

## SECTION I

### INTRODUCTION

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This assessment examines the key issues affecting housing on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The objective of the study is to define the full scope of housing characteristics and needs on the Eastern Shore.

Within the context of this report, “Eastern Shore” refers exclusively to that area of the Delmarva peninsula that is located within the Commonwealth of Virginia, i.e., Accomack and Northampton Counties. Where appropriate, the characteristics of these two Counties will be compared against State-wide conditions and trends. A map of the Eastern Shore follows this page.

References to the “Eastern Shore” are made repetitiously throughout the report. The term “Eastern Shore” is used to err on the side of clarity in distinguishing between Accomack County, Northampton County and the combination of the two.

In certain circumstances, demographic information for the Eastern Shore will be evaluated at the census tract level. Each County is divided into smaller geographic units known as census tracts. Demographic information at the census tract level affords an opportunity to evaluate localized conditions and trends. Census tract maps for both Accomack and Northampton Counties follow the map of the Eastern Shore.

It should also be noted that at the time this assessment was published, certain types of data were available from the 2000 Census while other types of data from the 2000 Census were not yet published by the Bureau of the Census. Every effort has been made to use 2000 data. However, in certain circumstances, we have relied on 1990 Census data. There is no escaping the fact that some of our data is dated.

The study begins with an overview of the Eastern Shore’s housing market, which includes an analysis of the demographic conditions and trends that affect the demand for housing as well as a description of local market characteristics for both sales and rental housing. The market analysis is based on statistical research as well as personal interviews with real estate professionals, land developers and representatives of the mobile home industry.

The study then examines the composition and condition of residential land uses on the Eastern Shore. The housing stock analysis is based on a review of relevant census data, tax assessment data, field observations, and personal interviews.

Next we consider the housing needs of lower income households (both owner and renter) and the resources currently available on the Eastern Shore to meet those needs. This section includes an inventory of assisted rental housing and a description of affordable housing initiatives underway on the Eastern Shore.

The assessment then moves to a description of all of the public and quasi-public agencies, non-profit organizations, developers and special needs housing providers that play a role in the delivery of housing and supportive services on the Eastern Shore. An effort is made to evaluate the effectiveness of the Eastern Shore's organizational framework for housing and its capacity to carry out new housing initiatives.

The final section of the report is a collection of miscellaneous issues, needs, public policies and regulations that affect housing on the Eastern Shore, including zoning, water and sewer, public transit, education, tax burden and quality of life issues. We also examine the special needs of Tangier Island and the anticipated impact of public policies such as the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel commuter toll reduction. At the very end of the report, the Acknowledgments section reveals the sources of primary research upon which we relied to expand our knowledge of the Eastern Shore.

Finally, it is important to explain what this study is not. Being a needs assessment, this study stops short of recommending actions. It is our understanding that Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission (PDC) intends to commission a separate housing strategy and action plan as a sequel to the needs assessment.

Although certain information within this report may be useful to developers and other organizations pursuing housing development objectives, the study is not intended to serve as a market study for site specific real estate development initiatives.

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