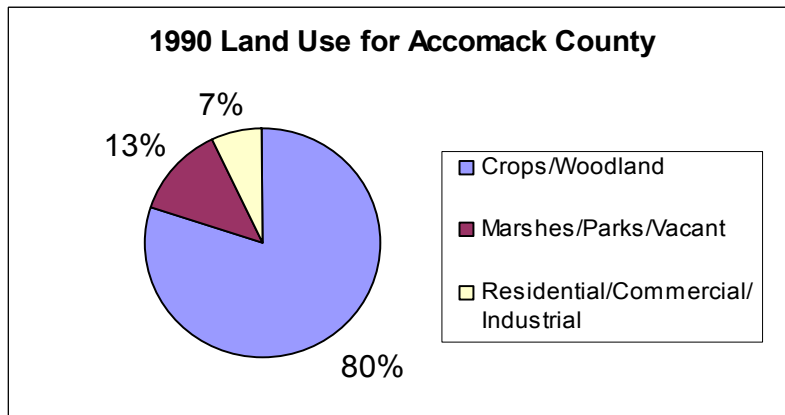
There has been a drop in the number of those participating in the labor force for both counties between 1990 and 1996 along with a corresponding increase in the employment rate for both counties. Labor force participation in these counties may have decreased due to the out-migration of high quality skilled labor looking elsewhere for employment opportunities.

The Eastern Shore’s overall unemployment rate as of October 2000 is 3.6%, the lowest in over ten years.

Land Use / Zoning

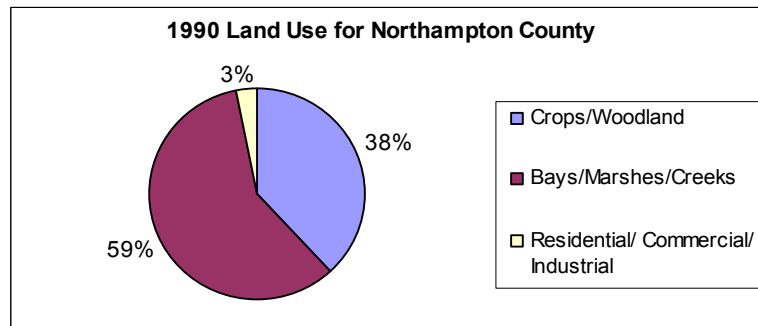
Land Use Overview by County

Since 1990, land use and corresponding zoning has been relatively constant over the ten-year span. Both counties are predominantly rural, with local industrial development focused on processing and shipping agricultural commodities, such as poultry, soybeans, vegetables and potatoes. Population is dispersed throughout the Planning District. The largest community



is Chincoteague, which continues to grow. In 1990, the population was a bit over 3,500 and it increased by 20% to over 4,300 in the year 2000. The second largest is Onancock with a 2000 population over 1,500, however their population decreased by 6% since 1990. Other towns with a population of over 1,000 include Cape Charles and Exmore.

Between 1960 and 1990, the population in Cape Charles dropped by 30%. Currently there are a number of retail vacancies in the town, however, realtors indicated that they have been sold to interested buyers who are in the process of renovating these storefronts. Also, tourism will be playing a greater role in this area, with the development



of Bay Creek and the increase in the number of bed and breakfasts and motels to this area.

As of 1989, land use in Accomack County is 5.8% residential, 0.2% commercial, 1% industrial, 36.8% cropland, 42.5% woodland, 13.4% parks, conservation or vacant land and 0.3% institutional. Less than 2% of the county is developed, 35% are crops and fields, 39% is wooded and 24% is wetlands. (Source: Accomack County Comprehensive Plan, 1997)

Agriculture is the dominant land use in Accomack County. According to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, there are 279 farms in Accomack County, covering 91,568 acres of land of which 69,420 acres is harvested cropland. A large percentage of Virginia's chickens for poultry operations are raised in Accomack County. There are about 94,507 acres of forest in Accomack County (1991 data). The County has a 360-acre industrial park, adjacent to the airport, in Melfa. There is a great deal of land that lies in conservation ownership. The federal government owns the following lands:

Location	Acreage
Seaside Marsh	19,491
Assateague	7,765
Parramore and Revel Islands	7,692
Saxis Marsh	6,177
Assawoman Island	1,434
Wallops	1,284
Cedar Island	1,250
Parker's Marsh	750
Chincoteague	550
Fox Island	500
South Point Marsh	437
Metompkin Island	174

Source: Accomack County Office of the Tax

Northampton County has been a rural community with agriculture and seafood providing the basis of the economy. Land use patterns reflect this, where cropland and woodland represent 38% of the land use, 3% of the County's area is developed for residential, commercial and industrial uses, while 59% is marshes, bays and creeks. (Source: Northampton County Comprehensive Plan, 1990)

Central Water and Sewer Systems

Due to the need to use individual sewage disposal systems, development is dependent on good soils. Development, therefore, is in competition with agriculture for the best land in the county. Septic systems are used for waste disposal in Onancock, Tangier and Cape Charles.

Land Use Patterns by Town:

The Cape Charles/Cheriton Area is characterized by:

- Dense housing development
- Recreational and second home development
- Cherrystone Campground
- Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge
- Kiptopeke State Park
- Beaches
- Fishing
- Bird watching

Exmore/Nassawadox :

- Shopping centers
- Supermarkets
- New commercial development concentrated along US Route 13 at the western edge of this area
- Nassawadox = Shore Memorial Hospital (primary care hospital for the two counties)

Belle Haven

- Predominantly residential
- Continuing construction of large lot homes in waterfront area. New clam hatchery opened in the adjacent area of Willis Wharf.

Melfa

- Adjacent to the Accomack Industrial Park at that airport
- Eastern Shore Community College
- Farmers Market

Onley

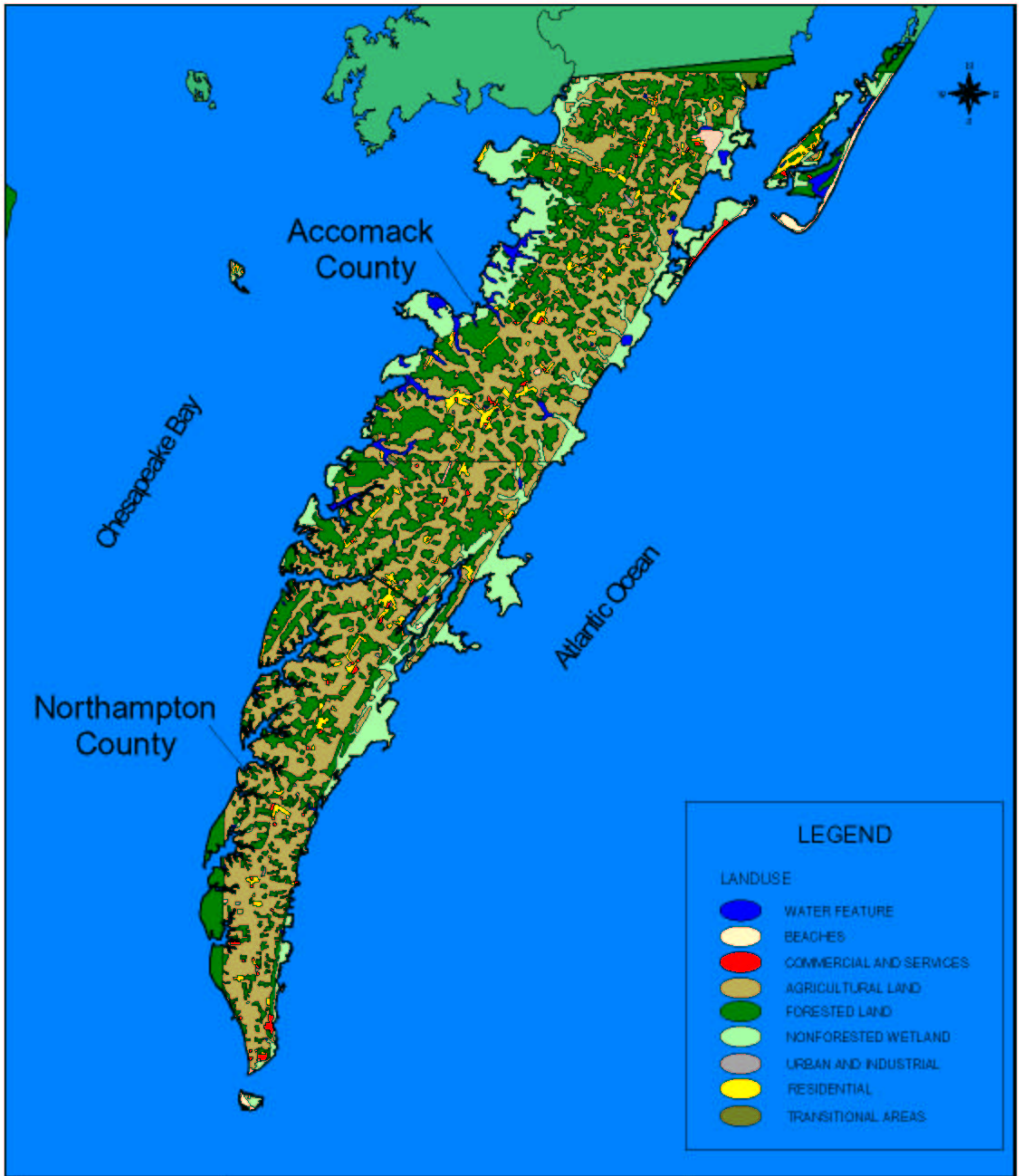
- Largest commercial concentration
- Two shopping plazas
- Fast food restaurants
- Banks
- motels

Onancock

- Second most populated
- Wharf – departure for daily cruises to Tangier Island
- Vacant commercial buildings
- Specialty shops and restaurants
- Historic district

Accomac

- County seat
- Courthouse
- Court related businesses
- Poultry farms
- Historic district



Chesapeake Bay

Accomack County

Atlantic Ocean


Northampton County

LEGEND

LANDUSE

-  WATER FEATURE
-  BEACHES
-  COMMERCIAL AND SERVICES
-  AGRICULTURAL LAND
-  FORESTED LAND
-  NONFORESTED WETLAND
-  URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL
-  RESIDENTIAL
-  TRANSITIONAL AREAS


Accomack and Northampton Counties, Virginia



STUDY AREA

SCALE

10 0 10 Miles




Sources:
 1998 TIGER/Line Files, Disc 1. US Census Bureau, Department of Interior.
 1999 A-NDPC Transportation GIS Database CD.
 2000 TIGER/Line Files, www.geographynetwork.com

TITLE **GENERALIZED LAND USE**

LOCATION: Accomack and Northampton Counties, VA

CLIENT **ANDPC**

DATE: March 2001 **FILE ID:** JR2332_EastShore.apr



THE LOUIS BERGER GROUP, INC.
 100 HALSTED STREET
 EAST ORANGE, NJ 07018

Parksley

- Major poultry processing plants
- Retail and services businesses

Chincoteague

- Chincoteague Island
- National Wildlife Refuge
- Assateague National Seashore
- Only public Atlantic Ocean beaches
- Largest town
- NASA's Wallops Flight Facility
- Limited residential development

Land Use Regulations**Current Zoning**

Northampton County - Northampton County revised its zoning ordinance in the year 2000, which is intended to encourage development around existing towns and village clusters and incorporate open space provisions. The major points of the ordinance are listed below:

- Provides for incentives to make affordable housing available
- Reduction in agricultural zoning district lot size from five acres and one acre to 20,000 square feet
- Decreased densities in A-1 Agricultural zones to one unit per 20 acres
- Introduce sliding scale for development bonuses on agricultural land to promote affordable housing and clustering
- Mandatory open space
- Incentive for preserving tidal shoreline by allowing density increases
- New zoning district nomenclature developed to meet and interpret the objective of the Comprehensive Plan
- New zoning district labeled "Conservation" on all wetlands, barrier islands and other lands, such as Kiptopeke State Park and the Eastern Shore Wildlife Refuge.

Accomack County -As of 1989, land use and corresponding zoning in Accomack County was 5.8% residential, 0.2% commercial, 1% industrial, 36.8% cropland, 42.5% woodland, 13.4% parks, conservation or vacant land and 0.3% institutional. Less than 2% of the county is developed, 35% are crops and fields, 39% is wooded and 24% is wetlands. Since 1989, according to the Comprehensive Plan, not much change has occurred related to land use and zoning over the past ten years.

Chesapeake Bay Preservation Overlay District

Virginia enacted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act in 1988 to develop regulations that will provide for the protection of the water quality and shoreline habitat. The regulations are used to grant and deny requests related to rezoning, subdividing and considering development of shoreline areas designated as the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Areas. In Northampton County, these criteria are applied to the seaside areas and appear to extend to the US Route 13 corridor.

In 1991, the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Overlay District was added to Accomack County's Zoning Ordinance in order to bring it into compliance with the Act. The District protects high quality state waters, and helps to support the growth of aquatic life, prevent pollution and promote water resource conservation. Land in the Overlay District, if improperly developed will cause degradation of the water quality of the Bay (Map in Accomack Plan, page 39 of the Preservation Areas). There are two segments, the Resource Protection Area (RPA) and the Resource Management Area (RMA). The RPA comprises lands that are at or near the shoreline. The lands include tidal wetlands, and tidal shores and other wetlands.

Lands within the RMA portion include floodplains, non-tidal wetlands, erodible soils, and permeable soils. All lands west of the Eastern Shore Railroad tracks and a five hundred-foot buffer around the Bay tributaries that extend east of the tracks are designated as a RMA. Within the Overlay District land uses must be developed in accordance with the district standards.

Coastal Zone Management

Public beach access in Accomack County is limited for those who do not have access to a boat. Waterfront property owners denied access to beaches that have traditionally been utilized by the public for years, such as Mason's Beach on Chesapeake Bay. The Department of Environmental Quality's Coastal Zone Management program provides funding which is available for the acquisition of public access areas so that the public can have the access to waterfront and beach areas.

Subdivisions

Northampton County - Within Northampton County there have been trends in subdivision development from the 1940s through the 1980s, where there has been a trend towards larger lot sizes (average size lot was almost 2 acres). The subdivisions reflect the change in pace and style of development throughout the past 50 years. The 1970s and 1980s began a dramatic change in the average lot size, which was more than three times the average lot size of the previous years. The size of subdivision lots increases as well as the number of lots developed during the last 2 decades. During the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the number of lots increased to over 1,000 compared to previous years where there were an average of 400 lots. The subdivisions were located predominantly on the Chesapeake Bay side of the County. (Source: *Northampton County Comprehensive Plan, 1990*)

Accomack County - From 1990 to 1996, 392 subdivision lots have been recorded and 2,000 residential structures have been created. The number of lots recorded increased from 30 in 1990 to 81 in 1995 and then substantially decreased to 32 in 1996. (Source: *Accomack County Comprehensive Plan, 1997*)

Agriculture/Forestal Districts

In Northampton County, these districts include land areas having prime or unique agricultural soils, woodland and areas where agriculture is the primary land use. Agricultural areas are well suited for the production of food, fiber and nursery products. It is part of the County's policy to preserve prime farmland and retain agriculture as a land use and major segment of the County's economic base. Along the Bay front, prime farmlands are becoming susceptible to land use conversions to large subdivisions. The impact of the Preservation Act is important factor in determining the maintenance of this viable resource.

Accomack County, according to the 1997 Comprehensive Plan, has 82,851 acres of land in 22 Agricultural and Forestal Districts. These districts were created in recognition of their economic, ecological and aesthetic value. Land within these districts are protected by Right to Farm legislation and from local regulations that would interfere with farm operation. This legislation provided a means to protect and enhance agricultural and forestal land as a viable segment of the economy.

Manufactured Homes

The Virginia General Assembly passed legislation in 1995, which limits the county's control over manufactured housing. It allows any manufactured home which has a HUD approval sticker to be placed in an Agricultural Zoning District. This has an impact on Accomack County since 93% of the county is zoned as agricultural. This Bill limits the ability of the County to provide for safe and orderly development. In 1995 and 1996, the number of new home permits that were issued increased.

A number of older manufactured housing units occurred in the County which provided living conditions that were considered substandard. The inability, therefore, to regulate minimum standards for these types of homes creates a safety hazard.

This table lists the number of permits for new housing units per year within Accomack County, for both conventional and manufactured. It also lists the number of those permits that were issued for single-wide and double-wide manufactured housing.

Year	Housing Units	Manufactured Units	Percentage
1990	253	166	66%
1991	265	132	50%
1992	316	170	54%
1993	275	123	45%
1994	316	157	50%
1995	335	223	67%
1996	292	191	66%

Source: Accomack County Comprehensive Plan, August, 1997.

Community Facilities/Activities/Amenities

- Churches -There are over fifty churches along the Eastern Shore
- Medical centers - There are several medical centers along the Eastern Shore. Nassawadox, Chincoteague, Cape Charles, Cheriton and Onancock are the locations of most of the medical centers.
- Fire departments and rescue – There are over ten fire stations on the Eastern Shore and about five rescue squads.
- Location of parks/wildlife refuges/campgrounds -There are various wildlife refuges on the Eastern Shore, such as Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge in Cape Charles, Saxis Wildlife Management Area and Parkers Marsh Natural Area in Accomack County. They offer wildlife observation tours, hiking, canoeing, fishing and hunting. Kiptopeke State Park offers beach access, camping and hiking. Other campgrounds include the Cherrystone Campgrounds in Cheriton, Virginia as well as several in Chincoteague. These include Maddox, which has 339 hook-ups and 250 tent sites, Tom's

Cove, which has 914 camp sites and 24 mobile home sites, Inlet View which has 300 sites, 4 cottages and 5 mobile homes and Pine Grove which has 150 camp sites.

- Recreation facilities -There are limited park facilities. Accomack County acquired Wayside Park outside of Parskey from the Department of Transportation. There are ballfields, tennis courts and picnic area, owned and maintained by the Department of Parks and Recreation. Recreation Centers include a YMCA in Accomack County. Public beach access is limited in Accomack County for those who do not have access to boats. Assateague National Seashore is accessible by car. The barrier islands are available for day use, but also must be accessed by boat. (Source: Accomack County Comprehensive Plan, August, 1997)
- Schools located in Accomack and Northampton counties – In Accomack County, there are three high schools, three middle schools and five elementary schools. There is also a community college in Melfa, Virginia. In Northampton County, there is one high school, one middle school and two elementary schools.

Schools/Education

Overview

Mean Pass Rate of High Schools by Location, Spring 1999

Location	Mean Pass Rate (%)
Northampton County	64
Virginia	60
Virginia Beach City	60
Newport News City	57
Chesapeake City	57
Hampton City	52
Norfolk City	52
Accomack County	51
Suffolk City	39
Portsmouth City	35

Source: Standards of Learning Testing Program, Spring 1999

Northampton County had the highest mean pass rate compared to the State of Virginia, Accomack County and cities within Hampton Roads. Its scores are 5% greater than the State of Virginia as a whole. Accomack County's high schools are 9% below the State of Virginia's averages and have one of the lowest passing rates in the state.

**Dropout Rate and Number of Students who did not Graduate High School
Accomack and Northampton Counties and for the State of Virginia, 1997-1998**

County	Mean Drop out Rate	Percentage Who did NOT Graduate
Accomack County	4.5	2%
Northampton County	4.6	0
State of Virginia	4.5	4%

Source: Virginia School report cards, Virginia Department of Education website

The mean dropout rate for both counties is equivalent to the dropout rate for the State of Virginia and the percent who did not graduate is 50% below the State's percentage. Therefore, 98% of the students in both Accomack and Northampton Counties have graduated high school.

Accomack County is served by a public school system consisting of 12 public schools and approximately 5,500 students enrolled as well as Eastern Shore Community College. Please see table below illustrating the percent of students enrolled by grade and ethnicity for each public school. Enrollment suggests that the majority of the County is high school graduates.

Within Northampton County, there are 4 public schools and one private school. Please see table below illustrating the percent of students enrolled by grade and ethnicity for each public school.

Enrollment by Grade/Ethnicity

Accomack County Public Schools –Percent Enrolled by Grade and Ethnicity Last Updated January 2001

School	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% American Indian and Asian	Total
Accawmacke Elementary School	38	56	6	0	100%
Arcadia High	39	54	6	1	100%
Central Middle	28	69	3	0	100
Chincoteague Elementary	76	22	1	1	100
Chincoteague High	83	16	0	1	100
Kegotank Elementary	38	55	7	0	100
Mary N. Smith Middle	42	54	3	1	100
Metompkin Elementary	32	51	16	1	100
Nandua High	46	50	3	1	100
Parksley Middle	41	51	7	1	100
Pungoteague Elementary	29	66	5	0	100
Tangier Comb.	99	0	0	1	100
Total	43%	50%	6%	1%	100%

Source: Virginia Department of Education

Northampton County Public Schools –Percent Enrolled by Grade and Ethnicity 1999 Fall Membership

School	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% American Indian and Asian	Total
Kiptopeke Elementary	33	55	11	1	100
Northampton High	42	54	3	1	100
Northampton Middle	39	55	5	1	100
Occohannock Elementary	40	56	4	0	100
Total	39%	55%	5%	1%	100%

Source: Virginia Department of Education

Private schools include:

- Broadwater Academy, Exmore, VA

Higher Education:

- Eastern Shore Community College, Melfa, VA

Buildout and Future Population Change Scenarios

Within the US Route 13 Corridor Plan, three scenarios were developed based on the Virginia Employment Commission projections of population growth. A moderate growth scenario of about 0.5% per year through the year 2020, would result in about a 15% increase in the population for both counties. An increase in retirement age population in the region as a whole may contribute to an increase in the development of retirement homes in the counties. Cape Charles, for example, with the Bay Creek development project, could achieve up to 25% occupancy by 2010 and 50% occupancy by 2020.

A medium growth scenario of less than 1% per year would be the highest rate that the Counties experienced over the past ten years. There would be about a 30% increase in the population. The Counties may experience an in-migration of retirees and others relocating to the Eastern Shore and less out-migration of employment age population.

A high-range growth scenario of 1.5% per year would result in an increase in the population by almost 50%. A significant number of retirees would be migrating to the Eastern Shore and there would also be an increase in the number of residents relocating to the Shore.

The highest anticipated growth scenario accepted by the A-NPDC would be between a 0.5% and 1% increase. Additional sewer improvements would be needed in some towns. With a quicker build-out rate in Cape Charles, demand for higher end retail may be also be a factor which may lead to outlet centers or other types of large-scale retail stores.

Trends and Conditions in the Region**Growth in Hampton Roads**

Location	2000	1990	Percentage Change, 1990-2000
Total	1,532,578	1,412,145	9%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

There has been a growth in the population in the Hampton Roads area of almost 10% between 1990 and 2000.

Trajectory of Development

Some residents on the Eastern Shore are concerned that growth experienced in areas such as those in Hampton Roads are approaching build-out which may result in the trajectory for future development turning toward the Eastern Shore. Interviews with area real estate experts suggest that there is currently an 80% buildout condition in Virginia Beach. New housing developments in the western portion of Hampton Roads area, such as in Suffolk are rapidly occurring. As these areas become more developed and property values increase, there may be potential for future growth in untapped, low-cost areas such as those on the Eastern Shore.

Virginia Beach Green Line

The Virginia Beach Green Line is a boundary meant to preserve the rural flavor the city's southern sections. The Green Line was drawn by the City Council in 1979 to "hem in" the sprawl of the city's urbanized north. The 1979 Comprehensive Plan's objective was to limit growth to those areas of the city where it could be supported by adequate facilities, north of what would be called the Green Line, and to allow only rural development south of it. The most recent plan in 1991 introduced conditional zoning and a desire to adhere to development standards in excess of the minimum where appropriate. Since the establishment of the Green Line, the city added 160,000 residents north of the Green Line and only a small handful south of it. The City's public facility systems were proven to be adequate. There is also an area called the "transition area" which is a buffer zone of sparsely developed farm and woodlands lying immediately south of the Green Line. The transition area serves as a land buffer between the urbanizing area of the north and the rural area of the south. Land uses and densities in the transition area are not a continuation of either form but a transition from one type to the other.

There are specific guidelines regarding residential development within the Transition Area, such as design with nature, careful planning of land uses, and ways to construct local roads. The residential growth in the Transition Area is not considered as continued growth in the north, but a special type of growth, with its own development standards suitable to the character of the area. The Transition Area supports open space and a recreational mecca with residential development present only to the extent it supports the primary purpose of advancing open space and recreational uses. Other uses may be acceptable in this area as long as they reflect high quality development, and meet the planning objectives of the Transition Area. This area is entirely in the Southern Watershed and, therefore, development standards should be environmentally sensitive.

(Source: Virginia Beach Comprehensive Plan, November 1997).

Assets and Resources

Employment Pool

The Eastern Shore's pool of workers include those with specialized skills that are in demand for its major industries within the two counties:

- Food processing
- Retail services
- Agriculture
- Aquaculture

As the unemployment rates decrease, workers in these areas continue to be in high demand. Poultry processing plants, agriculture and aquaculture need these specialized workers to continue to provide these staples to the region.

Low Densities/Rural Lifestyle

The unique, rural lifestyle of the Eastern Shore makes this peninsula an attractive place to live. Historic villages and towns are surrounded by farmland and water. Large lots of land are characteristic of the traditional, low density life style. The area's natural, ecological, cultural and historic assets are essential features of the low-density, rural lifestyle. The rural quality of the Counties, reflected by its agriculture, forestry and seafood operations, low density development, historic homes and safe, quiet lifestyle are highly valued by residents.

Aquaculture- Major Industry Important to Quality of Life and Economic Growth - Seafood production is a vital industry, where watermen, for years, made their living harvesting fish, crabs, oysters and clams and many others were employed by seafood processing plants. Most of the seafood plants, however, have gone out of business due to the decline in seafood harvests and more stringent water quality standards, but aquaculture, the farming of fish and shellfish has taken over as the primary seafood industry vital to quality of life. Growing clams is the basis of a million-dollar aquaculture industry on the Shore. (Source: Accomack County Comprehensive Plan, 1997). Even though the traditional seafood industry has declined, the Shore is an ideal location for major shellfish and finfish aquaculture. As waterfront development increases, however, watermen may have trouble gaining access to the Bay and Ocean which is crucial to how they make their living.

Agriculture, another traditional industry along the Eastern Shore, is vital to the quality of life of its residents and for the region. Accomack County produces 80% of Virginia's vegetable crops. Due to Accomack County's proximity to major markets, the state of Virginia invested \$2.3 million in the construction of the Eastern Shore Farmers Market.

Amenities/Natural Environment

The Eastern Shore offers miles of uninterrupted sandy beaches, navigable waters, wildlife refuges and barrier islands. A portion of the Counties' lands (15%) lie in conservation ownership.

Kiptopeke State Park is a 375-acre state park situated on the Chesapeake Bay three miles north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel on Route 13. It is a stopover for migrating birds and has a bird banding station, fishing pier, boat ramp, guarded swimming beach, camping facilities, hiking areas, and picnic area. There is also a hawk observatory and they offer the Eastern Shore Bird Festival every weekend following the first Wednesday in October.

The Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge is also located on Cape Charles and was established by the Department of the Interior. It is open to the public and offers nature trails, bird watching, and exhibits. The museum houses an extensive waterfowl carving collection.

The town of Chincoteague located in Accomack County, is an island off the coast of Virginia, just south of the Maryland border. Immediately beyond it lies the barrier island of Assateague, part in Maryland, part in Virginia, where there are miles of ocean surrounding the island and on shore, there are the sand dunes, and behind them is the Assateague lighthouse of 1857. A bridge connects Chincoteague to Assateague where the national seashore offers 38 miles of undeveloped Atlantic Ocean beach.

The Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague is home/migration stopover to hundreds of species of bird, including bald eagles as well as deer and the endangered Delmarva fox squirrel. Its most famous dwellers are the herd of wild ponies that lived on Assateague for centuries.

There are 20 historic sites in Accomack County and 17 in Northampton County. Accomac, Onancock, Eastville and Cape Charles contain the most number of historic sites.

Needs and Deficiencies

Employment Base

The County's labor pool includes under-utilized, low-wage and unskilled labor force. The trends that affect the labor pool are that college educated and skilled labor is relocating or "outmigrating" elsewhere for better paying, higher quality jobs off the Eastern shore, and employment opportunities are declining. The Eastern Shore Community College produces graduates that look to other areas for employment. There is a need for the Eastern Shore to diversify its employment base to attract employment in the future.

Infrastructure Needs

Limited water supply causes a strain in the infrastructure. Due to the need to use individual sewer systems, development is dependent on good soils. This therefore places residential and commercial development in competition with agriculture for the best land in the county.

Access to Shopping Opportunities

There are limited shopping opportunities on the Shore. Due to the lack of major discount stores and department stores, shopping opportunities are limited. The proportion of employment in retail is less than that for the state as a whole, suggesting that part of local demand for large ticket items is met elsewhere in the region, such as southern Maryland and Hampton Roads.

Issues of Concern

Employment Base

There is a limited high quality employment base causing outmigration of those who are educated and are looking for more challenging opportunities.

Congestion/Infrastructure

Congestion may occur due to the increase in tourism and residential development, impacting infrastructure, such as septic and sewer systems and causing air and water pollution. Community facilities and government services may also be impacted with increased residential and commercial development. Due to the lack of central waste water treatment facilities, new development in the counties requires individual septic systems.

Affordable Housing

There are concerns regarding the problems associated with housing stock. There is a lack of plumbing facilities, kitchen facility and adequate safe heating. About 7% of the housing stock are considered substandard.

Access to Amenities/Opportunities

There is limited public access to beaches along the Shore due to private ownership of lands. There is also a limited number of recreational facilities.

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion may be in jeopardy due to increased tourism and residential and commercial development along the Eastern Shore. Community cohesiveness occurred due to extensive family and historic ties to the land through agriculture and fishing. These industries may be at risk due to increased development on farmlands and along the shoreline.

Rural Land Uses and Conservation

There is a need to preserve the rural character of the Shore and protect and conserve environmentally sensitive areas for open space, recreation and habitat preservation. It is important to promote the conservation of barrier islands, marshland, forested area and creek corridors, as well as protect unique habitats.

Issues of Special Concern to Low Income Residents

There are limited number of high quality job opportunities and that may impact and limit opportunities for low-income residents. There may not be sufficient educational opportunities for them, and they may not be able to get to institutions and amenities in an efficient way due to the limited transportation network. In addition, living conditions for these residents are substandard and therefore, they live in low-quality housing since they cannot afford better opportunities.

Transportation and Quality of Life, Livable Communities

Quality of life in a community is closely tied to accessibility to opportunities for work, health care, recreation, shopping, and other services and needs. Communities are connected by their transportation networks. Changes in accessibility through improvements in capacity, or reduction of cost in time or money can bring important beneficial impacts to a community. These changes, however, can also bring direct and indirect negative impacts if they result in the displacement of current residents or a change in socioeconomic conditions. When transportation improvements induce a shift in residential and commercial activity from one area of a region to another, unplanned growth can result in land use, resource, fiscal and other impacts that some residents will consider negative in effect. Assessing impacts requires consultation with the community regarding goals and preferences. The level of impacts also relate closely to the attractiveness of an area to development including quality of life factors regarding education, amenities, community character, cost of living and other aspects of community life.