

TOWN OF CHERITON

TOWN PROFILE

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 land was owned by Dr. William Stratton Stoakley, who, in 1886, laid out the western part of his land as a town. Cheriton merged with another town called Sunnyside, where downtown Cheriton is currently located. The Town prospered during the early 1900s due to its role as a local agricultural shipping point and service center. The Town of Cheriton became incorporated in 1951. Today, Cheriton has many historic homes and churches (*Town of Cheriton Comprehensive Plan, 2010*).



Cheriton Context and Google Map

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Part of assessing hazards in relation to their risk is understanding the people affected. Not all people are affected equally. Some are affected by factors that relate to their ability to understand risks posed by hazards, and some by their ability to remove themselves from harm’s way. Those factors include age, mobility, income and the languages individuals speak and the languages in which individuals are able to access information.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Town of Cheriton had a population of 461 in 2019 according to the American Community Survey (ACS). This shows a steady population for the Town, aligning with both 2000 and 2010 Census. The median age for the Town is 55.5, compared to the nation’s 38.1, signifying an older and aging population with 35.8% over the age of 65 in 2019 (ACS 2014-2019). This portion of the population would likely require additional assistance during a hazard. There has, however, been an influx of younger individuals and families moving to the area (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021), so future estimates may differ.

Table 1: Cheriton Demographic Information

	2019*	2014**	2013***	2010****	2000*****
Population	461	471	624	487	499
Median Age	55.5	49.7	46.3	45.3	44.2
Disability	66	39	34	-	0
Income					
Median Household Income	\$31,250	\$32,969	\$28,393	\$35,550	\$26,429
Poverty Level	12.0%	21.8%	16.5%	8.8%	NA
Language					
Only English	98.2%	90.7%	87.1%	86.9%	98.1%
Other	1.8%	9.3%	12.9%	10.4%	1.9%
Spanish	1.8%	7.3%	10.4%	7.4%	1.5%
Indo-Euro	0.0%	1.1%	1.8%	3.0%	0.4%
Asian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.0%	0.9%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: *ACS, 2014-2019, **Annual Estimates of the Residential Population: 2010-2014, ***ACS, 2009-2013, ****U.S. Census 2010, *****U.S. Census 2000

WORKFORCE

Employment patterns are important to examine for two reasons. They can help to identify concentrations of people for hazard information dissemination or hazard rescue and evacuation. They can also identify where disruptions in employment and income might occur in the aftermath of a disaster.

The Town of Cheriton’s workforce is primarily a residential and retail/service-oriented community. Because of this, most people commute outside of the Town and work in wholesale/retail trade, agriculture, education/health services, accommodation and food services, or manufacturing (ACS 2014-2019). Many of the County’s largest employers are located just outside the Town and include Northampton County Schools, County of Northampton, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT), Coastal Precast Systems, and several other aquafarms and accommodation services. Some of these employment entities operate in waterfront areas, and thus are more exposed to winds and water damages during a storm event, which may slow the following recovery time for both the business, the workforce, and the Town. The decrease in the total civilian employed population may be attributed to an aging population in Cheriton and a number of residents retiring.

Table 2: Cheriton Local Workforce

Civilian Employed Population										
Industry	2019*		2014**		2012**		2010**		2000***	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, or mining	15	8.7%	11	5.1%	6	2.4%	13	5.1%	16	7.0%
Construction	9	5.2%	8	3.7%	16	6.3%	20	7.8%	11	4.8%
Manufacturing	11	6.4%	3	1.4%	42	16.7%	42	16.4%	38	16.6%
Wholesale trade	16	9.2%	42	19.4%	28	11.1%	12	4.7%	20	8.7%
Retail trade	15	8.7%	11	5.1%	14	5.6%	0	0.0%	32	14.0%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6	3.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	14	6.1%
Information	0	0.0%	5	2.3%	0	0.0%	18	7.0%	2	0.9%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rentals	2	1.2%	10	4.6%	11	4.4%	21	8.2%	5	2.2%
Professional, scientific, waste management	3	1.7%	29	13.4%	48	19.0%	69	27.0%	10	4.4%
Educational, health care, social services	41	23.7%	26	12.0%	22	8.7%	28	10.9%	41	17.9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, food	28	16.2%	17	7.8%	8	3.2%	4	1.6%	17	7.4%
Public Administration	0	0.0%	24	11.1%	23	9.1%	24	9.4%	11	4.8%
Other	27	15.6%	11	5.1%	6	2.4%	13	5.1%	12	5.2%
TOTAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION	173	-	217	-	252	-	256	-	229	-

Source: *ACS, 2014-2019, **ACS, 2010-2014, ***U.S. Census 2000

BUSINESSES

Business data provides basic information used in projecting potential economic losses from business and employment disruption, along with wage losses to employees. They can also serve as an indicator of community recovery resources. Finally, data can help to prioritize restoration of utility and infrastructure functions following a high-intensity hazard.

The presence of businesses within Town has been on the rise, with 31 current businesses in Cheriton Town limits; however, the majority of residents still commute to jobs outside of the Town (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). The Retail, Health Care, and Accommodation industries dominate the businesses in Cheriton. Due to the influx of tourism and tourism-based businesses in the Town, a significant storm event would greatly affect Cheriton’s growing economy.

Table 3: Cheriton Business Types

Industry Code Description	Total Establishments				
	2021*	2015**	2013***	2011***	2009***
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	2	0	2	2	2
Construction	3	4	2	3	2
Manufacturing	2	1	1	1	1
Wholesale Trade	0	3	3	5	4
Retail Trade	6	1	2	4	5
Finance and Leisure	3	2	1	1	1
Real Estate and Rental Leasing	1	2	2	3	1
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	0	2	2	2	2
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	0	2	2	2	2
Health Care and Social Assistance	5	2	2	4	5
Accommodation and Food Services	5	4	2	1	2
Other Services (Except Public Admin)	4	4	4	2	4
Total, All Establishments	31	26	25	31	32
Total Employees	-	-	323	285	316

Source: *Personal Communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, 2021 **Personal Communications, Town Council, 2016 ***Census Zip Code Business Patterns, 2009, 2011, 2013

BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

Housing units, community facilities, and transportation are all important factors when considering hazard resiliency. They provide the social services necessary during hazardous scenarios, safe cover for those wanting to stay, and a way to leave towards safety.

HOUSING UNITS

Knowledge of a community’s housing base contributes to hazard and vulnerability analysis by identifying how many homes are at risk. According to the American Community Survey, in 2019 there were 248 total housing units in Cheriton. This number has remained steady since the 2000 Census, with the exception of what the Cheriton Town Council determined to be an overestimate in 2014 (Personal communications, Greg Hardesty and Mary Mears, Town Council, January 14, 2016). The majority of properties are occupied, with only 41 vacant housing units in 2019 (ACS 2014-2019). This number is believed to be an over estimate, as the Town has been working diligently to keep vacant structures in compliance with Town policies (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). Many of these vacant units may also be second homes or vacation homes due to Cheriton’s growing tourism and the close proximity of the beach in the Town of Cape Charles.

Table 4: Cheriton Housing

	2019*	2014**	2010***	2000****
Total Housing Units	248	276	243	239
Occupied	207	219	211	219
Vacant	41	57	32	20
Owner-Occupied	135	163	146	155
Renter-Occupied	72	56	65	64
Median Housing Value	\$162,200	\$173,900	NA	NA

Source: *ACS, 2014-2019, **ACS, 2010-2014, ***U.S. Census 2010, ****U.S. Census 2000

TRANSPORTATION

Cheriton has an adequate road system which is maintained by the Virginia Department of Transportation. Route 13 provides good regional access and directs major traffic flow away from the town, while Business Route 13 provides safe access in to and out of Town. With the addition of a new traffic light, signage, reduced speed limits, and a contractual deputy to help enforce speed limits, there are generally no major traffic issues in Cheriton (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). The former Bay Coast Railroad is now abandoned and has not been an active railroad since 2018. The plan is to railbank and turn the now abandoned railway into a multi-use path as part of the Eastern Shore Rail Trail, which will extend 49.1 miles from Cape Charles north to the Town of Hallwood in Accomack County.

Vehicles available to households is one indicator of a household’s ability to evacuate when necessary. Table 5 shows that there are 28 households without a vehicle available. This is an important factor to consider in the event of a hazard in order to ensure all residents are able to evacuate if needed by providing additional assistance. Star Transit serves the Town, connecting it to the rest of the Eastern Shore, with several stops in Cheriton on the Red (North), Purple (South), and Yellow (Loop) lines; however, it is highly unlikely this service would run in the event of a hazard. The Town has applied for a grant to provide a bus shelter for Star Transit riders on North Bayside Road by the new park and playground (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021).

Table 5: Cheriton Resident Vehicles

Vehicles Available	2019*	2014**	2010**	2000***
None	28	25	53	34
One	97	108	86	75
Two	49	58	92	79
Three or more	33	28	44	29

Source: *ACS, 2014-2019, **ACS, 2010-2014, ***U.S. Census 2000

COMMERCIAL AREAS

The downtown area is an important local retail center. Commercial buildings house local retail businesses such as Barrier Island Salt Co., ESVA Boxing Club, Northampton Farm Store, Northampton Firearms, LLC., The Sheep Factory, two barber shops, and American Legion Post 56 (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). U.S. Route 13 has directed traffic away from Business Route 13 and Downtown Cheriton; therefore, the presence of Cheriton’s business district is not obvious to highway travelers (*Town of Cheriton Comprehensive Plan*, 2010).

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & PUBLIC WORKS

Community facilities are facilities required to support the services and functions provided by the Town government or in coordination with other public and private entities. These facilities enhance the overall quality of life for the Town and its citizens. It’s important to note what facilities are available in case of a hazard, and it’s important to make an inventory of facilities that could be affected by a hazard.

PUBLIC SAFETY

A contractual deputy, the Northampton County Sheriff’s Department, and the Virginia State Police provide police protection for Town residents. Fire protection for the Town is provided by approximately 25 volunteer firefighters and 5 volunteer non-firefighters in the Cheriton Volunteer Fire Department; however, the Town recently has had difficulty recruiting volunteers (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). This station has a primary engine, engine/tanker combination, super brush truck (rescue and brush), and a teleport water tower. Ambulance service is provided by the Cape Charles Rescue, Inc., which is only 0.5-1 mile from Town limits (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021).

Town of Cheriton

WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER

Residents rely on individual private wells and septic systems for their water supply and wastewater disposal. Due to new regulations, new septic field construction requires alternative disposal designs that avoid having the septic field too close to the water table (*Town of Cheriton Comprehensive Plan, 2010*).

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Collection services are provided to the Town by Davis Disposal. Northampton County transfer station is located close by for disposal services as well.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Currently, the Town has one park located in the downtown area. The Park boasts a stage area, picnic facilities, and a playground with a paved parking lot for ADA accessibility. The Park hosts several Town events such as Children's Fun Day, Christmas Parade, and caroling. Most of the sidewalks in Town have been replaced and the Town is working on getting permission from store owners to repair privately owned sidewalks and ensure ADA accessibility of all sidewalks in the Town (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). A Parks and Recreation Committee has also been formed to ensure continued improvements for the park and downtown areas.

DRAINAGE DITCHES

Maintenance of drainage ditches is the responsibility of VDOT and were just recently inspected. They have been regularly maintained by VDOT in order to provide sufficient drainage and mitigate stormwater flooding (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021).

SCHOOLS

Small Wonders Childcare Center is the only school in Town limits (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). Public schools nearby serving students in the Town include Kiptopeke Elementary, Northampton Middle, and Northampton High.

POWER AND COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Broadband Authority, Spectrum, Bay Shore Communications, and Hugh's Net all provide communication services to the Town of Cheriton (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). The Town typically does not experience lengthy service outages.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Elevation in Cheriton ranges from 26 feet, from a high point of 36 feet where the abandoned railroad crosses Sunnyside Road, to a low point of 10 feet where Eyrehall Creek crosses Route 13. The small elevation change of 26 feet results in overall slopes in Cheriton of less than 2%, which contributes to flooding due to poor drainage (*Town of Cheriton Comprehensive Plan, 2010*).

GROUND WATER

The Town does not provide water. Potable water is supplied by individual private wells, which withdraw from ground water aquifers. The Town's water supply is mostly withdrawn from the upper Yorktown aquifer. The majority of land in Cheriton lies within the spine ground water recharge area and is in Wellhead Protection Area E. Protecting the spine recharge is extremely important to assure good quality and sufficient quantities of ground water on the Eastern Shore (*Town of Cheriton Comprehensive Plan, 2010*).

HAZARD PREPAREDNESS & COMMUNITY CAPABILITIES

PREVIOUS HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

[§201.6\(b\)\(3\)](#) [§201.6\(c\)\(3\)](#), [§ 201.6\(d\)\(3\)](#) The Town of Cheriton began participating in the hazard mitigation planning process in 2016. The Town was formerly covered under the County’s Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Town updated their comprehensive plan last in 2010.

Table 6: Cheriton Hazard Mitigation Resources

	Ordinances, Plans, & Publications														Resources, Committees					
Authority	Building Code	Chesapeake Bay Act	SWMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan	Comprehensive Plan	Ordinance	Storm Water Regulations	Transportation Infrastructure Inundation Vulnerability Report	All Hazards Preparedness	Emergency Operations Plans	Mutual Aid	Agreements/Documents	Neighborhood Emergency Help	Viginia Hurricane Evacuation	Oil & HazMat Response Plan; HazMat Commodity Flow	Ground Water Committee	Navigable Waterways Committee	Climate Adaptation Working Group	ES Disaster Preparedness Coalition	
Local	*				*	*														
County			*																	
Regional				*				*	*	*				*		*	*	*	*	
State		*					*						*							
Federal		*																		

NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM & HAZARD MITIGATION GRANT PROGRAM

NFIP

[§ 201.6\(c\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#), [§ 201.6\(c\)\(3\)\(ii\)](#), [§201.6\(d\)\(3\)](#) The Town joined the NFIP in July of 2020 after adopting a floodplain management ordinance and enforcement procedures (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021).

HMGP

The Town has not participated in the HMGP.

HAZARD PROFILE

[§201.6\(c\)\(2\)\(i\)](#), [§201.6\(c\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#), [§201.6\(d\)\(3\)](#) Stormwater flooding has the greatest and most frequent impact on the Town. The [Town of Cheriton website](#) provides residents and visitors with information on emergency preparedness as well as links to other resources. The Northampton County Emergency Preparedness information and a Disaster Preparedness Brochure are among some of the hazard information the Town has provided on their website.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND READINESS

The Town of Cheriton responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in several ways. The Town was able to stay open for residents and visitors by purchasing glass barriers, blue lights, sanitary stations, and a canopy shelter for residents waiting outside for DMV Select and Town business. The Town provided care packages for their residents which included masks, gloves, sanitizer, and thermometers and the Town Park remained off limits until deemed safe (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). Extra supplies have been kept on-hand in the case of a resurgence or another similar event in the future.

COASTAL FLOODING

[§ 201.6\(c\)\(2\)\(i\)](#), [§ 201.6\(c\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#), [§201.6\(d\)\(3\)](#) The Town is almost entirely out of the flood zone (Zone X), except for the areas at the headwaters of both Kings and Eyrehall Creeks, where there are small portions in the 0.2%-annual-chance flood zone and in the A zone with a BFE of 5 feet. There are very few businesses or residents that are near these flood zones. The Town of Cheriton joined the NFIP after adopting a floodplain management ordinance and enforcement procedures. Residents in the Town are now able to purchase insurance through the NFIP (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021).

COASTAL EROSION

No structures are at immediate risk to coastal erosion.

WIND

No parts of the Town lie in the wind-borne debris hazard area. This area extends 1-mile inland from the coast. The Town lies in the 110-120 mph design wind zone (*Northampton County Building Code*, 2016); however, like many

towns on the Eastern Shore, the Town has several mature trees around the homes that could come down during high-wind events. These trees pose a threat of damage to homes, personal property, businesses, and infrastructure.

STORM WATER FLOODING

Drainage and flooding are problems in Cheriton due to the flat topography and inadequate maintenance of drainage ditches. Drainage of storm water flooding has historically been and continues to be a major issue for Cheriton (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). Recently, maintenance of these ditches has been ongoing and has helped to mitigate some stormwater flooding; however, the continuance of maintenance to all drainage ditches in Town is pertinent for proper drainage and mitigation of stormwater flooding. Stormwater flooding occurs frequently on Mill Street, Holland Road, and Cherrystone Road (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021). Other areas throughout the Town have been affected from inadequate drainage and flooding issues as well.

HAZARDS OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

GROUND WATER CONTAMINATION

Due to the high permeability of the soils in Cheriton, they are generally not well suited for septic tank filter fields. When soils are saturated, waste may not be sufficiently treated (*Town of Cheriton Comprehensive Plan, 2010*). The Town is following Northampton County and Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) guidelines by enforcing septic pump outs every five years. The Town notifies residents via letters when their five years is approaching (Personal communications, Mayor Jackie Davis, March 25, 2021).

ICE & SNOW STORMS

Snow and ice storms in 2009 and 2015 impacted the Town of Cheriton, creating dangerous travel conditions for residents. These types of storms may cause damage to infrastructure and create extensive power outages due to ice build-up on power lines, downed trees, and vehicular crashes.

FIRE & SMOKE

In the 1950s, two fires almost destroyed Downtown Cheriton. Many of the buildings were rebuilt using brick, but there are still a lot of wooden structures located in Town limits that may pose a fire hazard risk, particularly during times of extreme heat and droughts.

TORNADOES

In July of 2014, three people were killed and 20 injured when a tornado ripped through the Cherrystone Campground in Cheriton. The storm left several overturned campers and boats and several downed trees throughout the area. Although tornadoes aren't extremely common in the Region, there have been several other suspected tornadoes and waterspouts throughout the area. It is extremely important for the Town to ensure residents and visitors are educated and diligent in regards to safety information and precautions to take during such hazards. Strong, fast-moving thunderstorms occur frequently in the Region during the warmer months and are capable of producing strong winds, rain, hail, waterspouts, and tornadoes.

CRITICAL FACILITIES

The following table lists the critical facilities and their relative importance to the Town.

Table 7: Cheriton Critical Facilities

Facility	HMP '06	HMP '11	HMP '16	HMP '21	Hazards	No of People Affected	Loss potential	Relocation Potential	Retrofit Potential
Town-Owned Facilities									
Cheriton Town Office	-	-	X	X	Stormwater Flooding, Wind, Tornadoes	461+	Major Disruption	Yes	Yes
Other Facilities (not Town-owned)									
Cheriton Volunteer Fire Department	-	-	X	X	Stormwater Flooding, Wind, Tornadoes	461+	Devastating	No	Yes
Cheriton Post Office	-	-	X	X	Stormwater Flooding, Wind, Tornadoes	461+	Major Disruption	No	Yes
Cherrystone Family Camping Resort	-	-	-	X	Stormwater Flooding, Wind, Tornadoes	11,885+	Inconvenience	No	Yes

FINDINGS

1. The hazards expected to have the greatest impact on the Town are stormwater flooding and high-wind events, which have been experienced throughout the Town's history. Other hazards facing the Town are groundwater contamination, ice and snow storms, fire, and tornadoes.
2. The upkeep and maintenance of drainage ditches in the area are pertinent to the mitigation of stormwater flooding in the Town. Recently, the ditches have been properly maintained and it is essential for effective maintenance to continue.
3. The Town has no Special Flood Hazard Areas, but does experience significant stormwater flooding.
4. The Town joined the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in July of 2020 after adopting a floodplain management ordinance.
5. A tornado in 2014 tore through the Town, killing three individuals at Cherrystone Campground and injuring several others. Although uncommon, it is important for the Town to consider mitigation and education of residents and visitors for these types of sudden storms.