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Chapter 3: Housing

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OVERVIEW

This section provides data, analysis and highlights about housing in the City of Poquoson. Information about the number and types of housing units, year of construction, household size, housing prices and average rental costs are presented for the most current year available. The vast majority of developed property in Poquoson consists of single-family homes. The housing stock is in good condition in most areas of the city, although some homes show signs of neglect and damage from past storm systems. Since the last Comprehensive Plan, Poquoson has adopted the Property Maintenance section of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VaUSBC). Enforcement of this section will increase awareness for property upkeep. Nevertheless, average home prices will likely continue to rise in the City due to the excellent quality in life. Housing for the elderly, empty nesters and low to moderate income families are immediate and long-term community needs.

DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS

(For the purpose of this plan, districts refer to the planning districts for the City, not voting districts.)

For the Comprehensive Plan update, the City has been designated into three (3) planning districts - eastern, central and western. The districts do not follow the voting districts, as voting districts may change from time to time, but are based on existing land use patterns. Below is a brief description of each district as well as anticipated growth patterns. It is expected that the past development trends will continue in each district. Please see the Land Use chapter for a detailed description of each planning district and Map 8-1 which graphically depicts each district.

Eastern district- The most sparsely populated due to extensive marshlands and practically fully built-out, consists of eastern most land zoned R-2 and C-1 including all surrounded by R-2 zoning. Only minor in-fill development and possible redevelopment are expected.

Central district- More densely populated due to smaller lot sizes, multi-family housing units and commercial development, consists centrally located land zoned R-1 including all properties surrounded by R-1 zoning. Most of growth is expected in central business area.

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Western district- Predominantly developed with low-density single-family homes in a suburban design, consists of western most land zoned R-S including all properties surrounded by R-S zoning. Tracts of developable land still exist in this district.



HOUSING TRENDS

Table 3-1 summarizes historic information about housing units throughout the Lower Peninsula and Gloucester County. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 4,300 housing units located within the City of Poquoson. Of those, approximately 97% were occupied which results in 4,166 households (see table 3-11). The City’s housing stock increased by 46% between 1980 and 2000. Similarly, the number of households in the City increased 51% from 1980 to 2000. However, 1980 to 1990 represents most of the increase of new housing units (70% of growth) with only 410 units during 1990 to 2000. Poquoson’s growth was more than the Cities of Newport News, Hampton and Williamsburg; but was markedly lower than James City and York Counties which experienced substantial growth, approximately 45% and 34.5% respectively.

	Housing Units			Change, 1990-2000	
	1980	1990	2000	Number	Percent
Poquoson	2,943	3,890	4,300	410	10.54%
Gloucester County	7,878	12,451	14,494	2,043	16.41%
Hampton	43,562	53,623	57,311	3,688	6.88%
James City County	8,524	14,330	20,772	6,442	44.95%
Newport News	54,986	69,728	74,367	4,639	6.65%
Williamsburg	3,041	3,960	3,880	-80	-2.02%
York County	11,401	15,284	20,701	5,417	35.44%
Virginia	2,020,941	2,496,334	2,904,192	407,858	16.34%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1980-2000.

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

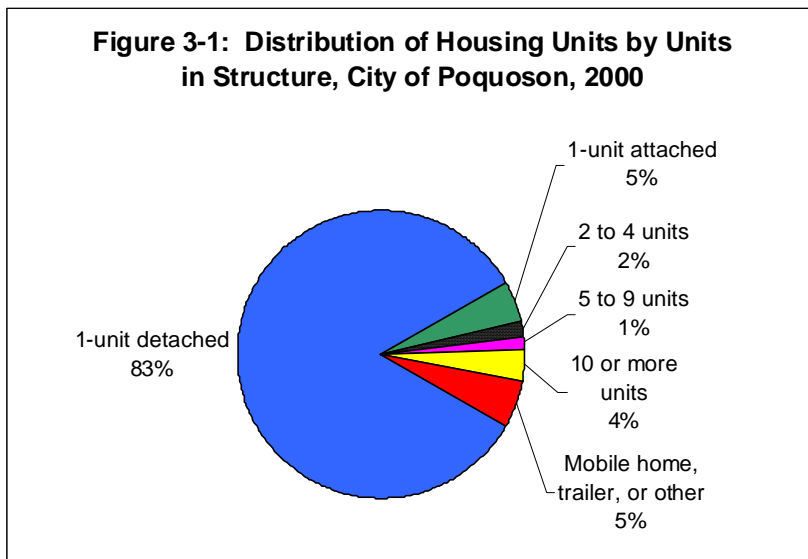
As noted in Table 3-2, 83% of all housing units in the City were classified as single-family detached structures in 2000. Although single-family detached homes predominate, there was a steady increase in the number of multi-family dwellings and mobile homes developed between 1970 and 1990. As a percentage of the housing stock, multi-family units and mobile homes changed little from 1990 to the 2000 Census. The supply of housing units other than single-family detached residential in Poquoson (16.9% of all housing) is relatively low when compared to other suburban Hampton Roads localities such as York County (28.9% of total housing) and James City County (33.1% of total housing). Both localities also have significantly higher percentages of single-family attached residential structures than Poquoson; York County having more than triple (15.1% of total housing) and James City County more than double (12.2% of total housing). Both York County and James City County also more multi-family housing units than Poquoson (6.5% of total housing units) with York County almost double the amount of Poquoson (11.7% of housing stock) and James City County more than twice the amount (14.1%). These observations and their implications are discussed in more detail later in the Housing Element, in the Affordable Housing Section of the chapter. It is important to note that



Multi-family housing units and mobile homes account for 39.6% of total housing stock in the Hampton Roads region as a whole. A detailed breakdown of housing units in Poquoson in 2000 by the number of units in the structure is provided in Figure 3-1.

Housing Type	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
single-family Detached	1,615	94.2%	2,642	89.8%	3,212	82.6%	3,578	83.2%
single-family Attached	Combined with Detached	Combined with Detached	23	0.8%	210	5.4%	209	4.9%
Multi-Family	67	3.9%	173	5.8%	257	6.6%	281	6.5%
Mobile Homes	32	1.9%	105	3.6%	211	5.4%	232	5.4%
Total	1,714	100.0%	2,943	100.0%	3,890	100.0%	4,300	100.0%

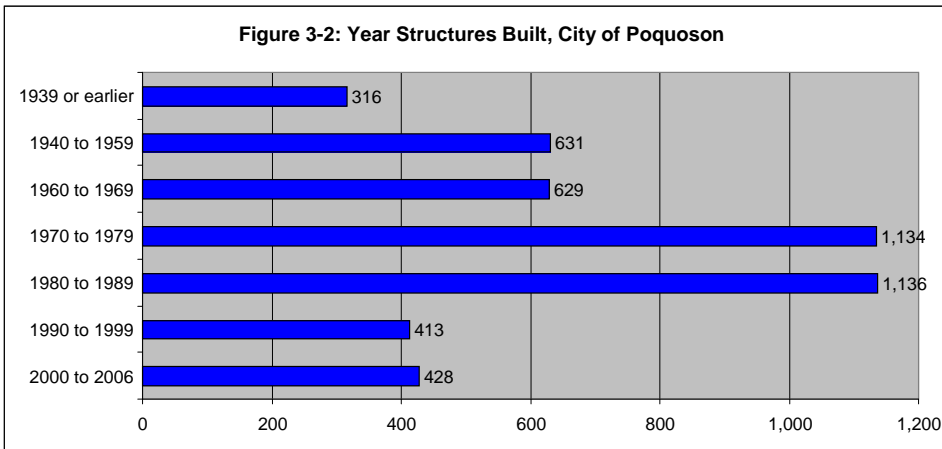
Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1970-2000.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000.

According to the U.S. Census, the majority of the housing stock in Poquoson (52.8%) was constructed in the 1970s and 1980s. Figure 3-2 identifies the number of units built within varying time periods. Development appears to have slowed considerably in the 1990s, when only 413 units were constructed. This time period represents only 9.7% of the housing stock in the City.





Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000 & City of Poquoson Building Inspections.

Physical Housing Characteristics

Over three-fourths (75.7%) of Poquoson’s housing stock has six or more rooms. This is a slightly higher percentage of large houses than nearby communities. Similarly, the percentage of housing units with four or less rooms is slightly lower than the adjacent communities of Hampton (28.1%) and York County (12.6%). Table 3-3 details Poquoson housing by size.

Number of Rooms	1990		2000	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
1 room	4	0.1%	0	0.0%
2 rooms	8	0.2%	58	1.3%
3 rooms	82	2.1%	80	1.9%
4 rooms	392	10.1%	346	8.0%
5 rooms	552	14.2%	562	13.1%
6 rooms	810	20.8%	842	19.6%
7 rooms	758	19.5%	878	20.4%
8 rooms	638	16.4%	724	16.8%
9 or more rooms	646	16.6%	810	18.8%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1990-2000.

In order to assess future housing needs, it is necessary to inventory the existing housing stock to determine where inadequate or substandard housing conditions exist. While the 2000 Census did not specifically enumerate substandard units, certain characteristics indicative of low quality housing were tabulated. Table 3-4 details the numbers of units lacking basic facilities.

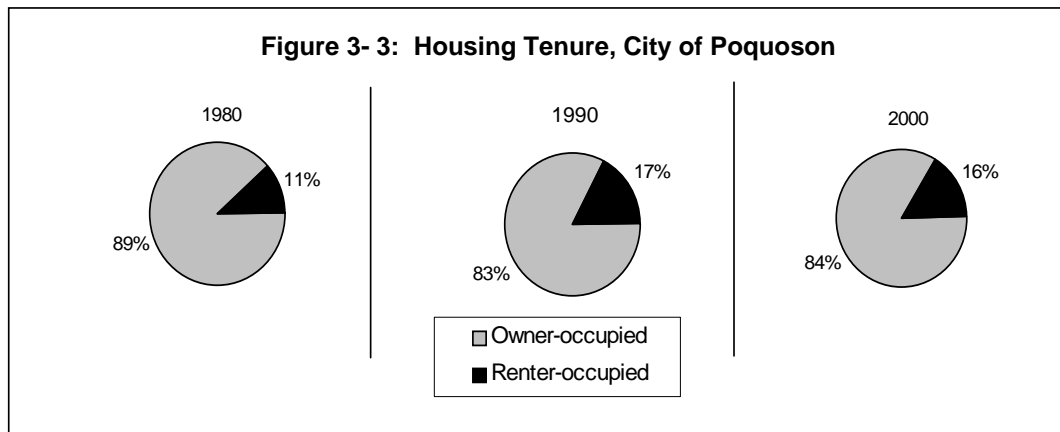


Table 3- 4: Selected Housing Characteristics, City of Poquoson, 2000		
	Units	Percent
Lacking complete plumbing facilities	7	0.2%
Lacking complete kitchen facilities	7	0.2%
No telephone service	24	0.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000.

Tenure

In 2000, there were 134 vacant housing units in the City of Poquoson, or about 3% of the total. The City averaged 2.75 persons per occupied unit. Owner occupied units had a slightly higher average household size (2.76 persons per unit) than renter occupied units (2.70 persons per unit). The vast majority of the City’s occupied units were owner occupied (3503 units or 84 percent). Figure 3-3 below details housing tenure in Poquoson. The percentage shown was calculated using the total occupied units. Map 3-1 illustrates the location of owner and renter occupied properties in the City (Please see end of Chapter). It is important to note the renter occupancy rate increased by 6% from 1980 to 1990 while remained relatively the same as 1990 in 2000.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1980-2000.

Table 3-5 compares housing tenure in Poquoson to surrounding localities. The City has the highest owner-occupied housing rate among these communities, followed closely by James City County and York County.



Table 3- 5: Housing Tenure, Percent of Occupied Housing Units, 2000					
	Poquoson	Hampton	James City County	Williamsburg	York County
Owner occupied	84.1%	58.6%	77.0%	44.3%	75.8%
Renter occupied	15.9%	41.4%	23.0%	55.7%	24.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000.

The 2000 Census suggests that in-migration to Poquoson is common. Over half of Poquoson’s householders (54.2%) moved into their housing units between 1990 and March 2000. The years in which the head of household moved into housing units in the City are detailed below in Table 3-6.

Table 3- 6: Year Householder Moved Into Unit, City of Poquoson		
	Number	Percentage
1999 to March 2000	598	14.4%
1995 to 1998	1,024	24.6%
1990 to 1994	636	15.3%
1980 to 1989	852	20.5%
1970 to 1979	492	11.8%
1969 or earlier	564	13.5%
Occupied Housing Units	4,166	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000.

Value and Rent Prices

Housing values in Poquoson are among the highest in the region. Table 3-7, below, details the historical trend of the four localities with the highest home prices in Hampton Roads according to the U.S. Census. Table 3-8 specifically categorizes the housing units in Poquoson into a range of home values. Notably, between 1990 and 2000, homes with values of \$100,000 or less have declined significantly while growth has occurred in the number of homes valued at \$300,000 or more. Nonetheless, the majority of homes in Poquoson have values between \$100,000 and \$199,000.



	Poquoson	Hampton	James City County	Williamsburg	York County
1970	\$16,600	\$16,600	\$17,800	\$26,600	\$19,600
1980	\$60,700	\$38,900	\$52,700	\$61,600	\$58,500
1990	\$113,700	\$78,200	\$119,500	\$121,000	\$121,600
2000	\$153,400	\$91,100	\$167,300	\$212,000	\$152,700
1999 Per Capita Income	\$25,336	\$19,774	\$29,256	\$18,483	\$24,560

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1970-2000.

	Number of Units		Percent change
	1990	2000	
Less than \$50,000	112	22	-80.4%
\$50,000 to \$99,000	976	576	-41.0%
\$100,000, to \$149,000	949	933	-1.7%
\$150,000 to \$199,000	471	864	83.4%
\$200,000 to \$299,000	176	520	195.5%
\$300,000 or more	57	281	393.0%
Specified owner-occupied housing	2,741	3,196	16.6%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1990-2000.

According to the U.S. Census, the median contract rent for units in Poquoson is \$588 per month, placing the City among the four most expensive localities in Hampton Roads. Gross rent is defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census as the contract rent plus the estimated average monthly cost of utilities and fuels. It is intended to eliminate differences among various rental procedures with respect to the inclusion of utilities and fuels as part of the rental payment. Even when considering median gross rent figures, Poquoson is still one of the most expensive localities in Hampton Roads (\$697 per month).

Table 3-9 identifies the number of units within each rental price range in 1990 and 2000. The number of units renting for less than \$500 declined sharply during this time, while the greatest increase was seen in the number of units renting for \$1000 or more.



	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than \$200	6	0.9%	0	0.0%
\$200 to \$299	10	1.5%	0	0.0%
\$300 to \$499	144	22.2%	56	8.4%
\$500 to \$749	254	39.1%	318	47.9%
\$750 to \$999	132	20.3%	125	18.8%
\$1000 or more	73	11.2%	124	18.7%
No cash rent	30	4.6%	41	6.2%
Specified renter-occupied units	649	100.0%	664	100.0%
Median (dollars)	\$574		\$697	

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 1990-2000.

Selected housing cost characteristics are summarized in Table 3-10 below. The localities selected for inclusion in this comparison were most equivalent to Poquoson with regard to median home value and median monthly rent price.

	Poquoson	Hampton	James City County	Williamsburg	York County
Median Value of Owner Occupied Housing Units	\$153,400	\$91,100	\$167,300	\$212,000	\$152,700
-below \$99,000	18.7%	61.1%	19.2%	22.4%	19.3%
-above \$200,000	25.1%	3.9%	38.9%	53.1%	25.6%
Median Rent	\$697	\$603	\$703	\$616	\$708
-below \$500/month	8.4%	27.9%	17.9%	15.9%	13.2%
-above \$750/month	37.5%	23.6%	43.1%	24.0%	31.8%
Owners paying 30%+ of income for housing	19.3%	24.4%	21.5%	21.1%	19.1%
Renters paying 30%+ of income for housing	33.7%	37.6%	41.5%	41.5%	23.1%
Home Ownership Rate	84.06%	50.95%	68.48%	24.10%	67.81%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000.



Depicted in Table 3-10 is the region-wide phenomenon of strong housing demand and rising incomes forcing prices above the means of some low to moderate-income households. Nevertheless, the home ownership rate in Poquoson is the highest among localities on the Peninsula within the Hampton Roads Planning District.

HOUSING ESTIMATES AND PROJECTIONS

Household trends based on occupied housing data for Poquoson during the period from 1970 to 2000 are provided in Table 3-11, along with projections up to the year 2030. By 2030, the number of households in Poquoson is expected to increase to 5,408, up 29.81% from 2000 with 1,242 additional households. Although the increase is only slightly lower than the increase anticipated for the Hampton Roads region as a whole (less than 3%), Poquoson’s housing stock is projected to grow at a significantly slower pace compared to the projections for surrounding communities like York County and Gloucester County (projected to grow more than 53% each) and James City County (projected to more than triple).

The projected increase in housing is seems to follow a linear rate, depicting a low yet increasing growth rate. The minimal availability of vacant land (less than 20%) and the extensive environmental sensitivity of the land in Poquoson will continue to constrain residential development. Without these two factors, development would surely resemble the rest of Hampton Roads. While some vacant land is yet to be developed, the City is slowly reaching an apex of residential build-out which will eventually require rezoning of existing vacant land or redevelopment for new residential growth. Residential areas with potential redevelopment opportunities are limited and outlined in the Land Use chapter.

Table 3 - 11: Regional Forecast 2010 - 2030							
Projected Households in Hampton Roads							
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Poquoson	Not Available	2,763	3,763	4,166	4,545	4,958	5,408
Gloucester County	4,431	7,159	10,957	13,127	15,218	17,643	20,454
Hampton	31,564	41,550	49,680	53,887	55,535	57,234	58,985
Newport News	39,586	51,310	64,420	69,686	24,614	31,883	41,297
James City County	4,551	7,493	12,990	19,003	73,981	78,541	83,381
Williamsburg	2,396	3,024	3,462	3,619	4,394	5,335	6,477
York County	7,391	10,879	14,452	20,000	23,091	26,659	30,779
North Hampton Roads	89,919	124,178	159,724	183,488	202,788	224,117	247,691
Hampton Roads*	Not Available	390,531	504,180	579,107	636,023	698,532	767,185

Source: HRPDC, Years 2010-2030 derived from Hampton Roads 2034 Socio-Economic Regional Forecast.
 *Hampton Roads is used synonymously with Norfolk--Virginia Beach--Newport News, VA,NC MSA for years 2010-2030.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

VA statute §15.2-2223 requires Comprehensive Plans include “the designation of areas and implementation of measures for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing which is sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income while considering the current and future needs of the planning district within which the locality is situated”, referenced as Affordable Housing by State Code. Unfortunately, connotations of “affordable housing” are generally negative and misinterpreted to represent ‘public’ (or free) housing, which is not factual. Many localities have discouraged using the term of “affordable” and proceed to call this effort “workforce housing” for two main reasons: (1) the housing is for a working families that must purchase the housing and therefore not free, and (2) affordable has different meanings to different people. It is recommended that this effort be referenced as ‘workforce housing’ during implementation since this term best matches the character of Poquoson as a small town of hard working individuals.

The State of Virginia requires localities to address this Affordable Housing in their Comprehensive Plans. The Affordable Housing section of the plan proposes two strategies to address Poquoson’s housing issues in a manner that best matches the values of the residents and remains compatible with the community’s existing land use pattern by using a key tenet of Smart Growth strategies and Sustainable Development strategies as the foundation to the recommendations.

Existing Conditions Analysis

The Housing element has presented Poquoson’s existing suburban landscape through various narratives, charts, graphs and tables throughout the chapter and can be summarized as consisting primarily of single-family detached residential dwellings (83.2% of stock) built during the 70s and 80s (52.8%) with limited single-family attached dwellings and multi-family dwellings. Poquoson’s housing stock consists of structures possessing six or more rooms (75%) with almost 19% of the housing stock consisting of houses with nine or more rooms, both qualities indicative of Poquoson’s character as a family oriented bedroom community. In comparison to neighboring suburban designed communities, Poquoson possesses the third highest median value of housing cost on the Lower Peninsula (North Hampton Roads) and lacks housing diversity that can support different income levels.

Current Zoning

The base zoning for the City of Poquoson are zoning classifications that allow single-family detached residential uses at a maximum of two dwelling units per acre in designated areas (R-S, R-1, R-2). Land currently zoned for multi-family residential is already developed which would require proposals for high density residential to obtain land and request a rezoning for development. It should also be noted that under the City of Poquoson’s current Zoning Ordinance Multi-family Residential zoning (R-3) is the only zoning that allows a density more than two units per acre (2 du/acre); therefore, any land development proposal of more than 2 units per acre, whether or not the proposal attempts to maximize unit yield, must undergo the

Deleted: While the reasons may vary, it is difficult for opposition to justify their reasons against workforce housing with factual data. Parties of opposition usually present emotional and/or traditional rationale for opposition of affordable housing, which generally stem from fear of a loss of safety or devalued property. Regardless, it is irrational to attribute such issues to people in need or predict this effort as a nuisance and not address the need. However, this plan recognizes the importance to maintain Poquoson’s character as a small bedroom community and therefore reflects this character in the recommendations for addressing housing issues. These divergent convictions buttress the purpose of politics as mentioned in the foreword. However, it is clear that Poquoson has hardworking individuals and families in need of more affordable housing and this atmosphere attracts the same to Poquoson. ¶



rezoning process and the controversy associated with R-3 zoning (multi-family residential). This fact may explain the lack of single-family attached residential housing in Poquoson.

Past Trends and Effects

As previously mentioned in Table 3-3, over seventy-five percent (75%) of Poquoson's dwellings consist of six (6) or more rooms with less than twelve percent (12%) of the housing stock dedicated to four (4) rooms or less. It is sensible to believe the market during this time was supplying a demand by providing a quality product which has led the high quality of housing stock found in the City. Profit was maximized by building larger high quality dwellings, as opposed to building smaller sized detached dwellings that would not draw as much return in profit on land that shares the same cost.

Consequently, Poquoson's high quality of life and the recent boom in the real estate market created an environment where the existing housing stock became extremely valuable and new construction provided larger more expensive housing. In fact, from 1990-2000 the housing stock increased by 3.5% with dwelling units boasting seven rooms or more, and the number of dwelling units with four rooms reduced by 2.1%. The effect of this trend is that few citizens in Poquoson who rented were able to purchase and few who owned were able to upgrade their housing situation. However, Poquoson maintained its status as a "bedroom community" as the additional, larger newly constructed housing attracted new residents with higher incomes.

Housing Issues Poquoson faces

As the availability of residentially zoned land decreases, it is important for the City of Poquoson to address important housing issues. Data analyses, past surveys and public comments have identified housing issues the City faces such as:

- More affordable housing for low to moderate income families within the community;
- Affordable shared living arrangement housing that provides assisted care facilities, services and housing for the elderly and disabled; and
- Active lifestyle housing for retirees and empty-nesters with limited maintenance responsibilities.

The City of Poquoson must strive to achieve more affordable housing for its current and future residents in a manner that best suits the community. The aforementioned issues represent a demand in the real estate market and within the community, and are generally addressed by diversifying the housing stock through a variety of housing types and ownership options. However, under the City's current zoning ordinance, any housing type or style other than single-family detached residential would have to utilize Multi-Family Residential zoning. The concept of Multi-Family housing has proven to be a highly controversial topic and forces City staff members and governing officials to think of different ways to address the housing needs of the community. This plan presents two strategies intended to address these issues.



Key Observations

As mentioned previously in the Housing Characteristics section, the City of Poquoson has a limited amount of Attached single-family Residential housing and Multi-family housing, especially when compared to nearby suburban communities of James City County and York County. In fact, multi-family residential structures outnumber single-family attached residential structures in Poquoson by 1.5%. Table 3-12 illustrates that York County has more than three times the amount of Attached single-family Residential than Poquoson, 15.1% of the total housing to 4.9% of the total housing respectively. James City County also has significantly more single-family attached residential structures than Poquoson, 12.2% of the total housing, more than twice the amount. These claims are not an attempt to imply that Poquoson should attempt to match the percentages found in James City County or York County; however, the observation is presented in an attempt to discuss an opportunity to diversify the housing stock in a manner appropriate for Poquoson.

Table 3 - 12: Housing Type Comparison - 2000						
Housing Type	James City County		York County		Poquoson	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
Single-Family Detached	13,899	67.0%	14,719	71.1%	3,578	83.2%
Single-Family Attached	2,536	12.2%	3,128	15.1%	209	4.9%
Multi-Family	2,914	14.0%	2,411	11.7%	281	6.5%
Mobile Homes	1,413	6.8%	443	2.1%	232	5.4%
Total	20,772	100.0%	20,701	100.0%	4,300	100.0%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Census, Census 2000.

In the City of Poquoson, property transfer records confirm that, on average, attached residential dwellings generally sell for approximately a third (33%) less than comparable detached dwellings, according to information provided by the City’s Assessor Office¹. The difference in cost may be due to the fact that typically lots containing attached residential dwellings are located on smaller lots of land, thereby reducing the cost. The number attributed to this difference was calculated to be roughly a \$100,000 savings². This disparity was once greater, but the scarcity of attached residential in Poquoson has essentially increased the demand which has increased the price of this product. This market trend clearly demonstrates the demand for this type of housing while also indicating that the supply is limited. Single-family attached residential presents an opportunity for the community to capitalize on its great quality of life

¹Information provided by City Assessor, Robert Faison, in interview on January 25, 2008.

²Information provided by City Assessor, Robert Faison, in interview on January 25, 2008.



while advancing towards its goal of becoming a more sustainable community with a diversified housing stock.

Background

Values of the Community

Strategies to address workforce housing must maintain the values of the community to ensure compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods and public acceptance. The following list of community values have been compiled from data analyses, citizen surveys and public comments³:

- The City of Poquoson is a suburban bedroom community predominantly consisting of single-family detached residential homes (83.2%) and approximately 78% of the City's residents worked outside the City. The majority of dwellings are less than three stories in height.
- The City of Poquoson is a family oriented community. Families populate the housing (80.9% of the households) with an average household size of 2.75 persons and an average family size of 3.08 persons. Poquoson's percentage of families as population is the most on the Peninsula with York County the next closest locality with a similar family population 79.4%. Other than James City County, no other localities on the Peninsula had populations consisting of at least 70% families. Poquoson's average household size and average family size rank second on the Peninsula, behind only York County with an average household size of 2.78 persons and an average family size of 3.15 persons.
- The community holds home ownership in high regard boasting the highest rate of owner occupied housing units on the Peninsula (84.1%) and 74.3% of its total dwelling inventory occupied by owners.
- The community mostly consists of hardworking diligent individuals with only 2.1% of the labor force unemployed, tied for 2nd least on the Peninsula with James City County behind only York County with 1.8%.
- Poquoson has a small town atmosphere with a small central commercial core to serve basic community needs and services along Wythe Creek Road.

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Citizen Comments

2004 Survey

The 2004 survey asked citizens what land uses should be of highest priority to the City of Poquoson. Respondents of the 2004 survey answered that affordable housing for young families

³All numbers are from the 2000 Census and the Department of Planning & Building Inspections records.



and elderly housing were 3rd and 4th priority out of 8 choices regarding land use, garnering a combined 33.5% of the responses. The combination of the 2 choices outranked all other choices by more than 10%. However, it should be noted that the respondents of the survey ranked single-family homes as the 1st priority with a slight edge of one percent (1%) over elderly housing. The choice of office/professional just barely ranked 2nd over elderly housing with only two (2) more responses than elderly housing. Affordable housing for young families garnered 15.4% of the responses, selected the 4th most priority.

2006 Survey

Like the 2004 survey, the 2006 survey asked the citizens what the City's three (3) top priorities should be regarding land use. A total of nine (9) choices were listed for the question with a non-descriptive selection of 'affordable housing' and 'age restricted housing' as choices. Affordable housing received enough responses to remain in the upper half of priorities as the 4th most nominated priority while 'age restricted housing' received only modest support as a priority in 2006. Affordable housing was only 2.6% behind detached single-family homes (15.8% of responses) with 13.2% of the respondents selecting affordable housing. Age restricted housing dropped significantly to represent only 6.25% of the responses. This number is quite peculiar since a similar selection in the 2004 survey (elderly housing) was edged out as the 2nd most priority by only 2 votes, especially since Poquoson has the 2nd oldest population in Hampton Roads. Speculation of current events during the distribution of the 2006 survey would suggest a controversial rezoning application may have influenced respondents' choices. The top three responses for this question (Question #7) were:

- Parks & open areas – 22%
- Conservancy with no development - 20.5%
- Detached single-family homes – 16%

The 2006 survey also asked citizens if more R-3 areas should be made available that target retired and elderly, 51% of the respondents stated yes and 22% selected the response of 'no opinion' (It is important to note that a group of citizens assisted in the development of the 2006 survey). Unfortunately, the survey did not include a selection for a 'no' response for this question. However, the remaining tallies of the responses (27%) were handwritten responses of 'no' on the survey for this question. It is possible that respondents may have chosen to select 'no opinion' in order to express a 'no' response to the question. A scenario of assuming that every 'no opinion' was actually a 'no' response combined with the handwritten 'no' responses would provide almost a 50/50 split on the issue. Nonetheless, the effects of this error cannot be fully determined leaving the issue for debate and to the discretion of local elected officials.

The responses for 'yes' were divided into 3 different categories and each selection is shown below along with corresponding percentage of responses:

- Yes, single-story housing – 31%
- Yes, multi-story housing – 4%
- Yes, either - 16%



Favorable responses indicate that single-story housing is the most preferred option to address housing for the retired and elderly (receiving 31% of the selection from respondents) and the ‘Yes, either’ option receiving the fourth most selections from respondents (16%). The choice favoring multi-story responses received the least amount of favorable responses, only 4% of the responses. Although multi-story is still considered in the ‘Yes, either’ response, the ‘Yes, either’ choice can be interpreted that the respondents would find single-story housing to address elderly housing acceptable as well. With this in mind, single-story housing received the most support in the survey.

Justification for Action

While respondents of the surveys did not feel that affordable and elderly housing was of the utmost priority, most respondents to the surveys agreed that these types of housing are needed. The State of Virginia has also given directives via legislation requiring local governments to address affordable housing issues in their Comprehensive Plan. It would also be temerarious of the City to not consider housing for the elderly population a priority since Poquoson has the second oldest population in the Hampton Roads area, out of 17 localities, with a median age of 39.5. Poquoson’s median age is higher than the Norfolk -- Virginia Beach -- Newport News Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) of 33.6 years and 35.7 years for the State of Virginia. Looking back to Table 1-8 (page 1-8), 33.4% of the population is 45 years old or greater with 9.5% 65 years of age and older. Of that number, nearly 5% (4.74%) of the population is above the age of 75. These numbers depict an older population that will need elderly housing; an issue which is quickly approaching a point of action.

Citizen comments from the surveys resulted in the majority of respondents answering that single-family detached residential should be the City’s priority. Evaluating the landscape and regulations governing land use, one can determine that the single-family detached residential is the land use Poquoson’s elected officials hold in the highest priority. As previously stated, the 2000 Census data supports this fact with 83.2% of the City’s dwellings classified as single-family Residential – Detached and the base zoning layer of the City permitting single-family Residential – Detached as the only by-right use.

It is an important element of this plan to continue to promote single-family detached residential as a recommended land use to maintain the character and stability of Poquoson as a suburban community. However, attempts to address affordable housing in Poquoson must consider alternative types of housing that complement its landscape in order to achieve the Poquoson’s vision of “Building a Sustainable Community”. One of the key tenets to Smart-Growth and Sustainable Development strategies is to diversify the housing stock in a manner compatible to the community⁴. The proposed strategies that follow are derived from these same Smart Growth and Sustainable Development strategies complemented by analysis performed by City Planning Staff.

Key Recommendation: Diversify the Housing Stock

⁴ Smart Growth Network (www.smartgrowth.org) and Sustainable Communities Network (www.sustainable.org).



As mentioned previously, addressing the issue of affordable housing is required by the State of Virginia by State Code. Analysis of Poquoson’s existing conditions indicates that attached residential naturally leans towards addressing the social issues Poquoson faces with its housing market because it typically does not require the owner to purchase a large amount of land with the dwelling, thereby reducing the overall cost of the dwelling. The real estate market provides different types of housing that may be appropriate for Poquoson if implemented properly. It is important that the sites designated to implement the recommended strategies of affordable housing be appropriately located in areas that affect the least amount of residents and that public infrastructure can support the use. ~~The sites most appropriate for single family attached residential are depicted on the Future Land Use Map (Map 8-4) found in Chapter 8 – Land Use.~~ The following paragraphs explains two concepts used in the housing market, single-family attached residential and condominiums, for better understanding of what is being proposed:

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Single-family attached residential represents a fee simple purchase option that involves the purchase of land with a dwelling unit that typically contains smaller versions of both attributes, especially when compared to single-family detached residential. A fee simple purchase option is one in which the buyer purchases the land and the structures found on it with entitlements to the rights and responsibility of that land. This is the same purchase option for single-family detached residential except their will be provisions for the structure on shared property lines or “party wall” as it is commonly called. Each unit has separate entrances and no shared access arrangements.

Condominiums do not require a buyer to purchase any land, as the arrangement of sell is for the dwelling only. A phrase typically used in the market is that the buyer purchases “sheet rock to sheet rock” meaning the interior of the dwelling. An association regulates, owns and maintains the exterior including the land, but it is shared amongst those living within the development for equal access and use. Essentially condominiums are not a style of development but rather a description of purchase that usually requires the buyer to agree to terms of covenants which they must abide. It is possible for condominium to resemble a single-family detached dwelling. These are commonly called “patio or carriage homes”.

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The high demands of the market and citizen resistance to housing other than detached single-family are obstacles that must be faced by the community’s leaders. However, the City must work to educate the public on issues such as these in order to provide the community with affordable housing. There are different types of attached residential options in the market, some of which are purposely designed and constructed to emulate a single-family detached structure. The designs and styles of housing that attempt to resemble single-family detached residential structures seem most appropriate for Poquoson’s landscape. Therefore ~~these the styles are~~ recommended for consideration in this plan as Strategy #1, some of js are listed below:

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- o Duplex (or commonly called a twinhome) - Two units sharing one common party wall with each unit located on its own parcel.
- ~~o Triplex (also commonly called a carriage home) - Three units attached to one another with one unit sharing a party wall with each of its neighbors.~~



- ~~○ Quadplex (also commonly called a ranch style condo) — Four units attached to one another with each unit sharing a party wall with each of its neighbors.~~
- ~~○ Townhouse (also commonly called a rowhouse) — usually Four units attached to one another in a row with each unit sharing a party wall with each of its neighbors.~~

Recommended Strategies

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Incorporating attached residential that fits the landscape of Poquoson can be done through a variety of implementation methods, two of which are recommended for consideration by this section:

Recommended

Strategy #1 - Allow compatible types of single-family attached residential dwellings in future formally planned subdivisions that also contains single-family detached residential dwellings. The balance of the subdivision is recommended to be primarily detached single-family dwellings. This strategy would blend ownership options with single-family residential uses together and provide compatibility in areas designated for low density dwellings.

Recommended

~~*Strategy #2* — Create a moderate density land use district that permits and requires types of single-family attached residential dwellings compatible to the single family detached landscape of Poquoson. The 2006 Citizens’ Survey indicated a favorable response to single story attached residential structures as compared to multi-story structures.~~

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Essentially the aforementioned recommended strategies ~~is a~~ ~~are~~ method ~~to diversify~~ the housing inventory for current and future residents of Poquoson by providing the regulations that will allow the private sector to address the market demand. Again these strategies are not intended to be the limit of what is needed to address the affordable housing needs of Poquoson as there may be additional steps needed to continue to address these issues, some of which could be: creating a Housing Authority, partnering with neighboring communities, public/private partnerships, federal assistance or assistance from non-profit organizations. However, ~~the~~ strategy recommended ~~intends~~ to diversify the housing stock in a manner appropriate for the landscape and character of Poquoson ~~by NOT increasing density~~.

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Strategy #1 – Mix Single-Family Residential Types

The first strategy recommends allowing compatible types of single-family attached residential dwellings in future formally planned detached subdivisions. This method is typically called mixing residential types and the purpose of this strategy is to permit land designated for low density residential the capability to provide affordable housing by mixing single-family attached dwellings with detached single-family dwellings. Again, on average, attached residential dwellings sell for less in this community than comparable single-family detached dwellings.



However, this strategy is proposed only for new subdivisions and not for subdivisions with infill capability. The reasoning for this restriction is not to impact persons who purchased property in of single-family detached residential subdivision that reasonably assumed that the subdivision was planned only for detached dwellings.

Due to their design, a duplex (also known as a twinhome in the real estate market) is the most compatible type of single-family attached residential structure for integration with single-family detached residential. Nearby subdivisions in York County, such as Coventry, reflect this strategy with duplex units that visually resemble a large single-family detached dwelling. As previously mentioned, a duplex dwelling is 2 units, each located on their own separate parcel, sharing only one (1) vertical party wall located on the center lot line. Duplexes are the only type of attached residential recommended for areas designated for low density residential, such as the underlying zoning districts R-1, R-2, and R-S. This type of housing mix can be found in new urbanism and traditionally designed developments across the nation. It is important to note that while *Strategy #1* mixes the type of single-family residential, the permitted density for the subdivision remains the same. Again, the permitted density for Low Density Residential only allows a maximum of 2 units per acre.

For example, a scenario of a formal subdivision proposal that is allowed to yield 100 dwelling units (or lots) but the design plan can only accommodate 90 dwelling units (or lots) is an opportunity to provide this mix of units. Strategy #1 would allow 10 lots to be halved for single-family attached residential; thereby creating 10 additional lots for a total of 20 lots to be utilized for single-family attached residential. The remainder of this subdivision, 80 lots, would stay single-family detached residential with a total of 100 dwelling units for the site.

One incentive for a developer to do this type of development is the opportunity to build the total number of units allowed. Since Poquoson has many environmentally constrained lands, these constraints often preclude developers from achieving the total number of units that may be allowed upon subdivision development. For instance, if a significant amount of acreage located on the parcel is wetlands, the developer may not be able to attain the total number of unit allowed through the conventional development method due to the amount of available buildable land. Permitting the developer to integrate mixed residential types would create a ‘win/win’ situation because of these significant issues:

- Flexibility within the subdivision maximizes the developer’s profit and ability to provide improvements by providing additional units to sell with the same cost of land and extension of utilities;
- Construction of single-family attached residential units minimizes land disturbance by keeping the disturbed area compact since two units attached would eliminate one (1) side yard for each between the two. Limiting the amount of disturbed land helps improve water quality by reducing the amount of sediment transfer thereby reducing pollution. This notion follows a key practice of Low Impact development; and



- Single-family attached residential creates affordable units for working class families in the community since they sell for 33% less than comparable sized single-family detached structures.

Strategy #1 Implementation Recommendations

Before this strategy can formally become reality a means of regulating this opportunity must be in place. It is highly recommended that a process for this strategy to operate be in place before any consideration of a proposal. Since the Comprehensive Plan is advisory, the process which to permit the integration of duplexes with detached dwellings in future formally planned subdivisions requires formal action by City Council by ordinance amendment. The following are key issues recommended for consideration when developing ordinance provisions to implement *Strategy #1*; it is recommended that *Strategy #1*:

- Be utilized for instances similar to the aforementioned described scenario where a project design cannot yield the maximum number of lots and allowing the mixing of residential types would allow the developer to yield the maximum number of units allowed.
- Be implemented in future formally planned detached subdivisions that will be reviewed by City Staff for compliance with ordinance provisions.
- Utilize administrative review in the site plan review process with specific criteria that must be met to permit the mixed residential types adopted in the ordinance, similar to the Planned Open Space Development ordinance.
- Regulate the number of single-family attached residential units allowed in such a development not to exceed 20% of the total lot yield. The result would be 80% of the lots must remain single-family detached dwellings thereby maintaining a significant level of the City's character in the neighborhood.
- Regulate the minimum lot size for the single-family attached residential units to not exceed 50% of the required lot size for a detached dwelling lot in the underlying zoning district. Doing so would increase the amount of land the potential buyer would have to purchase, thereby reducing the effectiveness of *Strategy #1*.

Other incentives should be explored in order to fully capitalize on this opportunity, but further study is necessary to determine to what level. For example, density bonuses could be used to grant additional lots for subdivisions in exchange for documentation guaranteeing a certain number of units to be sold to low to moderate income families, fixed income families, elderly, empty nesters or other social groups in need of assistance for affordable housing. Again, this is only an example and additional study of what incentives could be implemented to address affordable housing issues.

~~Strategy #2 – Moderate Density/Single Family Attached Residential Land Use District~~

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The second strategy recommended to diversify the housing stock is to create a moderate density land use district that promotes single family attached residential dwellings, such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, and townhouse styled units. By permitting a density higher than 2 per acre, but less than 12 units per acre, the market for this type of housing can attempt to address Poquoson's housing issues by finding middle ground on such a controversial subject. As previously stated, a hindrance Poquoson faces in diversifying the housing stock is that all land zoned for more than 2 units per acre has already been developed. Therefore, designating vacant land for rezoning and development is necessary to accommodate diversifying the housing stock and providing more affordable housing types. *Strategy#2* reflects this fact and coordinates the affordable housing effort with the Land Use chapter later in the Comprehensive Plan (Chapter 8).

The Future Land Use Map (Map 8-4) has designated areas appropriate to accommodate moderate density residential using selection criteria similar to multi family housing, such as close proximity to major thoroughfares and public services and site location near compatible uses. Although since Moderate Density proposes less density than Multi-Family residential, the adherence to such criteria is not as rigid and the tolerance for proximity more flexible. Selection criteria for the proposed Moderate Density zoning also included a factor of minimal impact to adjacent single family detached residential property. In fact, the location of the recommended Moderate Density/single family attached residential district will serve as a buffer between single family detached residential and Commercial uses. Designation of the Moderate Density/single family attached residential district in specific areas indicates that these areas are most appropriate for the district and that the district would not be appropriate located elsewhere in the City without significant infrastructure improvements. It is important to note that while a moderate density is proposed the use is remains single family Residential which is compatible with other single family Residential types. The Land Use Chapter details areas appropriate to accommodate the proposed Moderate Density/single family attached residential housing choices.

Strategy #2 Implementation Recommendations

Again, while the comprehensive plan designates areas deemed compatible for this use, standards and regulations will need to be adopted in the zoning ordinance for guidance and enforcement. The comprehensive plan is an advisory document, and therefore the zoning ordinance should be revised to include provisions for a Moderate Density/single family attached residential zoning district before formal consideration of a proposal.

The following statements are recommended for consideration in the development of a moderate density ordinance and implementation of *Strategy #2*:

- Adopt a Zoning Ordinance that provides regulations outlining the Moderate Density district before consideration of any proposals.
- Allow moderate density zoning only in appropriate areas depicted in the Future Land Use Map (Map 8-4). The proposed designation areas of Moderate Density will serve as a buffer for single family detached residential and commercial uses.



- ~~• A density range of 5 to 7 dwelling units per acre is recommended for the moderate density residential ordinance. According to this recommendation, five (5) dwelling units per acre would be the minimum number of units required and seven (7) dwellings units per acre would be the maximum number allowed. The range was established by determining a midpoint for the maximum allowed between the single family density (2) and the multi family density (12). Requiring a minimum number of units establishes a commitment to the goal of providing a range of affordable housing.~~
- ~~• Prohibit apartment styled units in this district. Allow only single family Attached units that resemble single family detached units. The aforementioned styles of single family Attached Units are the most compatible with Poquoson's landscape of single family detached subdivisions and more likely to promote ownership pride. Apartment styled units and condominiums are better utilized in the Multi family residence zoning, not the moderate density zoning district. Therefore each unit should have their own entrance and access separate from neighbors.~~
- ~~• For townhouse styled units, no more than 5 consecutive units should be allowed to be attached to one another and no more than 2 consecutive units should be on the same plane per structure. An offset requirement promotes an aesthetically pleasing design that defines the individual units.~~
- ~~• Adopt the ordinance detailing a Moderate Density/single family attached residential use as 'R-3 Single Family Attached Residential district', renaming Multi family to 'R-4 Multi family residence'. This keeps the number value consistent with the density, showing a progression from 2 units per acre (R-S, R-1, R-2) to 12 units per acre (to be renamed to R-4).~~
- ~~• Allow and encourage single family detached residential units in a formally planned single family attached residential subdivision but at a balance not to exceed 20% of the total number of units for the subdivision. Allowing this mix of residential types complements Strategy #1 Mix Residential Types and provides the housing stock for move up or upgrading families within the same subdivision.~~

Conclusion / Recommendation for Committee Formation

While implementing this strategy alone may not solve the issues facing Poquoson instantaneously, it is a strong first step to address the issues. The method will have to be detailed specifically by the Zoning Ordinance in order to be compatible to the landscape of Poquoson. Since no ordinance provisions exist currently, the Comprehensive Plan provides a purpose, intent and recommendations to the establishment of the strategy for the creation of such provisions to be adopted in the Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance should guide property owners/developers and establish requirements such as minimum lot sizes, compatible dwelling types, and other limitations suitable for Poquoson.

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In order to meet the goal of the affordable housing section and guide its effort in Poquoson, it is recommended that the City create a committee that analyzes trends, case studies and implementation procedures that have been successful providing compatible affordable housing. A topic the committee should be charged to evaluate is the creation of ordinances that will effectively address the issues listed in this plan. This plan recommends the committee be titled the workforce housing committee or housing committee and should consist of elected or appointed government official(s), City Staff, citizens and local business leaders in the real estate market. The committee will provide an objective study of these issues and hopefully develop a solution to present to City Council for consideration.

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SUMMARY

While residential growth is still occurring in Poquoson today, its pace is significantly slower than past years, especially in comparison to the decade of 1980-1990. In this time period, single-family detached subdivisions were the predominant housing development following the design of suburban sprawl. The suburban layout encompassed large portions of available land, required utility extension and increased demand for services. Today’s slower pace of growth indicates that Poquoson is nearing a residential build-out due to decreasing amounts of vacant land and significant environmental encumbrances on the lands available. These factors will force developers to become more creative in design and construction which will more than likely result in proposals with higher densities, such as multi-family housing.

Multi-family housing has primarily been discouraged in the City of Poquoson due citizen reaction to the proposed higher density. A benefit of higher densities is that more dwellings over the same span of land and installation of infrastructure returns more tax revenue with less impact to the environment since it is located in a tighter or compact area. As mentioned previously, many citizens have expressed the need for affordable housing but in a manner suitable for Poquoson. Typically, multi-family housing is used to address housing issues, but the areas zoned for multi-family residential in the City are currently occupied with developments. Eventually, this subject will surface as social needs require attention with a high-demand market attempting to provide attached housing and new proposals will require rezoning or redevelopment.

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Since multi-family is highly controversial, the comprehensive plan contains recommendations to meet the goal of diversifying the housing stock, a key tenet to Smart-growth and Sustainable Development, by mixing residential types without increasing density levels or changing the character of the community. This strategy enables the private sector to meet social needs of the community by giving developers of land flexibility for responsible community development.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES – HOUSING

The following goals, objectives and strategies for housing were developed through public worksessions and comments:

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Goals

1. Promote affordable, safe, sanitary, and aesthetically pleasing housing for all Poquoson residents.
2. Encourage open space housing developments; exchanging smaller lot sizes for maximum usable open space including wetlands conservation.
3. Provide opportunities for a variety of housing types and arrangements so that suitable housing will be available to households of a wide range of income levels.
4. Promote appropriate residential development in compatible districts to preserve the overall character of the City.

Objectives

1. Promote the upgrading of housing conditions by encouraging maintenance and upkeep of housing and property by the owner.
2. Provide opportunities for the construction of attached residential and condominiums in appropriate areas as an attempt to address the housing concerns facing Poquoson's citizenry.
3. Identify areas for residential rehabilitation projects.
4. Promote adequate housing opportunities for the physically challenged, elderly citizens, and moderate-income families.
5. Encourage pride in home ownership and promote a sense of community responsibility for neighborhood character.

Strategies

1. Create a committee whose purpose is to address Workforce Housing options for the City of Poquoson.
2. ~~Continue to encourage large lot residential developments for all subdivisions not specifically designed to serve populations with special needs.~~
3. Utilize federal and state housing subsidies, grants, and loans to the fullest extent possible in order to meet the needs of the elderly and lower income families, and to rehabilitate housing.
4. Develop a housing inventory to include the condition, age, and assessed value of homes and use as a monitoring mechanism for future planning for rehabilitation, replacement, and/ or demolition of dilapidated structures.

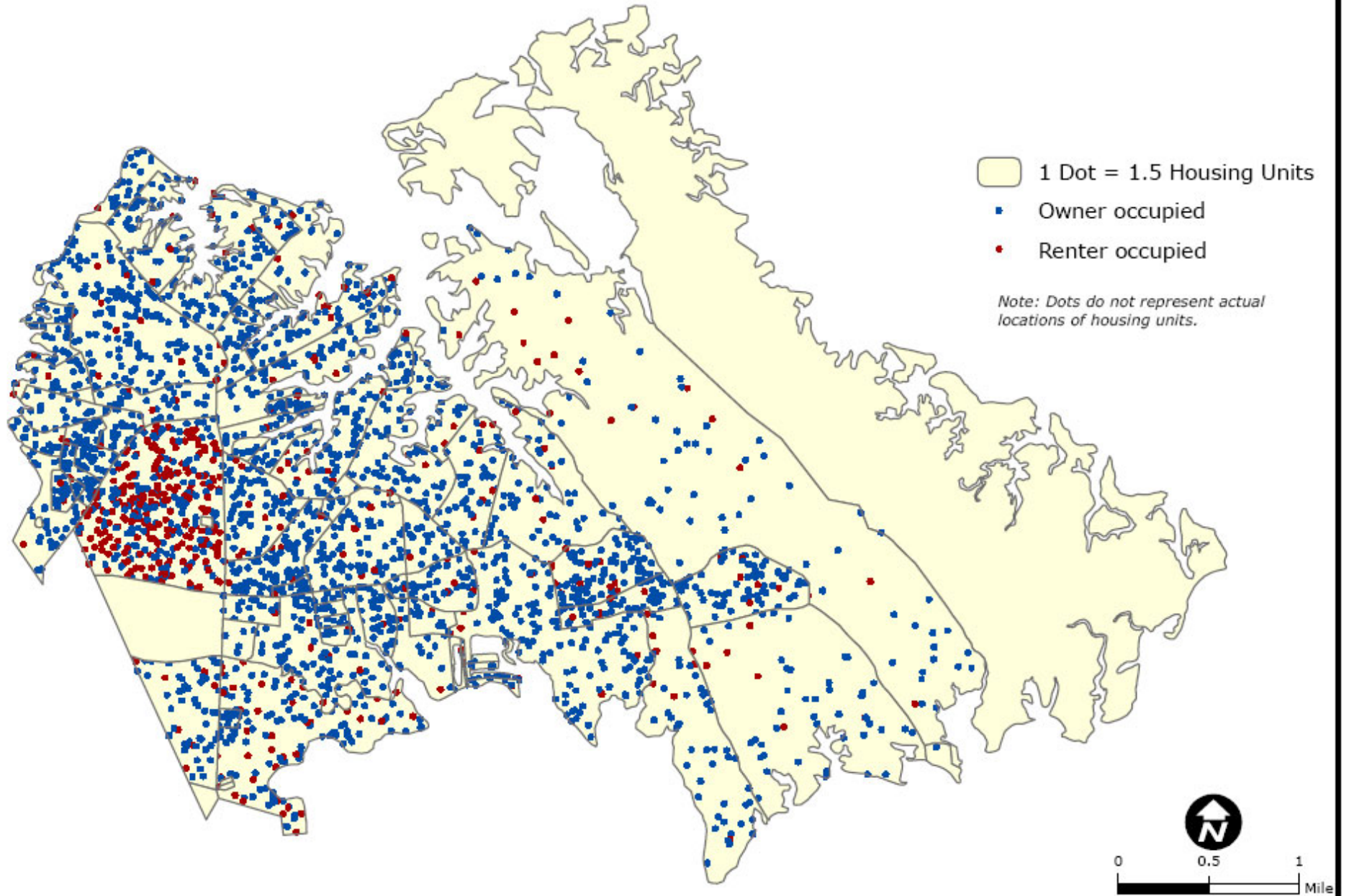
Deleted: <#>Create a moderate density residential zoning district for adoption in the zoning ordinance that promotes a density between low density residential and high density residential land use categories. As the district's title suggests, the number is to be a range of more than 2 units per acre and below 12 units per acre. ¶



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5. Provide educational programming to encourage the maintenance and repair of housing to prevent deterioration.
 6. Institute a Home Pride Program to improve and maintain the existing aging housing stock in the City.
 7. Support housing rehabilitation efforts sponsored by local community service and volunteer groups.
 8. Consider offering real estate tax exemptions for substantially rehabilitated, renovated, or replaced homes in the City.



Map 3-1



*Distribution of Owners and Renters
by Census Block*

Map Created by HRPDC GIS Staff, May 2005
Data Source: US Census 2000

