

SECTION III

COMPOSITION AND CONDITION OF HOUSING STOCK

A Census Indicators

Census Bureau statistics will be used in this Section to define the condition of the Eastern Shore's housing stock in terms of age, indoor plumbing, overcrowding and vacant units.

i Age of Housing Stock

The age of a structure is used to show the time the unit has been in the inventory and the duration of time over which substantial maintenance is necessary. The age threshold commonly used to signal a potential deficiency is represented by the year built with units that are 40 years old or over used as the threshold. The 1990 Census reported that 36.2 percent of the housing units on the Eastern Shore were completed prior to 1950. In Accomack County the 1990 Census identified 35.2 percent of the housing units were completed prior to 1950 and in Northampton County 38.7 percent of the housing units were completed prior to 1950. The median year built for the housing in Accomack County was 1962 and the median year built for the housing in Northampton County was 1958. The 1990 Census reported that Statewide the median year built for the housing was 1970.

ii Units Lacking Indoor Plumbing and Kitchens

The Virginia Center for Housing Research estimates that as of 1999, there were 273 owner units on the Eastern Shore lacking complete plumbing. This represents a 42.6 percent decrease in the number of owner units lacking complete plumbing in 1990.

The primary method of residential sanitary sewage disposal on the Eastern Shore is through the use of a cesspool or septic tank (82 percent), while Statewide the primary method is through public sewers (70 percent). Sewage disposal by "other means" is negligible in the State at 1.9 percent, but reaches 7.8 percent on the Eastern Shore and almost 10 percent in Northampton County.

Housing Sewage Disposal - 1990				
	Virginia	Eastern Shore	Accomack	Northampton
Public Sewer	1,740,787	2,299	1,367	932
% Public Sewer	69.7	10.4	8.6	15.1
Septic Tank or Cesspool	707,409	18,016	13,375	4,641
% Septic Tank or Cesspool	28.3	81.8	84.4	75.1
Other Means	48,138	1,708	1,098	610
% Other Means	1.9	7.8	6.9	9.9

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Public utilities such as water and sanitary sewer are generally lacking on the Eastern Shore. As with sanitary sewer, public water services are very limited with only 30.1 percent relying on water from a public or private facility. On the Eastern Shore, 68.5 percent of all housing units rely on wells.

Hydrological factors due to sandy soil and a high water table contribute to water and sewer problems on the Eastern Shore. Since the Delmarva Peninsula is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, there is also significant intrusion of salt water into the water table. In many areas of the Eastern Shore, well sites and septic systems are located in proximity to one another. This phenomenon creates the potential for contamination of drinking water supplies. In order to minimize the danger of contamination, residents must bear the expense of constructing a deep well that is located safe distances from septic systems.

Lack of plumbing is a housing problem on the Eastern Shore. Of the total housing units on the Eastern Shore, 8.8 percent lack complete plumbing, while Statewide 1.9 percent of the housing lacks complete plumbing. Interestingly, there is a higher proportion of occupied units on the Eastern Shore with incomplete plumbing facilities (9.1 percent) than vacant units with incomplete plumbing (7.4 percent).

In the area of home heating, the State's major sources are utility gas and electric. However, the Eastern Shore's primary sources are bottled, tank, LP gas, kerosene, and fuel oil.

The Eastern Shore also shows a slightly higher amount of housing units lacking complete kitchens than the State. Northampton County in particular has almost 8 percent of its housing with incomplete kitchens. The Eastern Shore makes up 4 percent of the entire State's amount of housing units lacking complete kitchens.

When considering the age of some of the homes of the Eastern Shore and the fact that many have been vacant for considerable periods of time, it can be concluded that there is a large proportion of homes that suffer several of the negative factors concerning utilities and facilities. The use of outhouses and hoses run inside from outdoor faucets is still somewhat commonplace on the Eastern Shore. Houses with incomplete or nonexistent plumbing may have inadequate bathing facilities or may lack the convenience of hot water. These degraded homes that have been left unattended for so long significantly reduce housing values on the Eastern Shore and are often beyond repair.

iii Overcrowding

A statistical variable used to measure housing condition involves the overcrowding of dwelling units. A value of more than one person per room (1.01) is used as the threshold for defining living conditions as substandard. Overcrowded dwelling units on the Eastern Shore are depicted on the following chart.

Overcrowded Dwelling Units			
	Eastern Shore	Accomack County	Northampton County
Owner Occupied Housing:			
Total Owner Occupied Dwellings	12,465	9,051	3,414
Overcrowded Owner Occupied Dwellings	258	182	76
% Owner Occupied Overcrowded	2.1	2.1	2.2
Renter Occupied Housing			
Total Renter Occupied Dwellings	4,999	3,325	1,674
Overcrowded Renter Occupied Dwellings	365	289	76
% Renter Occupied Overcrowded	7.3	8.7	4.5
Total Housing Stock			
Total Dwellings Units (owner & renter)	17,464	12,376	5,088
Overcrowded Dwelling Units	623	471	152
Percent Overcrowded Dwellings	3.6	3.8	3.0

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

iv Vacant Units

There is a high rate of vacant housing units on the Eastern Shore. The 1990 Census reported 4,241 vacant housing units on the Eastern Shore with 19.3 percent of the units identified as vacant. Statewide in 1990 8.2 percent of the housing units were vacant. The vacant housing units on the Eastern Shore increased by 29 percent from 1990 to 2000 with 5,477 vacant housing units recorded in 2000 (21 percent of the total housing units). It is noted, however, that in 1990 41 percent of the vacant units (1,752 units) on the Eastern Shore were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. By 2000 56.1 percent of the vacant units on the Eastern Shore were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Statewide in 2000 about 27 percent of the vacant units were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use. Eliminating the vacant units that were for seasonal, recreational or occasional use, there were 3,073 vacant housing units on the Eastern Shore in 2000 representing 9.2 percent of the housing stock. Statewide in 2000 5.2 percent of the housing units were vacant and not held for seasonal, recreational or occasional use.

Vacant Housing Units - 1990 and 2000								
	Virginia		Eastern Shore		Accomack		Northampton	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total Housing Units	2,496,334	2,904,192	22,023	26,097	15,840	19,550	6,183	6,547
Vacant Housing Units	204,504	205,019	4,241	5,477	3,187	4,251	1,054	1,226
% Vacant Housing Units	8.2	7.1	19.3	20.9	20.1	21.75	17.1	18.73
% of vacant for occasional use	20.4	26.6	41.3	56.1	44.1	60.8	32.6	39.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The following table identifies vacant housing units by census tract on the Eastern Shore for 1990 and 2000. While the number of vacant units on the Eastern Shore increased from 1990 to 2000, the number of vacant units held for seasonal, recreational or occasional use also increased. While the vacancy rate of the housing units on the Eastern Shore is overstated by the units that are held for seasonal, recreational or occasional use, it is noted that the rate of vacant housing units not held for seasonal, recreational or occasional use is about double for the rate of vacant units Statewide.

Vacant Housing Units by Census Tract - 1990 and 2000							
	1990			2000			% Change in Vacant Units 1990 - 2000
	Vacant Units	% Vacant	% of Vacant for Occasional Use	Vacant Units	% Vacant	% of Vacant for Occasional Use	
Accomack							
9901	1,472	46.4	63.5	1,902	47.9	90.3	29.2
9902	331	15.4	33.2	493	12.8	39.6	48.9
9903	210	15.8	23.8	237	17.1	27.0	12.9
9904	233	11.3	30.9	364	15.1	27.7	56.2
9905	143	11.1	12.6	182	13.7	18.7	27.2
9906	273	13.0	26.0	378	16.0	52.4	38.5
9907	280	13.8	28.9	367	15.3	34.9	31.1
9908	245	14.2	28.6	328	17.8	45.1	33.9
Northampton							
9901	372	19.1	46.8	363	17.5	48.5	-2.4
9902	379	18.9	34.8	408	19.0	38.0	7.7
9903	303	13.6	12.5	455	19.5	34.5	50.2

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

B Tax Assessment Indicators

On the Eastern Shore, both Accomack and Northampton Counties retain the services of third party professional firms to evaluate the value and condition of real estate for tax assessment purposes. Assessment consultants perform an exterior inspection of all real estate to determine fair market value. The results of these inspections have been used to prepare a summary of existing housing conditions on the Eastern Shore.

i Methodology of Housing Conditions Survey

ii Results of Housing Conditions Survey

iii Methodology and Results of Field Surveys to Verify Accuracy of Housing Conditions Survey

C *Field Observations*

During the Spring and Summer of 2001, the consulting team visited the Eastern Shore frequently to attend meetings, conduct interviews and observe housing and community conditions in a variety of settings. Our observations and conclusions relative to pockets of deterioration are summarized in this section.

i. Pockets of housing deterioration with documentary photos

Field observations show that all of the communities that have public water or public sanitary sewer systems contain a higher quality housing stock. There are examples of poor housing quality in these communities but the strong correlation between housing quality and public water and public sewer systems is unmistakable. Only Onancock, Cape Charles and Tangier have both public water and sanitary sewer systems. The following towns have public water systems:

- Chincoteague
- Parksley
- Exmore
- Eastville

The expansion of public water and sanitary sewer service will exert a beneficial impact on housing quality on the Eastern Shore by making it easier to provide indoor plumbing. Public water and sanitary sewer service also make it easier to develop higher density housing, which may be more affordable.

Public water and sanitary sewer systems have been proposed for the Exmore-New Road-Nassawadox areas and the Accomac-Onley-Onancock-Melfa areas. These systems would cover those sections of Exmore and Onancock not presently served. The Public Service Authority is evaluating these areas.

There are certain remote areas of the Eastern Shore that are difficult to serve with public water and public sanitary sewer systems. Some of the remote areas reflect multiple problems of the rural poor, including inadequate housing, poverty, absence of access to jobs and commercial amenities, and the need for a variety of social services and case management.

Pockets of housing deterioration are concentrated in those areas that have resulted in the establishment of non-profit community groups with an interest in housing. These include:

- New Road Community Development Group of Exmore
- Bayview Citizens for Social Justice
- Concerned Citizens of Cape Charles
- District One Community Action Group
- Horntown and Surrounding Communities Improvement Association
- Withams Neighborhood Association

- Concerned Citizens for the Improvement of Savage Town

The concerted efforts of these groups have begun the process of providing safe and sanitary housing for their clientele. However, there is much work to be done.



**Deteriorated Housing
Conditions on Woods
Lane in Bayview**



ii. Public

Health and Safety Issues

Discussions with the Accomack and Northampton Counties Health Department determined that the major source of public health problems is the potential for water contamination. This is a result of the existence of old shallow wells near poorly functioning septic systems. The Eastern Shore is affected by a seasonal high water table that affects the cost of septic systems. These costs can be prohibitive for lower income families to convert to deep wells. Northampton County and portions of Accomack County are subject to the Bay Act regulations, which particularly affect sewage permitting. The permitting requirements are more stringent under the Bay Act legislation. The Bay Act legislation has therefore made it more difficult to build in portions of the Eastern Shore.

D Lead-based Paint Hazards

With an aging housing stock, it can be expected that a significant number of units will have lead-based paint, an environmental concern particularly in households with children 7 years of age and younger. Lead paint is typically found in homes that were constructed prior to 1978.

The housing stock on the Eastern Shore can be classified as middle-aged. In Accomack County, 35 percent of the structures were built prior to 1950 and another 46.6 percent were built between 1950 and 1979. In Northampton County, 38.6 percent of the housing units were built prior to 1950 and another 45 percent were completed between 1950 and 1979. Because over 80 percent of the units on the Eastern Shore were completed prior to 1979, the incidence of lead-based paint is high, as depicted in the following table.

Estimated Incidence of Lead-Based Paint in Housing Stock			
Year of Construction	Estimated percent of Total Housing Units with Lead-Based Paint	Estimated Number of Housing Units with Lead-Based Paint	
		Accomack County	Northampton County
After 1980	0%	0	0
1960 - 1979	52% - 72%	2,801 - 3,891	1,002 - 1,387
1940 - 1959	70% - 90%	2,293 - 2,948	1,021 - 1,313
Before 1940	80% to 100%	3,418 - 4,272	1,431 - 1,789
Total		8,512 - 11,111	3,454 - 4,489

Source: Comprehensive and Workable Plan for Abatement of Lead-Based Paint in Privately Owned Structures

The following two tables provide estimates of the number of renter and owner housing units in Accomack County and Northampton County which are affordable to low income households and suspected of containing lead-based paint.

Accomack County

Housing Units Affordable to Households at or Below 80percent MFI at Risk for Lead Based Paint Hazards					
Year Built	Units Affordable to Households at or Below 80% MFI		Percent with Lead- Based Paint	Estimated Units with Lead-Based Paint	
	Renter Units	Owner Units		Renter Units	Owner Units
Pre 1940	984	1,350	x 0.90 =	886	1,215
1940 to 1959	644	1,347	x 0.80 =	515	1,078
1960 to 1979	9505	2,240	x 0.62 =	589	1,389
	2,578	4,937		1,990	3,682

Source: CHAS Database, US Census Bureau, September 1993

Northampton County Housing Units Affordable to Households at or Below 80% MFI at Risk for Lead Based Paint Hazards					
Year Built	Units Affordable to Households at or Below 80% MFI		Percent with Lead- Based Paint	Estimated Units with Lead-Based Paint	
	Renter Units	Owner Units		Renter Units	Owner Units
Pre 1940	487	518	x 0.90 =	390	466
1940 to 1959	408	525	x 0.80 =	326	420
1960 to 1979	406	770	x 0.62 =	251	477
	1,301	1,813		967	1,363

Source: CHAS Database, US Census Bureau, September 1993

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) reports that from 1994 to 1999 there were 110 reported cases of children age 5 and under on the Eastern Shore with blood lead poisoning, that is with blood lead levels above 15ug/dl.

- 63 of the cases of blood lead poisoning in children age 5 and under were reported in Accomack County.
- From 1994 to 1999 the five-year population prevalence of blood lead poisoning for children age 5 and under was 2.61 in Accomack County, making it the fourth highest among the Counties in Virginia.

- 47 of the cases of blood lead poisoning in children age 5 and under were reported in Northampton County.
- In Northampton County, the five-year prevalence of blood lead poisoning for children age 5 and under from 1994 to 1999 was 4.41, which was the second highest among the Counties in the State.

The VDH has prepared a list of high risk zip codes for lead blood poisoning in Virginia. High risk zip codes are those with either a large quantity of pre-1950 housing or a greater than 12 percent prevalence per screening data. The VDH recommends that in high risk zip codes there should be universal blood lead screening for all children age 2 and under. The VDH has designated 17 of the 35 zip codes in Accomack County as high risk including 23301, 23302, 23308, 23356, 23357, 23359, 23404, 23407, 23409, 23410, 23417, 23418, 23420, 23421, 23426, 23440, and 23442. The VDH has designated three of the 13 zip codes in Northampton County as high risk including 23350, 23354, and 23405.

It is expected that a major source of lead on the Eastern Shore is the predominantly pre-1978 housing stock painted with lead-based paint. The low socioeconomic profile of large portions of the population precludes the cost-intensive option of lead abatement in the housing stock.

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