

# **Town of Cheriton, Virginia COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**A 2010 update by**

**The Cheriton Planning Commission  
in cooperation with the Cheriton Town Council**

**of the original prepared by  
Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission  
23372 Front Street  
Accomac, Virginia 23301  
Adopted June 24, 1999**

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## **Introduction**

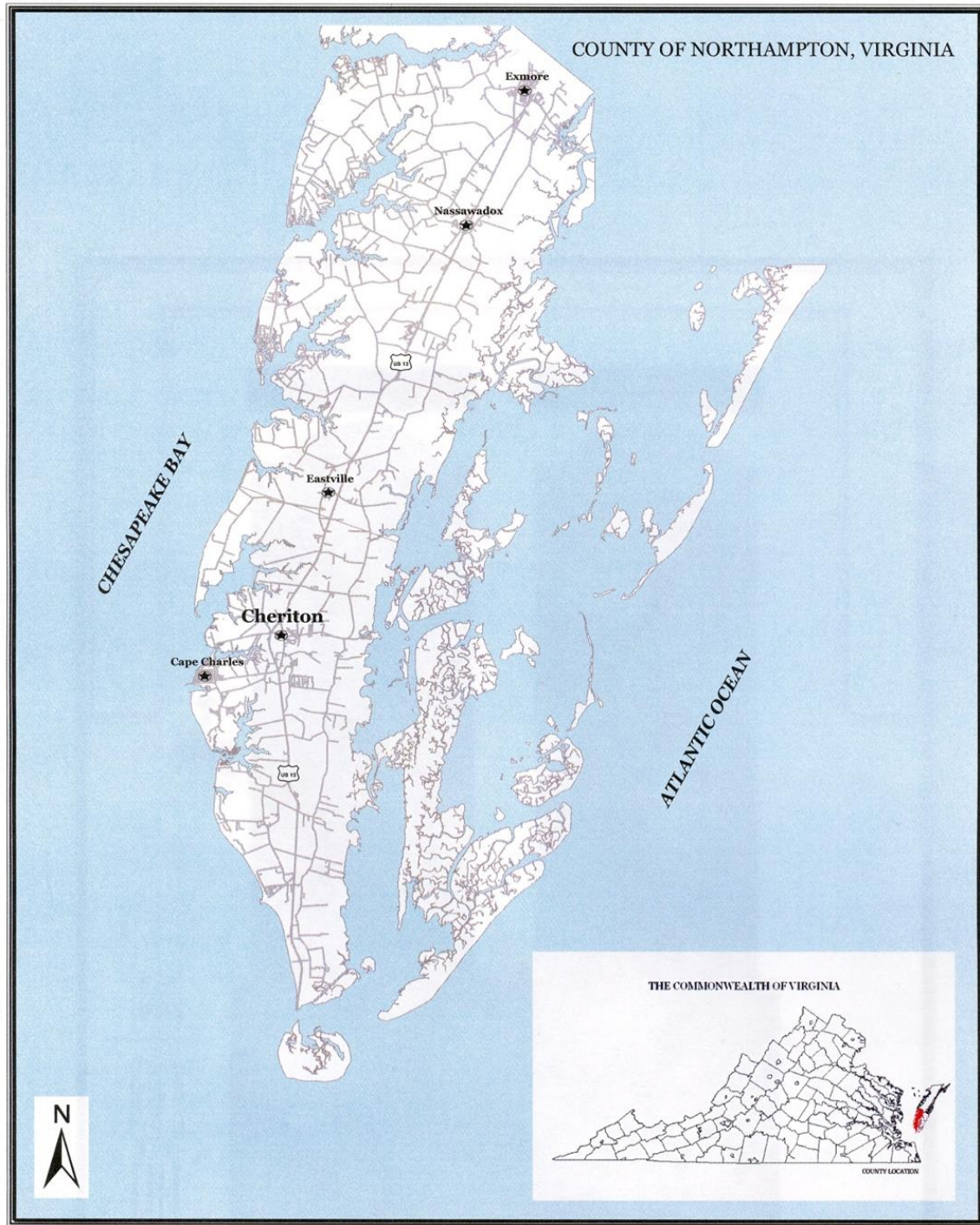
The Comprehensive Plan is an official public document adopted by local government to be used as a guide for making policy decisions about the community's physical and social development. The Plan includes an inventory and analysis of existing conditions in the community, goals and objectives based upon this analysis, and future plans and implementation strategies to achieve the identified goals and objectives. The Plan is general in nature and controls the general location, character, and extent of each feature in the Plan. Before any public area, facility or use can be constructed or established, the Planning Commission must approve it as being substantially in accord with the adopted Plan. The Commission forwards its recommendations on such proposals to the Town Council. Once the Plan is adopted, it should be used as the basis for guiding and regulating land use and physical development.

The Virginia General Assembly, recognizing the need and value for local planning within each area of the Commonwealth, adopted Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia, which requires that each city, county or town develop and adopt a Comprehensive Plan. Section 15.2-223 states, "The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted, and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with the present and probable future needs and resources best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants."

In addition to this mandate, the Virginia General Assembly, recognizing the economic and social importance of ensuring the long term viability of state waters and in particular the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, enacted the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (Section 10.1-2100, et seq., of the Code of Virginia). The Act is a cooperative effort between the state and local governments with a water quality improvement and protection focus. Section 10.1-2109 of the Act states that "Counties, cities, and towns in Tidewater Virginia, shall incorporate protection of the quality of state waters into each locality's comprehensive plan consistent with the provisions of this chapter."

To achieve these ends, the Cheriton Town Council has adopted the following Comprehensive Plan. The current Plan is an update of the town's 1999 Plan and includes areas outside of the current town boundaries in the planning area.

It is necessary, due to the nature of the Comprehensive Plan and its purpose, that the Town Council regularly review the Plan and update the goals to keep pace with events and development affecting the town's well being. As required by the Code of Virginia, the document should be reviewed at least once every five years and amended if necessary to keep pace with the changing conditions facing the town and county.



Comprehensive Plan Cheriton, Virginia

**Figure 1**  
**Town of Cheriton Location**

## **Community Profile**

Cheriton, Virginia is a small town located in Northampton County on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. At 647 acres, Cheriton is the third largest of Northampton County's five incorporated towns. Cheriton is located approximately 12 miles north of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and is situated midway between the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean, as shown in Figure 1.

### **History**

The Cheriton area is one of the oldest settled parts of the Eastern Shore. When Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and the Eastern Shore in 1608, he wrote in his journal about landing at Cheriton and being brought by Indians to their Werrowance in Accomack. Historian Jennings Cropper Wise wrote in *Ye Kingdome of Accomacke* that Captain Smith's map of the expedition showed that "Accomack was situated within the interior of Cheriton and on or near the place called Cherryton, in Northampton County." According to Wise, the Shore's first community was "The Towne" located on the present site of Cherrystone Campground. "The Towne" was established in the 1630's but was soon abandoned.

Cheriton started out as a railroad town and can trace its beginnings to 1884 when the New York, Philadelphia and Norfolk Railroad Company was extended from Maryland to Cape Charles. The new railroad ran through land owned by Dr. William Stratton Stoakley, who in 1886, laid out the western part of his land as a town. Dr. Stoakley is credited with the idea of calling the town Cherrystone or Cherrytown. Cheriton became the accepted spelling and the official name of the town. A store and post office were established, and Dr. Stoakley became Cheriton's first postmaster. At the same time, the town of Sunnyside was established on Bayside Road, where downtown Cheriton is today. The towns of Sunnyside and Cheriton eventually grew together and merged. Since then, the town has been called Cheriton, although older residents still refer to the downtown area as Sunnyside. Cheriton prospered during the early 1900's due to its role as a local agricultural shipping point and service center. The town had its own schoolhouse, fire company, several churches, and a thriving downtown business district. The Town of Cheriton was incorporated in 1951.

Today Cheriton is an attractive town with many late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century homes, as well as several historic churches and commercial buildings. These older structures contribute to Cheriton's historic small town character. Cheriton is fortunate that Route 13 bypassed the town to the west allowing Business Route 13 to serve as a safe "Main Street". This has also allowed Cheriton to retain its small town flavor and still serve as a commercial center for the southern portion of Northampton County.

### **Population Characteristics**

Table 1 shows that Cheriton's population decreased by a net 35% from 1960 to 1990 similar to the county. That trend reversed between 1990 and 2000 when population increased by 15% with the construction of new housing. Since the 2000 census, the population in town has increased even more with the creation of new subdivisions. This is the case in Northampton County where the real estate boom of 2008 and 2009 resulted in new construction and an influx of new residents but growth and new home starts have halted due to the latest recession.

Table  
Historic Population Change  
**1960-2005**

<u>Northampton County</u>			<u>Cheriton</u>	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>	<u>Total Population</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
1960	16,966	n/a	761	n/a
1970	14,442	-15%	655	-14%
1980	14,625	1%	515	6%
1990	13,061	-11%	499	-26%
2000	13,093	0.2%	573	+15%
2004	13,303	1.6%	Not available	Not available

Source: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, US Census; and 2004 US Census Estimate

The population of Cheriton has changed not only in terms of raw numbers, but also in terms of its composition. As shown in Table 2, statistics from the U.S. Census revealed that working aged people increased slightly as a proportion of Cheriton's population from 1980 to 1990, from 51 percent to 57 percent but decreased again in 2000. The age cohort of 65+ decreased only 1 % during the same time, while proportion of people age 0-17 years stayed the same.

Table  
Population by Age  
**1980-2000**

<u>Age</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>%</u>
0-17	164	24 %	124	24%	118	24%
18-64	355	51 %	292	57%	263	52%
65+	173	25 %	99	19%	118	24%

Source: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 US Census

As shown in Table 3, the racial diversity of the town has changed significantly from 1980 to 2000. Although the proportion of whites stayed approximately the same, the Hispanic population increased from 0 percent to 4 percent of the population between 1980 and 1990 and has since dropped to 1 percent in 2000.

Table  
Racial Composition  
**1980-2000**

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<b>Race</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent</b>
White	475	69%	359	70%	357	70.5%
Black	217	31%	129	25%	138	27%
Hispanic	0	0%	22	4%	8	1.5%
Other	0	0%	5	1%	6	1%

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Source: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 US Census

## ECONOMICS ELEMENT

### Commercial Activity

Cheriton is primarily a residential and retail/service oriented community. A 1999 town survey revealed 22 businesses located within the town limits but that has significantly decreased over the last few years. U.S. Route 13 bypass directed traffic away from Business Route 13 and downtown Cheriton in the 1960s so there are now two areas of commercial activity; the downtown area and the highway-oriented activity located at the gateway entrances of Cheriton on Route 13.

The downtown area is a local retail center, which employs some town residents. There has recently been a decrease in the number of businesses downtown, which may be interpreted as a deterioration of the area. Shore Bank moved to Rt. 13 in 2008 desiring increased parking and public exposure. The pharmacy closed and these two buildings currently remained unoccupied now owned by the American Legion that operates a clubhouse facility in the main downtown area. Within the town limits, there is currently a Latino grocery, home health agency, **holistic health center**, two service stations, a hardware store, funeral home, tax preparation service, post office, and an auto repair shop. There are several vacant commercial buildings in the area, and many structures are in need of repair and refurbishing. Sidewalks in the downtown area are in need of repair and parking for downtown businesses is not well identified. Revitalization is planned via an acquired USDA grant obtained by the town. There are gateway signs located at the southern and Cherrystone lane intersections of Rt. 13 and Cheriton. There is also a business listing sign posted at the corner of Route 13 and Cherrystone Road at the stop light to promote Cheriton's business district.

There are three gateway entrances to Cheriton from Rt. 13. Located at the northern most intersection of Bayside Road and Rt. 13 is a meat market, and a tax preparation service. Businesses located at the middle gateway intersection of Cherrystone and Rt. 13 include a bank, and a currently vacant commercial property that most recently was a furniture store and prior to that, a seafood shop. The southern gateway intersection is county property and has no active retail commercial located at that traffic light. The identification of the town from Route 13, and the appearance of roads leading into Town are important for attracting visitors and additional commerce into Cheriton.

A Cheriton downtown revitalization committee was formed in 2002 and was instrumental in obtaining a USDA downtown revitalization grant. Bids were awarded and plans are underway for sidewalk construction and beautification of the downtown area.

Town gateway signs have been positioned at the northern and Cherrystone intersections of the town using the town's adopted slogan "Open for Business."

### Employment

Table 4 shows that 229 of 419 Cheriton residents over age 16 were employed in 2000, which means 54% of working age persons in the town were employed. The top categories of employment for town citizens were manufacturing, education, health, and retail trade. Currently with the recession, depressed economic environment, and decrease in housing starts and new homebuyers, that figure is likely much lower.



Economic opportunities within Cheriton and Northampton County are limited. Although Northampton County has seen the average household income level increase in the recent years due to the influx of new residents around the Bay Creek development, Cheriton still has some of the lowest income levels in Virginia. During the real estate and construction boom of 2005-2007, local contractors complained of an unreliable local work force.

The largest employers for Cheriton residents include the Baycreek development including the railroad, Bayshore Concrete Products in Cape Charles; the Chesapeake Bay Bridget Tunnel, the VDOT maintenance facility; J. H. West Seafood Company; C & E Farms; Northampton County offices and schools; Cherrystone Aquafarms; Shore Health Services in Nassawadox, and Cherrystone Campground. Cherrystone Campground, which is located on the Chesapeake Bay about two miles west of Cheriton, is a 300-acre private campground with 700 sites employing more than 20 year-round workers and over 80 seasonal workers. During peak season in July and August the campground is at full capacity serving about 2,000 campers who come primarily for fishing and the on-site recreation activities. These campers are also interested in historic sites, restaurants and shopping and could be a potential source of revenue.

Table  
2000 Employment  
**Cheriton Residents**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Agriculture/Fisheries	16	7.3
Construction	11	8.8
Manufacturing	38	16.6
Wholesale Trade	20	8.7
Retail Trade	32	14.0
Transportation	14	6.1
Information	2	0.9
Professional, scientific, administrative, waste management services	10	5.4
Education, health, social services	11	14.8
Arts, entertainment, recreation	17	7.4
Other services (except public administration)	12	5.2
Public Administration	11	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>100%</b>

Cheriton commuters spend an average of 17 minutes traveling each way to and from their jobs. The 2000 census shows that almost 7% of the town's work force either walks to work or works at home. The census shows that some 16% of the occupied housing units have no vehicle available. The provision of services catering to the needs of the home office will likely be of greater importance in the coming years as decentralization of the workplace becomes a more common

phenomenon. Information technology infrastructure such as adequate and affordable access to the Internet is taking on increased importance in determining where people choose to live. The Northampton Board of Supervisors is currently investigating providing broadband service to the county. The emerging use of electronic access may blur the importance and reliance on physical access that underlies traditional economic theory.

Potential economic activity, that would impact the town, has been discussed over the last two years. These include a business enterprise to be housed at the vacant KMC food processing plant located just outside of Cheriton. The KMC plant was a major employer in the county with about 100 people employed year round and up to 600 people during peak census. The plant closed in 1988; it is not known exactly what economic impact the plant's closing had on Cheriton, but current residents agree it was a setback for the employment opportunities for the residents of Cheriton. Another commercial activity at that site would be of economic benefit to the town.

### **Income**

Household data from the 2000 census reveals that only 7% had incomes less than \$10,000 per year compared to almost 32% in 1990. Still, a relatively low proportion of resident households in town have low incomes. In Cheriton 11% of the population live below poverty level while 20% of Northampton County residents live below poverty level. Forty percent of Cheriton residents had annual incomes less than \$ 40,000. Recently, there has been an increase in residents with higher incomes in the town, and 8% of individuals now report incomes over \$75,000 compared with just over 2% in 1990. Results of the 2010 census, now ongoing, should update these figures in the near future.

Median income is defined as the income value where 50% of a particular group has an income above a specific value, while 50% of the same group has an income below that value. As shown in table 5, Cheriton's median household income in 1990 was \$18,281. According to 2000 census data median household income in Cheriton has increased to around \$ 39,000, which is higher than Northampton County's median income, which is around \$28,000. This data does not reflect the current county population change with the development of the golf course community. Per capita income is defined as the total income received by all persons divided by the total population. According to census data, Cheriton's per capita income in 1990 was \$10,504 and increased in 2000 to \$14,238 which was below Northampton County at \$16,591 and the state of Virginia which was \$23,975.

Table  
Income Characteristics 2000  
**Virginia, Northampton County & Cheriton**

	<u>Virginia</u>	<u>Northampton</u>	<u>Cheriton</u>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$46,677	\$28,276	\$26,429
<b>Per Capita Income</b>	\$23,975	\$16,591	\$14,238

#### **ECONOMICS ELEMENT: Goals and Objectives**

**GOAL:** Promote the economic vitality of the town and its citizens.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage the location and expansion of compatible businesses in Cheriton

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote entrepreneurship as a viable economic resource for the town.

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote industrial development within the town.

#### **ECONOMICS ELEMENT: Plans and strategies**

- Promote adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings in the downtown area. Vacant commercial buildings provide the town with additional economic opportunity while at the same time providing an opportunity for the town to preserve its historic character
- Facilitate development of limited neighborhood businesses, where historically appropriate, by providing appropriate zoning for compatible commercial uses.
- Provide a competitive tax structure.
- Continue downtown revitalization including sidewalk and streetscape construction, building maintenance and repair, general cleanup, joint advertising efforts, and provision of adequate parking.
- The town should continue to stress to VDOT the importance for town identification signs on Route 13.
- Support activities and land uses at the gateway entrances to Cheriton that promote patronage of the downtown area.
- Work with the economic development groups of Northampton County and towns to develop a strategic plan for entrepreneurial (small business) commercial and industrial development with the town.
- Work with county officials to provide for the expansion of town boundaries to ensure appropriate area for commercial and industrial development within the town.
- Work with appropriate county and regional agencies to develop the town's role in the development of tourism as part of the overall economic development of the Shore.

## HOUSING ELEMENT

In 1990, there were 246 dwelling units in Cheriton with 26% of those vacant. In 2000 there were 239 housing units in town with 135 as single-family homes. Approximately 70% of the housing stock in town is currently owner occupied; 29 % is renter-occupied, and 8 % is vacant. The low vacancy rate indicates the need for new single-family housing within the town. Since the 2000 census, 16 new single family units have been constructed, 9 in the Chelsea and 7 in the Seabreeze subdivisions. There are over 100 lots currently planned for single-family construction just outside the town boundaries.

With 25% of housing units in Cheriton inhabited by individuals living alone over 65, there may be an increased need in the future for assisted living units. There is also a lack of new affordable rental properties suitable for teachers and young couples not only in Cheriton but also throughout the county.

Table  
Housing Occupancy and Types  
**Town of Cheriton 2000**

<u>Housing Types</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Family households	135	61.6
Non family households	84	38.4
<b>Total households</b>	219	100
<u>Housing Occupancy</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Occupied housing units	219	91.6
Vacant housing units	20	8.4
<b>Total housing units</b>	239	100
<u>Housing Tenure</u>	<u>Units</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Owner Occupied	155	70.8
Renter-occupied	64	29.2
<b>Total Occupied Units</b>	219	100

### HOUSING ELEMENT: Goals and Objectives

**GOAL:** Ensure that housing in Cheriton is building code-compliant, safe, and sufficiently affordable to meet the varying needs of residents while retaining compatibility with the historic character of the town.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage maintenance of all housing structures and emphasize measures to prevent housing decline.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage construction of compatible workforce and affordable infill housing on existing vacant lots throughout the developed parts of town.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage construction of multi-income developments with creative designs and architecture in keeping with the historic character of the Eastern Shore in designated growth areas.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage development of assisted living and rental units whether through renovation or new construction.

### **HOUSING ELEMENT: Plans and Strategies**

- It is important to preserve and protect the existing housing stock in town to ensure that adequate housing is available to meet the needs of the residents and to preserve neighborhood character.
- The town should encourage maintenance of all existing housing structures to reduce and eliminate substandard conditions.
- Enforce the building maintenance ordinance for governing the maintenance of existing structures.
- Encourage renovation of existing structures when possible to maintain the historical significance of town, especially in the downtown area.
- New development should be constructed to be architecturally similar to the Eastern Shore traditional construction, and have designed open and common areas.
- Encourage multi-income, assisted living and multi-unit developments to promote affordability through zoning density bonuses and a fast track approval process.
- Approve new subdivisions only if constructed to easily hook into public water and sewer systems when available using standardized diameter trunk lines.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES ELEMENT**

### **Public Safety**

The Northampton County Sheriff's Department and the Virginia State Police provide police protection for town residents. The town pays for additional police and traffic protection based on need as determined by the mayor and the town council. Fire protection is provided by the Cheriton Volunteer Fire Department. Ambulance service is provided by the Cape Charles Rescue Squad which is near Cheriton on South Bayside Road.

### **Town Office**

Cheriton's town office resides in the current Fire Department Building. Town business and council meetings are conducted there. There is a financial agreement between the town and the Cheriton Fire Company for the space used by the town.

### **Water and Sewer**

No public water or sewer facilities exist in Cheriton. Residents rely on individual private wells and septic systems for their water supply and wastewater disposal. Due to recently adopted county regulations setting a minimum distance separation between water table and septic field bed, new septic field construction requires alternative disposal designs including mound systems that are expensive and, to some, unsightly.

### **Solid Waste**

Solid waste disposal in Cheriton is provided by Davis Disposal and the Northampton County. A County solid waste transfer facility and recycling center is located near the junction of Bayview Circle and South Bayside Rd. Residents often complain of the limited time the facility is open. To prevent litter, the town maintains several trash receptacles in the downtown business area. Street cleaning is provided by the town on a periodic basis.

### **Recreation**

No recreation facilities exist within the town. Public beaches, playgrounds fishing piers and boat ramps are located nearby at Kiptopeke State Park, and the Cape Charles Harbor. Oyster also has a public dock for access to the seaside. There is a public park/playground facility located in Central Park in Cape Charles, along with a skateboard park, public beach, and a deep-water marina. Two 18-hole PGA Signature golf courses are also located in Cape Charles, along with planned high-end commercial area.

### **School**

No schools currently exist within the town; school aged children in Cheriton are served by public schools in Northampton County; Broadwater Academy and Shore Christian Academy in Exmore; and more recently by Cape Charles Christian School. The former Cheriton Primary School, located on South Bayside Street closed in 1994 and was torn down in 2000. The town currently owns the old school property, on which the Cheriton firehouse is built and there is adjacent open space to the west of the facility.

## **Transportation**

Cheriton has an adequate road system that is maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Route 13 provides good regional access and directs major traffic flow away from the town. Currently there is a highway overlay zone adopted by both the town and county to maintain the free flow of traffic along the main transportation corridor that limits commercial development in an aim to protect the groundwater recharge spine of the Eastern Shore. According to geological surveys by the Army Corps of Engineers, the recharge spine runs along business 13 in Cheriton, not bypass Rt. 13.

Business Route 13 provides safe access into and out of town. Generally, there seems to be no major traffic problem in Cheriton. The town maintains a small public parking lot in the downtown area to serve customers of the town's business establishments. Limited on-street parking is also available in the downtown area.

Sidewalks are located on the major streets in town, which include North and South Bayside, Cherrystone Road, and Sunnyside Road. The Workers Progress Association originally built sidewalks in the early 1940s and there are areas in the downtown area and especially on Cherrystone Road that are in poor condition and in need of repair.

Sidewalks in the downtown area are mostly owned by adjacent businesses with the right-of-way owned by VDOT. Periodic sidewalk maintenance is performed by VDOT approximately every four to five years. The sidewalk on South Bayside needs to be extended past the United Methodist church to serve the residents of Wilson Road and Holland Drive. The cost of materials needed for new sidewalk construction is the responsibility of the town; VDOT is responsible for labor costs. Currently fund from a revitalization grant are appropriated for sidewalk repair downtown.

## **Drainage**

Drainage and flooding are problems in Cheriton especially after periods of heavy rain due to low, flat topography of the area and the inadequate maintenance of drainage ditches. Several drainage ditches are located in town, which empty into Eyrehall Creek and King's Creek. Maintenance of the drainage ditches is the responsibility of VDOT; however, maintenance is not adequate and needs to be improved. The town in the past has undertaken ditch repair with funds allocated from the general fund.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES: Goals and Objectives**

**GOAL:** Attain and maintain an appropriate level of community services and public facilities

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure that adequate facilities exist to carry out public safety activities and administrative functions of the town.

**OBJECTIVE:** Promote efficient and cost effective solid waste collection and removal.

**OBJECTIVE:** Increase recreational opportunities within the town.

**OBJECTIVE:** Improve water quality and wastewater treatment for town residents.

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure public safety of town residents.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES: Plans and Strategies**

- Work with VDOT to maintain and expand sidewalk infrastructure in the town.
- Work with Northampton County and the newly established Public Service Authority to improve water quality and establish a wastewater treatment system for the town.
- Consider possible alternative uses for the remaining Cheriton School property including a community park with baseball fields, basketball courts, and a playground for town residents.
- Investigate the creation and funding of a town police force.
- Encourage new residential development to plan for public recreation areas for use by all town residents.
- Ensure adequate lighting on all streets.



## Natural Resources Element

The natural attributes of the landscape continue to influence how and where a community grows despite advances in technology and the capability for altering many site limitations. Largely, topography, drainage, soil characteristics and other natural features define areas suitable for development. A brief review of the relevant characteristics will serve to highlight those features that exert influence on growth patterns and identify potential problem areas.

### Topography

Elevation in Cheriton has a range of 26 feet, from a high point of 36 feet where the Eastern Shore Railroad crosses Sunnyside Road to a low point of 10 feet where Eyrehall Creek crosses Route 13. Federal Emergency Management Agency maps indicate that except for the Eyrehall Creek area, none of Cheriton is located in a flood zone. However, the small elevation change of 26 feet results in overall slopes of less than 2 percent, which may result in flooding due to poor drainage. The banks of the Eyrehall Creek area west of Route 13 contain slopes of approximately 6 to 10 percent. Cheriton is not located in the Northampton County 100 year flood plain, and has been classified by the Army Corps of Engineers Wave Study for Northampton County as Zone C, an area of minimal flooding.

### Soils

Understanding soil types and characteristics are important in determining how the town should develop. The Soil Conservation Study includes a soil survey that identifies soil types within the county and in Cheriton, as shown in Figure 2. Because the soil types are general and not site specific, the soil survey does not replace the need for on-site testing for soil suitability prior to development. However, the soil survey is useful for identifying the general location of the soil types and certain areas that may need special attention in relation to potential soil problems. The survey indicates that Bojac and Munden soils are predominant soil types found in Cheriton. Individual soil types found in Cheriton are discussed below.

**Bojac Fine Sandy Loam (BoA)** This soil is nearly level, very deep and well drained, with a surface layer that is typically dark brown fine sandy loam. Permeability is moderately rapid in the subsoil and rapid in the substratum. The seasonal high water table is more than 4 feet below the surface. The soil is prime farmland and mainly used for cultivated crops and residential development.

**Bojac Loamy Sand (BhB)** This soil is generally sloping, very deep and well drained, with a surface layer of dark grayish brown loamy sand. Permeability in this soil is moderately rapid in the subsoil and rapid in the substratum. The seasonal high water table is more than four feet below the surface. This soil is mainly used for cultivated crops and residential development.



#### Legend

- Corporate Limits
- Other Roads
- Route 13
- Bodies of Water
- Tax Parcels
- Building Footprints by Type**
  - Commercial Structures
  - Residential Structures

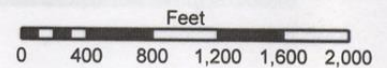
- Soils**
- |     |     |
|-----|-----|
| MuA | ChA |
| BhB | DrA |
| BkA | MaA |
| BoA | MoD |
| NmA |     |
| PoA |     |
| UPD |     |
| W   |     |



Comprehensive Plan Cheriton, Virginia

**Figure 2**  
**Soil Types**

1 inch equals 0.19 miles 1:12,000



**Bojac Sandy Loam (BkA)** This soil is nearly level, very deep and well drained. Typically the surface layer is dark grayish brown sandy loam. Permeability is moderately rapid in the subsoil and rapid in the substratum. The seasonal high water table is more than four feet below the surface. This soil is prime farmland and used mostly for cultivated crops and residential development.

**Molena Loamy Sand (MoD)** This soil is moderately sloping to steep, very deep and somewhat excessively drained. Typically the surface is very dark grayish brown loamy sand. Permeability is rapid. Slope, high permeability and droughtiness limit this soil for community development. This soil is used mainly for woodland and wildlife.

**Munden Sandy Loam (MuA)** This soil is nearly level, very deep and moderately well drained. Typically surface layer is very dark grayish brown sandy loam. Permeability is moderate in the subsoil and rapid in the substratum. Available water capacity is moderate. This soil is considered prime farmland and used mainly for cultivated crops. The seasonal high water table, seepage, and rapid permeability are the main limitations of the soil for community development.

**Nimmo Sandy Loam (NmA)** This soil is nearly level, very deep and poorly drained. Surface layer is very dark grayish brown sandy loam. Permeability is moderate in the subsoil and rapid in the substratum. Available water capacity is moderate. The seasonal high water table, seepage, and rapid permeability are the main limitations for community development. Mainly used as woodland and farmland when drained.

### **Surface Water**

Surface water in Cheriton consists of two branches of Eyrehall Creek. In town, these branches are shallow and relatively narrow, and not navigable by watercraft. A small non-tidal pond is located on the east branch of Eyrehall Creek, and a larger pond is located at the end of the creek's south branch. Land along the creek is privately owned; waterfront access is not available in the town. Land use surrounding the shoreline is predominately agricultural or forested. Vegetation bordering the shoreline of the two branches consists primarily of woodland vegetation. The town lies within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed draining into Eyrehall Creek and Kings Creek, and then into the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay has played an important role in the history of the Eastern Shore, providing valuable economic, environmental and recreational resources, and serving as the nation's largest and most productive estuary. However, pollution is causing the Bay's water quality to decline. Pollution can be classified as either point source or nonpoint source. Point source pollution results from discharge at a specific point or pipe into surface waters. Nonpoint source pollution is not attributable to a distinct, identifiable source, but enters waters indirectly. Examples of nonpoint source pollution include stormwater runoff from developed land and impervious surfaces, runoff from agricultural land and erosion of soil and shorelines. Under natural conditions, water running off land soaks into the ground and is filtered by soils and root systems from vegetation. In settled areas where much of the land is paved or impervious, stormwater cannot soak into the ground and runs off very rapidly, carrying with it pollutants such as oil, sediment, chemicals, pesticides and excess nutrients from fertilizer. These pollutants eventually reach the waters of the Bay unless filtered or retained by some structural or nonstructural stormwater management technique.

Land use and development in the town can affect the water quality of the Bay through nonpoint pollution. This can be reduced by land management techniques that minimize the amount of impervious surfaces, thereby increasing the filtering capacity of the land. The town has enacted a Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Program which enables the town to protect water quality through local land regulations. The Bay Act is a Virginia Law, administered by Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance through a division of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, which provides a legislatively mandated approach to protect and improve the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries by reducing nonpoint source pollution through wise resource management practices.

The town has designated Chesapeake Bay/Atlantic Ocean Preservation Areas, and has applied certain development standards to these areas. Cheriton's Preservation Areas consist of Resource Protection Areas (RPAs) and Resource Management Areas (RMAs), as shown in Figure 3.

The Resource Protection Areas include:

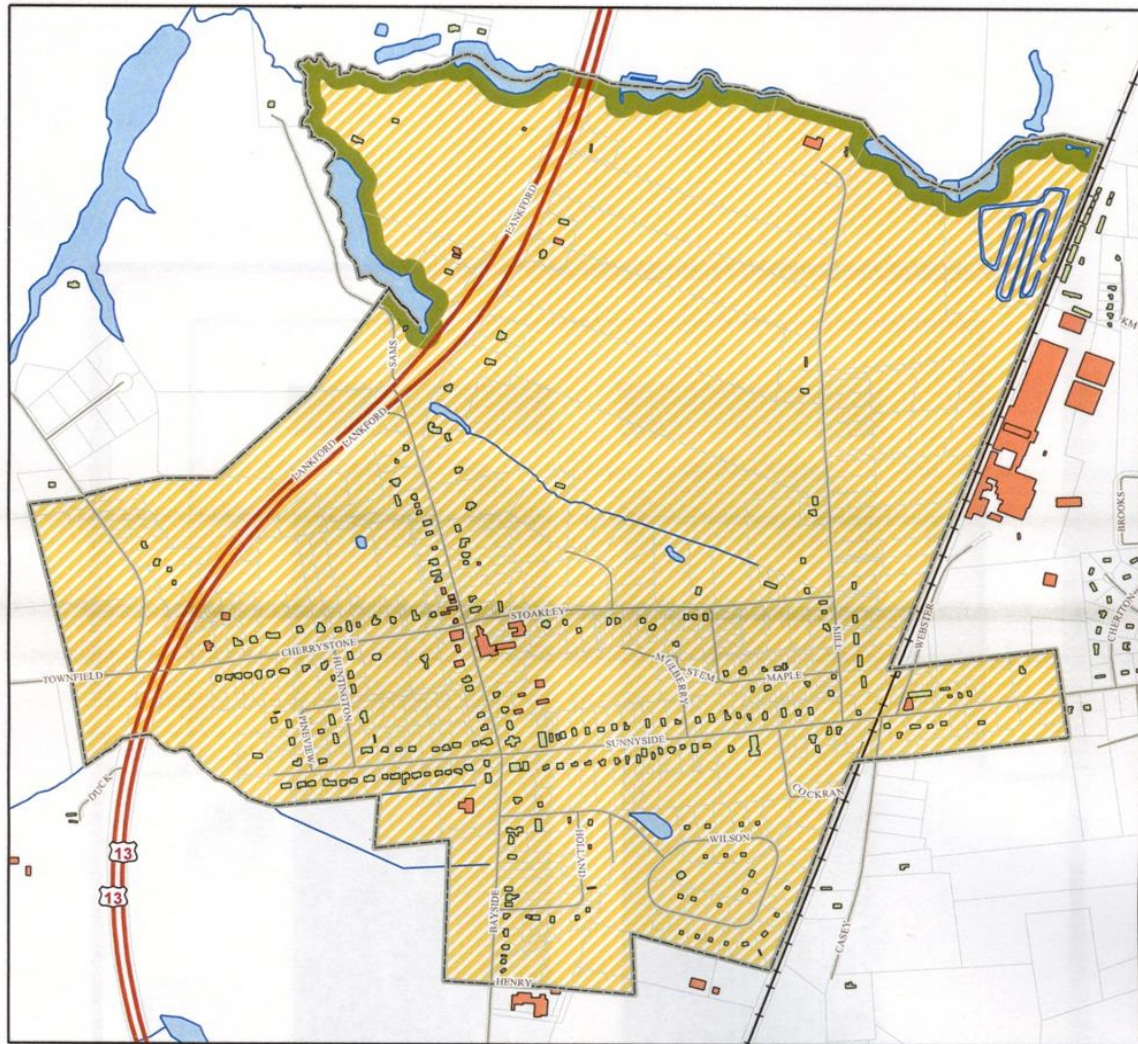
- a. Tidal wetlands;
- b. Nontidal wetlands connected by surface flow and contiguous to tidal wetlands or water bodies with perennial flow;
- c. Tidal shorelines;
- d. A 100-foot vegetated buffer area located adjacent to and landward of the components of an RPA and along both sides of any water body with perennial flow.

The Resource Management Areas include:

- a. All land within the town of Cheriton not designated as an RPA.

RPAs consist of sensitive lands at or near the shoreline which have an important water quality value to the Chesapeake Bay. Uses on land within the RMAs have the potential for causing significant water quality degradation if they are improperly developed. Because all of the soils in town are highly permeable, with some characterized as having a high water table, the entire town has the designation of an RMA. Development in highly permeable soils with a high water table can cause ground water contamination from septic system failures as well as contamination from improper industrial and agricultural practices. Development within RMAs should be planned in a manner which reduces the impact of nonpoint source pollution. By designating the entire town as an RMA, the town has legal authority to implement local regulations that protect ground water resources and manage stormwater.





**Legend**

- |                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Corporate Limits | <b>Building Footprints</b> |
| Other Roads      | <b>by Type</b>             |
| Route 13         | Commercial Structures      |
| Tax Parcels      | Residential Structures     |
| Water Bodies     | Resource Protection Area   |
|                  | Resource Management Area   |

Comprehensive Plan Cheriton, Virginia

**Figure 3**  
**Chesapeake Bay / Atlantic Ocean**  
**Preservation Area**

1 inch equals 0.19 miles 1:12,000  
Feet  
0 400 800 1,200 1,600 2,000

## **Ground Water**

Residents of Cheriton depend entirely upon ground water for their water supply needs, as does the entire Eastern Shore of Virginia. The town does not provide public water; potable water is supplied by individual private wells from ground water aquifers – bodies of sediments capable of yielding water. Ground water on the Eastern Shore is made up of a series of aquifers: the uppermost aquifer is the Columbia Aquifer, also known as the water table; and below the Columbia Aquifer is the Yorktown Aquifer consisting of upper, middle and lower units. The Yorktown Aquifer System is separated from the Columbia Aquifer by confining layers of clay that help protect the system from contamination but also impedes the rate of recharge. The town's water supply is mostly drawn from the upper Yorktown Aquifer.

Fresh water is supplied into the aquifers by rainfall that penetrates the soil and recharges the groundwater aquifers. The Eastern Shore ground water flow system is characterized by brackish water of the Bay to the west and salt water of the Atlantic Ocean to the east, with limited occurrence of freshwater. Most water in the Columbia Aquifer flows laterally from the center of the Eastern Shore peninsula, discharging into the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay. A much smaller portion of water flows down through the clays and silts that separate the Columbia aquifer from the underlying Yorktown Aquifers. Ground water recharge into the Yorktown Aquifers is limited to a narrow strip of land running along the center, or spine of the Eastern Shore peninsula known as the "spine recharge area". According to the *Ground Water Supply Protection and Management Plan for the Eastern Shore of Virginia*, the majority of land in Cheriton lies within the spine recharge area. Protecting the spine recharge on the Eastern Shore, by limiting impervious surfaces in the area will allow rainfall to recharge the aquifers.

The Eastern Shore of Virginia is divided into four wellhead protection areas, which are based on groundwater divides created by pumping patterns of the major ground water withdrawals on the Eastern Shore. Cheriton is located in Wellhead Protection Area E – Cheriton Area. This wellhead protection area is the southern-most wellhead protection area on the peninsula. Major ground water withdrawers in the area include the town of Eastville and the town of Cheriton. The Northampton County Landfill, that is due to close in the near future, is located within this wellhead protection area.

## **Ground Water Contamination Threats**

Wastewater and sewage treatment in Cheriton is currently done through on-site septic systems. Over 250 on-site septic systems exist in the town, as well as several mass drainfields. These septic systems are mostly conventional but some newer subdivisions are utilizing non-conventional mound systems. Septic systems utilize bacteria to break down biodegradable solids by converting them into liquids and gas, while non-biodegradable solids settle at the bottom of the septic tank. Liquid waste is then pumped into the septic system drainfield, consisting of underground pipes and then seeps down through the gravel and underlying soils where organisms in the soil perform additional waste water treatment and filtering. For proper treatment, septic systems should not leach too quickly or too slowly. When soils are saturated, waste may not be sufficiently treated. Generally, soils in the town are not well suited for septic tank filter fields, mainly due to high permeability.

All of the soil types in Cheriton are characterized as highly permeable soils that are extremely susceptible to pollutant leaching and have the potential for ground water contamination if septic systems start to fail. Nimmo and Molena soils that make up approximately 15 percent of the town have a shallow depth to the ground water, which limits septic usage. Some Nimmo soils are also considered “hydric” or “wet” soils. The presence of hydric soils and ground water near the surface has the potential to cause septic system failures, resulting in ground water contamination and public health dangers. According to the Northampton County Health Department, several permits are issued each year for septic system repairs that include expansions to existing systems as well as back up systems. Currently there are reports of septic system failures within the town especially after large rainfalls. If septic tanks are not pumped out on a scheduled basis, solids may pass to the drainfield, causing plugging and backups into the dwelling or effluent migration to the land surface. The county’s zoning ordinance requires that all septic systems be pumped out at a minimum of once every five years.

The predominant soil types in Cheriton are Bojac and Munden. Out of 22 soil types in Northampton County, Bojac soils are considered the most suitable for septic systems. Munden soils are considered fair for septic systems. From this perspective, Cheriton is suited for fairly good development sites for systems regulated through the Northampton County Health Department that issues permits for septic systems. Soils that permeate too quickly can contaminate ground water while those that permeate too slowly may cause sluggish plumbing flow and sewage overflows. A properly functioning septic system will effectively treat biodegradable solids and liquids.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT: Goals and Objectives**

**GOAL:** Protect the ground water and surface water resources of the town from an increase in pollution.

**OBJECTIVE:** Ensure adequate implementation and enforcement of the town’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Program.

**OBJECTIVE:** Protect the quality and quantity of the town’s potable water supply.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT: Plans and Strategies**

- Promote use of innovative wastewater treatment options to protect ground water quality.
- Explore options in cooperation with the Public Service Authority, and state and federal governments for central water and sewage systems using the latest environmentally sensitive tertiary treatment systems.
- Continue implementation of the town’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Program.
- Promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Prohibit future siting of major polluting activities in Cheriton. Landfills and septic lagoons should be prohibited in town.

## LAND USE ELEMENT

The town of Cheriton consists of 647 acres of land. The town annexed 362 acres from Northampton County in 1997 increasing its size from 285 acres to 647 acres, an increase of 127%. The original 285 acres were mostly developed and primarily residential in land use. The annexation has resulted in simplified boundaries which mostly conform to property lines, natural features and roads. There are remaining parcels that still have a portion of their property divided between the town and the county resulting in complicated taxation and mixed zoning. Since 2005, the town has pursued options to adjust its lines to follow natural land boundaries of creeks and roads and include the full acreage of parcels that are now only partially in town, and to provide areas for growth.

Currently approximately 50% of the land in Cheriton is residential consisting primarily of single-family homes. The family-oriented character of the neighborhoods is an important factor in the quality of life for town residents; most houses are located in neighborhoods, which provide a quiet, stable environment for residents and families. Residents are concerned about the group-like activities and pedestrian traffic that occur in the south corridor of Business Route 13. Pedestrians walking at night, graffiti, and dilapidated structures compromise safe travel in this area after dark.

Cheriton and the surrounding area are located within a planned development area of Northampton County. According to the current county comprehensive plan, growth is to be concentrated within the town limits of Cheriton and its town edge. Within the last ten years new subdivisions have located within and immediately surrounding the town limits. Chelsea subdivision has 9 single-family houses, and Seabreeze has 7 single-family houses. Towards Oyster along Sunnyside near the old Webster canning plant, many new homes are constructed and there are plans to provide over 100 additional structures. To the west of the town boundaries, Tower Hill Subdivision, Cheriton Estates and subdivisions on Cherrystone Road will result in a build out of over 100 new single-family units.

Commercial land use accounts for a very small portion of the total acreage in Cheriton. The majority of the town's commercial activity is concentrated in the downtown area, on Bayside Road. There is little room for expansion and growth of commercial activity. This area maintains a small town atmosphere with pedestrian oriented businesses surrounded by residential use. There are commercial pockets to the North of downtown at the Bayside Road intersection with Route 13, to the east at Cheriton Station on Sunnyside and the railroad, and to the west at the intersection of Cherrystone Road and Rt. 13. There are also long-established commercial uses currently located in residential areas.

There are several vacant lots in the developed areas of town most of which will not perk and cannot obtain health department permits for building. In order to obtain the highest and best use of these parcels a central sewage system would be required. Existing land uses in Cheriton are shown in Figure 5. The use of each parcel is classified and illustrated using the following categories.

**Residential:** This land use category consists mostly of single-family houses with a small amount of multi-family housing units and manufactured homes



**Commercial:** This land use category includes commercial and consists of activities including retail stores, offices and service-oriented establishments.

**Public/Semipublic:** This land use category includes churches and facilities used by local government.

**Agricultural:** This land use category includes agricultural farming activities.

**Vacant:** This category includes vacant land and forested land. It does not include agricultural land.

In current Northampton County's Comprehensive Plan, Cheriton's town edge including the surrounding area of the town have been deemphasized as areas in which future growth will be directed. This was a significant change from past plans in which the county's zoning ordinance allows commercial development to be concentrated from the intersection of Route 13 and Route 184 along Route 13 to the Cheriton Quick Mart beyond the intersection of North Bayside Road and Route 13. With the development of the strip shopping center south of the Cape Charles light in the late 1990s, downtown Cheriton saw a decrease in business and businesses have been drawn to the highway. Market forces have contributed to the success of the new shopping center and the character of Cheriton's downtown has changed over the last ten years.

It is important that the town be an active participant in land use decisions that affect land adjacent to Cheriton and to that end, the Town council has tried to gain land use control of the intersections while expanding the town borders because the county planning policies have had a significant effect upon the town's economic prosperity. Recognizing that each intersection is a gateway to Cheriton, land use planning and design in these areas should not be a detriment but rather a compliment to the Cheriton downtown area. Highway oriented services that encourage the public to stop in the Cheriton area and direct visitors into the town center, such as a visitor's center, motels, and recreational facilities that are designed to reflect the character of the area, should be encouraged. New developments should be designed carefully to meet goals for the area. In the portion of the area immediately adjacent to residential properties, the design features such as the mass, size and roof forms should be considered.

## **LAND USE ELEMENT: Goals and Objectives**

**GOAL:** Promote a pattern of land use and development that meets the town's physical, environmental, and economic needs, improves the town's existing character, and enhances the quality of life for the town's citizens.

**OBJECTIVE:** Improve the character of existing residential neighborhoods and foster new distinctive attractive communities with a strong sense of place.

**OBJECTIVE:** Focus growth in areas most suitable for development so that environmentally sensitive areas are protected and public and private costs associated with development are minimized.

**OBJECTIVE:** Seek solutions to the need for central water and sewage systems in order to address residential needs, environmental threats from failing septic systems, and support land use development to improve the economic viability of the town.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage smart growth development through incentives and creative zoning uses while creating a range of housing opportunities and choices.

**OBJECTIVE:** Encourage the use of alternative energy sources (wind, solar, geothermal power, etc.) in new construction and renovation.

**OBJECTIVE:** Revitalize downtown encouraging entrepreneurial activities that have minimal adverse impact on existing residential land use while promoting a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.

**OBJECTIVE:** Improve the entrances to town from Rt. 13 as the representative gateway to the town. Support gateway commercial development that promotes and complements Cheriton downtown.

## **LAND USE ELEMENT: Plans and Strategies**

Land use decisions should be predictable based on the Comprehensive Plan and cost effective to encourage community and stakeholder collaboration. Compact developments should be encouraged with open space and community areas and constructed with anticipation of availability of central water and sewer.

### **Residential**

Increased density incentives should be considered with smart growth design, open space preservation, dedicated community facilities, and/or multi-income development in the growth areas. To utilize smart growth initiatives the zoning ordinance should be amended to include the following:

- **Mixed-Use Zoning:** Mixing incomes and housing types (detached houses, row houses, townhouses and apartments) in combinations appropriate to the local site and market, allows for more expensive units to "subsidize" the necessary infrastructure. This helps make other units more affordable. Higher densities can also support downtown businesses within walking distance, adding to the amenities available to single-family homeowners as well as apartment dwellers.
- **Incentive Zoning:** This offers incentives to land developers in exchange for a community benefit or amenity. Developers receive one or more of the following opportunities: (a) Increased density, (b) Increased height, (c) Increased floor area, or (d) The increase or reduction of other zoning provisions. In return for these, the developer provides community benefits such as the following: open space, affordable housing, bike/pedestrian paths, day-care facilities, community recreation facilities, assisted living facilities, enhanced stormwater drainage, additional landscaping, and/or contributions to the development of central water and sewer.
- **Cluster Zoning:** This allows subdivisions to be built with houses located in a cluster on smaller lots while preserving areas of open space. The basic principle of cluster development is to group new homes onto part of the parcel so that the remainder can be preserved as open space. This type of zoning is also known as open space or conservation zoning. The open space created by cluster developments can be used for one or more of the following purposes: (a) preservation of agricultural land, (b) preservation of water resources, (c) protection of wildlife habitat, or (d) recreation (e.g., hiking and biking trails, passive recreational areas).
- **Planned Unit Development (PUD):** This type mixes uses on a particular site, e.g. residential, commercial and industrial. A PUD is negotiated between the developer and the town. PUD zoning is negotiated for a particular mix on an individually defined site.

### **Commercial:**

The commercial general land use category was created to promote general commercial land uses within the town limits bordering Route 13. It is the intent of this category to provide appropriate locations for a broad range of commercial activities, which are characterized by heavy truck and vehicle traffic, and occasional nuisance factors, which are highway, oriented. The intent of this designation is to allow highway noise to locate where existing roads and other public facilities can adequately serve the needs of these businesses without infringing in residential areas.

Currently the town has a highway overlay zone along bypass Route 13 in an attempt to control access and maintain the free flow of traffic. If access is not controlled, additional traffic lights will be required as has happened in other areas such as Exmore. New development should utilize easements or improve existing right-of-ways to access existing intersections and crossovers to Lankford Highway

The current character of the Route 13 commercial is typical of "strip commercial" areas that try to attract the automobile traveler. Many of the services that may locate here are typical to a highway intersection: gas stations, restaurants, motels and a visitor's center. Although these uses are typically associated with the automobile, this should not necessarily define this area's future character. In order to counter the current "strip commercial" character of the area, future developments should change the current character by promoting dispersed parking, creating a landscaped road edge and developing smaller sized structures with architectural elements conforming to Eastern Shore architecture.

The design goals for the Gateway Commercial Character Area are:

- To change the existing pattern of development.
- To serve as the gateway into Cheriton downtown.
- To establish a coordinated image.
- To minimize the impact of the automobile and large trucks, by managing a parking system (e.g., large areas of parking, as seen from the street, are discouraged. Parking should be screened with landscaping and broken up into smaller areas.)
- To clearly define the road edge and entrances and exits with landscaping. It is imperative that only a limited number of cuts should be allowed from Route 13. Commercial uses should be served by existing intersections and roads within and between the properties.
- To minimize the amount of light spill from a structure using friendly skies lighting techniques.
- Be sympathetic to adjacent residential construction.

Downtown commercial: As the downtown commercial area undergoes revitalization and continues to develop, it is important to Cheriton that a coordinated family oriented image be established. This image should utilize architectural forms from the area's historic period of significance, and promote family oriented, pedestrian friendly uses. Plans should promote a safe environment for the pedestrian with walking paths, pocket parks with sitting areas, and landscaping along the street edge. Overhead utilities should be buried and streetscape lighting installed.



### Legend

- Existing Corporate Limits
- Tax Parcels
- Other Roads
- Route 13
- Water Bodies
- Building Footprints by Type**
  - Commercial Structures
  - Residential Structures

### Existing Land Use

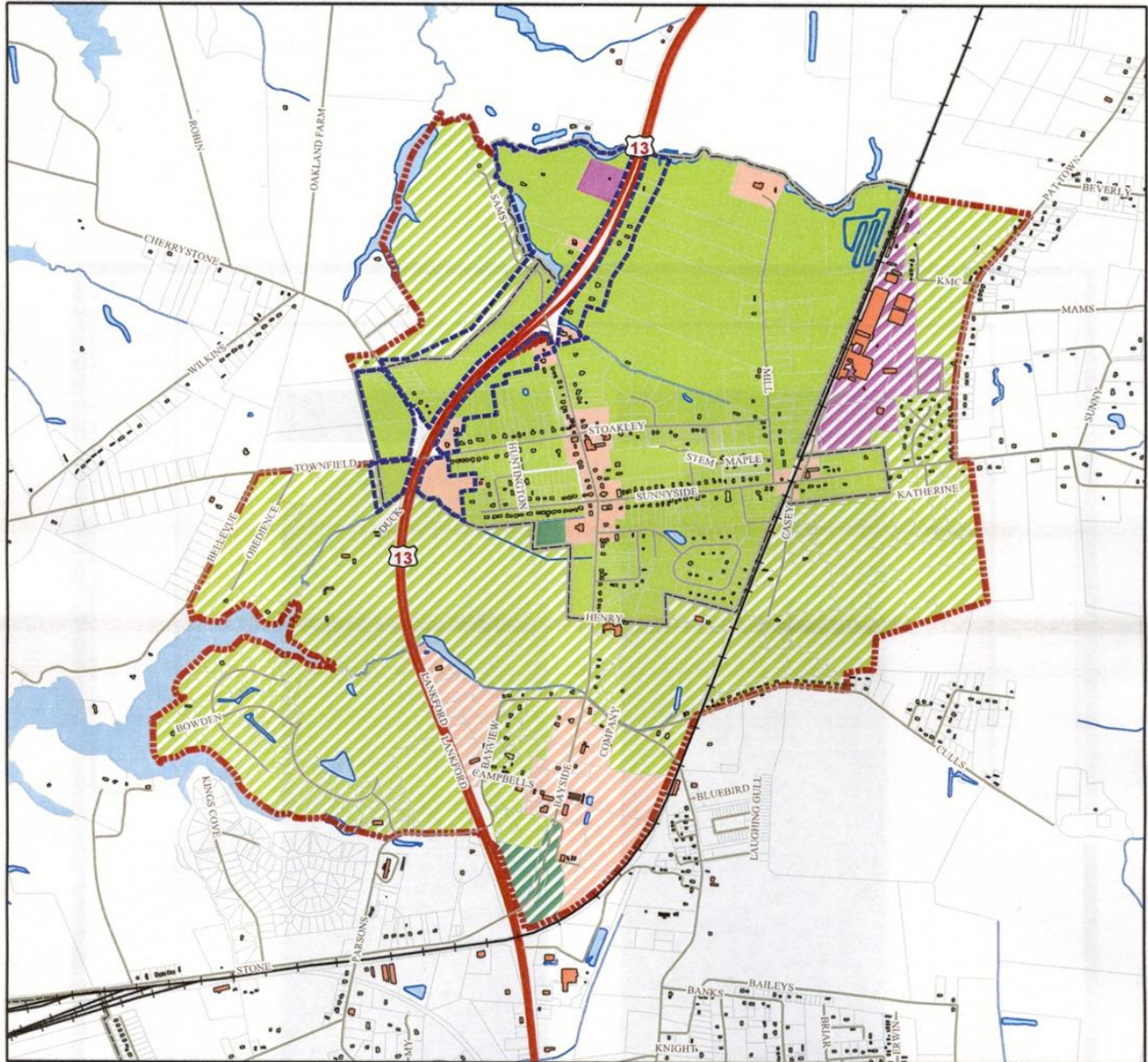
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Vacant
- Public/Semi-Public
- Residential

### Comprehensive Plan Cheriton, Virginia

**Figure 4**  
**Existing Land Use**

1 inch equals 0.19 miles      1:12,000  
 Feet  
 0   400   800   1,200   1,600   2,000





**Legend**

- Existing Corporate Limits
- Proposed Boundary Adjustment
- Cheriton Highway Overlay District
- Tax Parcels
- Other Roads
- Route 13
- Water Bodies

**Building Footprints**

**by Type**

- Commercial Structures
- Residential Structures

**Cheriton Future Land Use (FLU)**

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Residential

**Unincorporated Area Proposed FLU**

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Residential

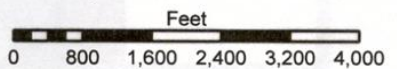


**Comprehensive Plan Cheriton, Virginia**

**Figure 5  
Future Land Use**

1 inch equals 0.38 miles

1:24,000



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