

# Chapter 6

## HOUSING

*In this chapter housing characteristics and demographic trends will be examined to provide the background for evaluating alternative implementation strategies necessary to achieve town's housing objectives.*

### BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The housing in Tappahannock consists mostly of single family dwellings. There are three different types of housing which are broken down into single family, multi-family and mobile homes. (See Figure 6-1) In 2000, approximately 58% of the total year round housing stock consisted of single family homes. Multi-family homes accounted for 32% of the total housing stock while mobile homes comprised 10% of the total year round housing stock in Tappahannock's town limits. The present mobile home park, located across from the airport, consists of 120 units. The park covers an area of 32.5 acres. Since 2000, 180 new multiple family dwellings and 35 single family dwellings have been added in various town locations.

**Figure 6-1  
Housing Types - 2000, 2006**

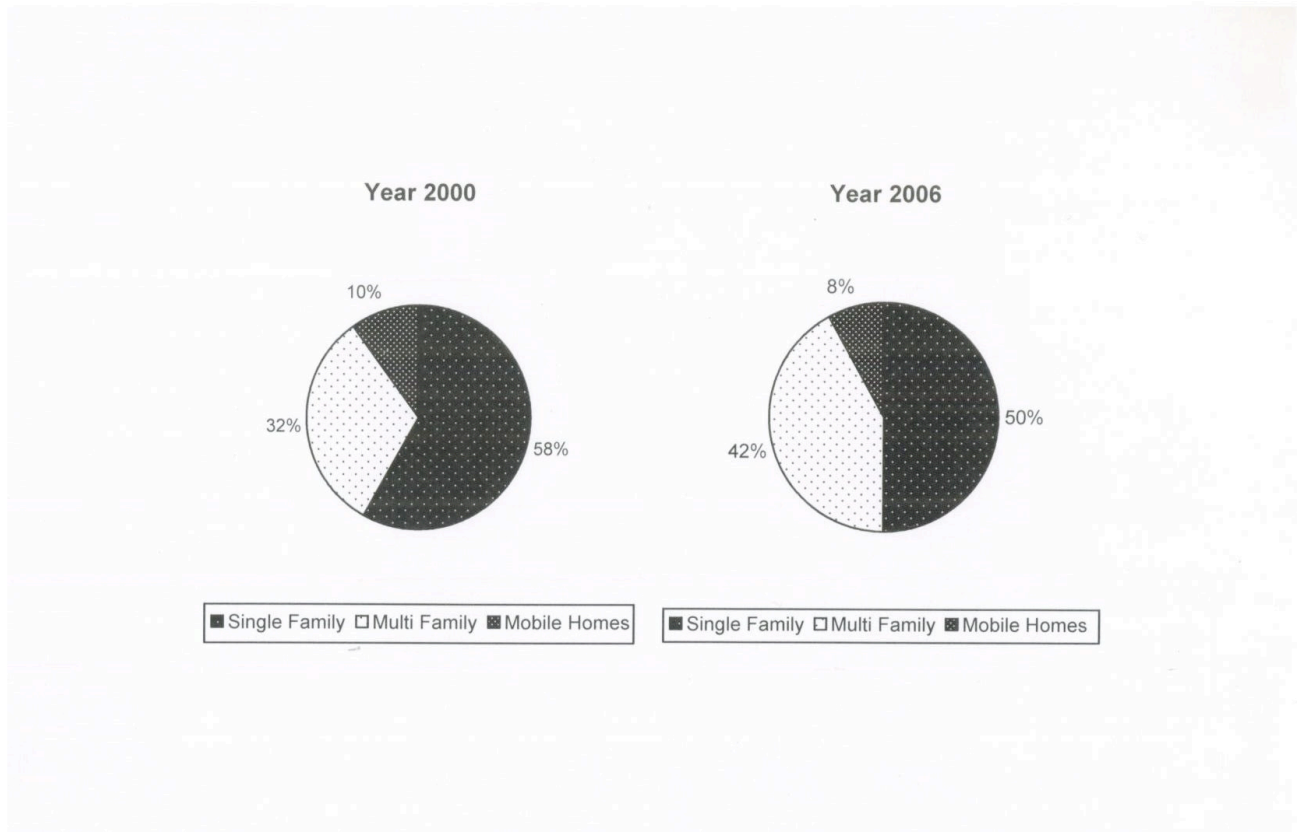
Type	2000 Number of Units	2006 Number of Units
Total Single Family Dwelling	541 (58%)	576 (50%)
Total Multi Family Dwelling	296 (32%)	478 (42%)
Mobile Homes	96 (10%)	96 (8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>1150</b>

Source: Redman/Johnston Associates based on analysis of town water system accounts.

The 2000 Census indicates that 53% of the housing stock was owner occupied and 38% were renter occupied at that time. Vacant housing accounted for 9% of the housing stock in that same year. Since 1990, the percentage of units occupied by renters has risen from 29% to 38% of the total housing stock. Analysis of the trend in housing unit types from 2000 to 2006 (see Figure 6-2) reveals that the dominant unit has remained the single-family detached home. However the single family detached home currently represents a smaller percentage of the total housing stock than in 1990. In 1990 the single family home represented 70% of the housing stock. By 2000, that percentage had dropped to 58%. The Comprehensive Plan and associated town policies will,

ultimately, influence where future housing is located in the town as well as the mix of types of housing.

**Figure 6-2  
Dwelling Units by Type  
2000, 2006**



### **New Housing Trends**

Since 2000, a number of additional housing units have been completed within the Tappahannock town limits which offer a variety of single and multi-family housing options to the population. A 60 unit town home development, Settlers’ Landing is currently being constructed behind the Essex Square Shopping Center west of U.S. route 17. All totaled, 217 new housing units have been added over the last 6 years.

### **Housing Conditions**

To evaluate housing in Tappahannock from a land use standpoint, a knowledge of the structural condition of the housing inventory in the town is important. To meet its housing objectives, the Town of Tappahannock initiated a Rehabilitation Planning Program. The Program was designed to identify and address substandard housing units and assist the town in applying for financial support from either the state or federal government to improve those units. The program is conducted by the Middle Peninsula Planning Commission and the Northern Neck-Middle

Peninsula Area Agency on Aging which serves as an acting housing authority along with the State Department of Housing and Community Development. The program is to pinpoint the need for housing improvements in low and middle income households because "they live in either single family, detached frame houses built prior to 1970 or in multi-family frame houses built prior to 1970."

The report for the planning grant stated that some of the low - middle income residents live in houses that are well constructed but they lack modern enhancements such as adequate heating and insulation, ventilation, lighting, electrical wiring, fire resistance and sanitary facilities. The program determined that 25% of the houses are rental units. In addition, 1.6% of the units lacked complete bathroom facilities, 1.2% of the units were not on the public sewer system and approximately 1% lacked complete kitchen facilities. These numbers are relatively low compared to Countywide figures.

A survey was conducted in June of 1989 which revealed that there were a significant number of homes in need of rehabilitation. Though the census data is somewhat old, little has been done to improve these substandard units. Also it can be assumed that these households are on the lower end of the economic scale and have few resources to improve their homes or move to more suitable housing. At the present time, the area between Virginia Street and Airport road has been targeted for improvements.

## **Rental Housing Subsidy Programs**

Affordable rental housing in Tappahannock is subsidized through the following:

### **Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

- Section 221 (d)(3) provides mortgage insurance to help finance the construction or substantial rehabilitation of large multi-family (5 or more units) rental or cooperative housing projects for low and moderate income families.
- Section 8 Existing Certificates and Moderate Rehabilitation Housing provide assistance on behalf of households occupying physically adequate, moderate-cost rental housing of their own choosing in the private market. Federal payment per unit equals the difference between the government-established Fair Market Rents and thirty (30) percent of the tenant's income. This Program is administered through the Rental Assistance Office. Section 8 New Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation subsidizes rents of lower-income households occupying public and privately developed projects. Federal payment per unit equals the difference between the government-established Fair Market Rents and thirty (30) percent of the tenant's income. The Rental Assistance Office located in Gloucester County, Virginia serves the Town of Tappahannock.

### **Farmers Home Administration (FMHA)**

Section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 authorizes FMHA to make or insure loans to finance the purchase, construction, or rehabilitation of rental and cooperative housing in rural areas for occupancy by the elderly, the handicapped, or low and moderate income families. The purchase of a site and the provision of essential housing-related facilities may be included in a loan where appropriate. The 1983 amendments to the Act require that, to the extent that rental assistance programs are available, all units must be occupied by very low income persons (income below 50% of the median).

The Tappahannock Greens Apartments, a 40-unit rental housing complex for the elderly and disabled, was developed and financed through the FMHA 515 Rural Rental Housing Program and is operated under the program. The complex includes five buildings with 8 one-bedroom units each, a community building, walkways, sitting areas, and recreation facilities.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

***Goal: Maintain the existing mix of the assessed housing values in the Town of Tappahannock.***

Objectives:

- Encourage housing development, single or multi-family, dependent on lot size.
- Encourage development of infill housing in existing subdivisions to maintain the housing balance.
- Continue programs which identify substandard housing.

***Goal: Efficient, high quality and attractive residential development and sound housing for all residents should be encouraged.***

Objectives:

- The town should ensure that developers of subdivisions provide streets, drainage facilities, curbs, sidewalks, easements and recreational area or open space necessary to serve the residents of such subdivisions.

***Goal: The town should respond to the local need for housing families of all incomes, and address those needs in the future through assistance programs.***

Objectives:

- The town should encourage that poor housing be brought up to minimum standards or replaced where renovation is not feasible through available Federal, State and local programs.
- The town should explore alternative means of meeting the housing needs of low, moderate and fixed income residents.
- The town will consider techniques for affordable housing including incentives for private developers to produce affordable housing and provisions for planned manufactured housing communities.

## IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a variety of implementation alternatives available to local governments for the provision of affordable housing. The following implementation techniques have been selected to implement the town's identified objectives.

**Flexibility in Housing Types** - Foster land use patterns that reduce unit land costs and encourage flexibility in housing types. This can be achieved through planned residential development and cluster development provisions in the town's zoning ordinance. This strategy will also be implemented by one of the basic concepts of the Land Use Plan, which is to allow maximum flexibility in configuring lots into clusters rather than relying on minimum lot sizes to determine the desired density. This flexibility also allows for maximizing efficiency in providing infrastructure to the home sites. The Land Use Plan allows for multi-family housing to be permitted in the Mixed Residential Cluster District and other appropriate locations without increasing overall permitted densities.

**Use Federal and State Programs** - Continue to use Federal and State programs to help meet Tappahannock's housing needs. The following housing programs should be used by the town to assist residents with low to moderate incomes.

**Congregate Housing Loan Program** - Funds from this program are specifically for projects which provide housing for such low or moderate income disabled or elderly persons. The project should have no more than 30 units and provide central kitchen and dining facilities. Loans of up to \$250,000 per project are available at an interest rate of 2% for a 15 year period. Non-profit organizations, private corporations, and governmental entities are eligible for the loans. This program is offered through the Department of Housing and Community Development.

**Virginia Housing Partnership Program** - Tappahannock is eligible to apply for either a block grant or a grant for a specific project under this program. Eligible activities include single and multi-family rehabilitation, energy loans, and funding for emergency home repairs.

**Virginia Housing Production Program** - Loans are provided to non-profit organizations or for-profit developers to construct single family homes and multi-family housing.

**Small Cities Community Development Block Grant** - (CDBG) Funds are passed through the State Department of Housing and Community Development for a variety of housing related projects such as housing rehabilitation programs.

**HUD Section 236 Program** - subsidizes mortgages for rental housing projects and provides rent supplements which are subsidy payments to the owners of private rental housing on behalf of lower-income tenants.

**HUD Section 202 Housing for Elderly and Handicapped** - provides direct loans for the development of rental housing for the elderly and handicapped. Projects also receive Section 8 subsidies.

**HUD Section 8 Housing Vouchers** - provides rent subsidy payments to be based on a newly established payment standard rather than on actual unit rents. The standard is to be based on the Fair Market Rents set for the Section 8 Existing Housing Program. Families renting units above or below the new payment standard will pay more or less than 30 percent of adjusted income for rent.

**Bonus Densities for Affordable Housing** - Grant bonus densities to planned development projects to encourage the provision of more affordable housing. It is recommended that in order to encourage the production of housing for low-income residents, the density of development within certain districts may be increased with the following guidelines:

- No more than a bonus of one additional dwelling unit per acre above the permitted density.
- The units provided must meet all conditions with regard to income qualifications and other standards that may be established by the town to ensure that the units are bonafide affordable housing.

The bonus for low-income housing should not be permitted where subsidized units constitute more than 20 percent of a development, except in the case of a development of less than 10 dwelling units.

**Mobile Homes** - Continue to permit mobile homes as a means of providing affordable housing with the needed performance standards to insure their use creates a safe, sanitary and comfortable living environment. Mobile homes, or manufactured housing, tend to be less expensive than most other types of single family homes and, consequently, serve as a practical alternative to affordable housing. Within the Tappahannock Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and other applicable ordinances, mobile home subdivisions and mobile home parks will be required to meet all the same standards as required for other single family dwelling detached development. For example, road standards that apply to conventional housing will also

apply to mobile home parks. Mobile homes will continue to be permitted in mobile home parks and subdivisions through conditional zoning.

**Accessory Apartments** - Permit accessory apartments under certain conditions with adequate safeguards to protect the character of the existing residential neighborhoods. This strategy will stimulate new, moderate cost rental housing for both young and elderly households while preserving large, older homes and allowing elderly homeowners to stay in their homes. Among the conditions of approval for accessory apartments is that the accessory apartment be "clearly subordinate to" the main unit. This will be achieved by requiring that the apartment be less than a specified percentage of the square footage of the original house. Another condition is that conversions should not be permitted in new housing. Finally, the house should have at least one owner occupied resident and should, from the exterior, appear to be a single family residence.

**Fixed Floor Area Ratio** - A fixed floor area ratio for single family residential structures in a planned residential development will allow smaller homes to be built on smaller lots. Housing costs can be contained in the small lot single family developments by tying the size of the dwelling unit to the size of the lot by a maximum floor area ratio per lot. This will ensure that the scale of the house is consistent with the lot thus preserving the less dense residential character sought in single family detached housing.

**Commercial Apartments** - Permit commercial apartments in the moderately intense commercial use zones such as the central business district. This type of housing represents a lower cost option for builders since there is no land value associated with the dwelling units. In addition to providing more affordable housing, locating residential uses in commercial areas also provides for the more efficient use of existing infrastructure and government services and greater accessibility to jobs. Because the apartments are primarily occupied during the hours that commercial uses are normally left vacant - the night and early morning hours - greater use is made of existing parking lots. The town should tie increased lot coverage or floor area ratios to the provision of second floor residential units as an additional incentive to increasing affordable housing stock.

**Housing Code** - Adopt and enforce a housing code to remove substandard conditions of rental housing.

**Self-Help** - Encourage the formation and operation of Self-Help groups. One such organization is the Habitat for the Humanities. The town might consider providing money for these organizations.

**Designing for Economy** - Designing for economy can be achieved without sacrificing marketability. The town should pro-actively educate builders on techniques proven to save money and, when possible, reduce standards that will save money without sacrificing structural strength or aesthetic quality. In most cases current town building codes permit cost saving designs; however, there are opportunities for the town to relax standards. The town needs to evaluate the building code to ensure that unnecessary impediments are not preventing the use of economical designs.

**Housing Trust Fund** - The Virginia Housing Development Authority (VHDA) and Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) will be administering such a State fund to be used as a revolving loan fund to induce the development of low and moderate income housing statewide. A housing trust fund can be both a generator and a conduit of funds for the development of affordable rental housing.

To create a flexible Housing Trust Fund as a mechanism to help fund affordable rental housing, the town should consider the following:

- Designing a housing trust fund that will be a stable source of financing. Sources could include proffers in the form of cash contributions from developers, donations from corporations, county government contributions, and real estate transfer taxes.
- Designating uses for housing trust funds such as interest rate buy-downs for projects meeting affordable rental housing criteria, second trust financing, land cost buy-downs, water and sewer tap fee reductions, rent supplements, and seed money for non-profit developments.
- Actively pursuing state enabling legislation, as necessary, to allow the use of housing trust funds and certain revenue sources for affordable rental housing.

Smart and sustainable growth should be considered when assessing housing and zoning needs for the Town to create a wider range of housing opportunities and choices. Smart and sustainable building utilizes existing structures rather than creating new ones, therefore reducing sprawled development.

The Town of Tappahannock's housing and zoning requirements are compatible with the requirements for Essex County, Virginia.



