

Housing

Overview

The vast majority of developed property in Poquoson consists of single-family homes. The housing stock, in most areas of the City, is in good condition although property maintenance remains a concern to most citizens. Affordable housing needs does not appear to be a critical issue if the existing stock of aging homes is properly maintained. Average home prices will likely continue to rise in the City and the construction of additional subdivisions is contingent upon the extension of sewer service to large, undeveloped land areas. Housing for the elderly and empty nesters are long-term community needs.

Housing Type

The vast majority of developed property in Poquoson consists of single-family homes. Eighty-eight (88) percent of the City's 3,890 housing units are single-family detached structures.

Table 1: Housing Type 1960-1990

Housing Type	1960	Percent	1970	Percent	1980	Percent	1990	Percent
Single-Family	1,318	100%	1,615	94.2%	2,665	90.6%	3,422	88%
Multi-Family	0	0	67	3.9%	173	5.8%	274	7%
Mobile Homes	0	0	32	1.9%	105	3.6%	194	5%
Total	1,318	100%	1,714	100%	2,943	100%	3,890	100%

Though single-family homes predominate, there was a steady increase in the number of multi-family dwellings and mobile homes developed between 1970-1990. The supply of mobile homes and multi-family dwellings, however, continues to represent only 12% of the total housing stock in the City (See Table 1). This supply of non-single-family housing units is relatively low when compared to other suburban Tidewater localities such as York County (27% non-single family) and James City County (19% non-single family). The Hampton Roads region as a whole has 34% of its total housing stock consisting of mobile homes and multi-family housing units.

It is very likely that the majority of housing units in Poquoson will continue to be single-family detached structures as the demand for expensive single-family homes continues and the percentage of land appropriately zoned for multi-family developments (only 0.8%) remains constant. The Village Commercial Zoning District of the Big Woods, adopted by City Council in 1995, provides the development of condominiums and townhouses as secondary uses. While it is likely that some multi-family units will be developed with this proviso, the total number of new townhouses in this district will be modest.



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Condition of Existing Housing Stock

The bulk of the homes in Poquoson are in very good or excellent condition. This is due in part to the relatively young age of the existing housing stock with over seventy-six (76) percent of the existing homes in Poquoson constructed after 1960. (Statistic is from 1990 U.S. Census).

***Housing Stock
- Age Distribution***

Pre-1939	11%
1940>1959	13%
1960>1979	43%
1980>1989	33%

Like all localities in Tidewater, Poquoson has some degree of need for repairing deteriorated housing units and upgrading substandard housing. In the absence of comprehensive on-site inspections of suspect housing stock, the actual number of units in need of rehabilitation and associated costs must be inferred from available Census data. The 1990 U.S. Census revealed nine (9) homes in Poquoson with a lack of complete plumbing facilities and four (4) homes with a lack of kitchen facilities. The City of Poquoson Building Official's office suggests that there are more likely sixty-five (65) or more homes in Poquoson that have significant indoor plumbing needs. Housing stock without appropriate weatherization (poor roofs, deteriorated siding, leaking windows, etc.) is also a problem for a number of households. The City of Poquoson Building Official's office suggests that there are one hundred (100) or more housing units in the City with significant weatherization improvement needs.

Property Maintenance

Another factor affecting housing in Poquoson is the maintenance of properties around homes. The City routinely receives complaints regarding the lack of appropriate home and property maintenance. These complaints include concerns over poorly maintained homes, but also extend to the storage of inoperative vehicles, debris accumulation, and the existence of dilapidated fences and accessory buildings. In the absence of a formal Property Maintenance Code, the City will continue to have problems maintaining property values in neighborhoods where homes and properties are allowed to be maintained below community standards. Poorly maintained properties adversely impact the property values of surrounding homes and can lower assessed values by up to twenty (20) percent. Neighborhoods with poorly maintained properties tend to get worse over time and even one poorly maintained home can have a detrimental long-term impact and can cause entire neighborhoods to deteriorate. Such a deterioration process has been well documented throughout the country.

Housing Production, Ownership and Affordability

Production

Generally speaking, Poquoson's housing supply has kept pace with demands of homebuyers and renters who can afford to compete in the housing market. Unfortunately, strong housing demand and rising incomes have forced prices above the means of some low to moderate-income households. This is more prevalent throughout other Hampton Roads localities, and is



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particularly evident in high growth areas where low to moderate-income families, often long-time residents, are being displaced from the housing market by heavy in-migration of more affluent neighbors.

Table 2: - Selected Housing Cost Characteristics - U. S. Census 1990

	Poquoson	James City	York	Williamsburg
Median Value of Owner Occupied Housing Units	\$113,700	\$119,500	\$121,600	\$121,000
-below \$60,000	7%	9%	7%	7%
-above \$150,000	26%	36%	32%	41%
Median Rent	\$574	\$528	\$513	\$492
-below \$250/month	1%	5%	4%	6%
-above \$600/month	44%	36%	21%	25%
Owners paying 30%+ of income for housing	21%	20%	20%	22%
-Owners earning <\$20,000 paying 30%+ of income for housing	43%	53%	52%	50%
Renters paying 30%+ of income for housing	27%	40%	36%	46%
-Renters earning <\$20,000 paying 30%+ of income for housing	82%	78%	84%	81%
Home Ownership Rate	83%	73%	72%	36%

Ownership

The high home ownership rate in Poquoson is a very positive community attribute. Over 83 percent of residents living in Poquoson own the home that they live in, compared to a Hampton Roads average home ownership rate of only 36 percent. Home ownership fosters stronger community ties, encourages home investment, enhances property values and typically yields stronger more stable neighborhoods and schools.

The high number of military families does not appear to yield a high number of renters. This phenomenon can likely be attributed to the high and increasing property values enjoyed in Poquoson, wherein most homeowners are able to sell their homes at a profit after only a few yards of ownership.

Housing values in Poquoson have also been steadily increasing in Poquoson, particularly over the past 7 years. Table 3 below indicates that the percentage of homes valued at \$150,000 and above is increasing at a much higher rate than lower valued homes. This trend is likely to continue as long as incomes and property in Poquoson remain high.



Table 3: Value of Owner Occupied Housing Units 1989-1996

Home Value Range	Number 1989	Number 1996	Percentage Increase
			1989-1996
\$29,999 and under	20	24	0.2%
\$30,000 to \$59,999	186	189	0.02%
\$60,000 to \$99,999	882	893	0.01%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	949	1167	23%
\$150,000 to \$199,999	471	781	66%
\$20,000 and above	233	428	84%

The overall number of individual housing units in Poquoson will also continue to grow as population increases. The total number of housing units is expected to increase 73% between 1990 and 2015.

Housing Unit Increase 1990-2015

1990 Housing Units	3,769
1996 Housing Units	4,185
2015 Housing Units	6,523
Unit Increase 1990-2015	2,754 (73%)

Affordability

Housing affordability in Poquoson is more of a concern than it is a crisis. The housing affordability concern results not only from housing costs rising faster than incomes, but also from how the housing stock has expanded during recent years. Housing in Poquoson and throughout the Peninsula expanded rapidly over the past 15 years. These areas transitioned from rural to suburban population densities very quickly, leaving few older properties as "trickle down" housing opportunities for low to moderate - income households. Moreover, market forces and zoning in Poquoson (i.e. large minimum lot sizes) general favor single-family housing above the median price range (\$113,700).

The trend in new housing construction over the past twenty years has been toward upscale housing. While the newer developments provide an abundant supply of certain types of housing, affordability to *all* Poquosonites is still in question.

Generally, certain assumptions are made when looking at affordability:

- A general rule of thumb is that buyers can generally obtain a mortgage for roughly double their gross annual income.
- The resulting monthly mortgage payment could then compromise as much as a fourth to a third of their monthly income, depending on the terms of the loan.
- Median adjusted gross income for an area is commonly compared to average selling price in the area to gauge affordability of local housing to the local community.



Applying the general assumptions noted above specifically to Poquoson's demographics yields the following:

- The average selling price of single-family homes in Poquoson in 1990 was about \$114,000. The annual median adjusted gross income for married couples in Poquoson in 1992 was \$47,991, which would typically qualify applicants to purchase an \$96,000 - \$111,000 home.
- These generalizations suggest that current average selling price of single-family housing in the City will be within reach of most Poquoson families, particularly with creative financing mechanisms. The housing affordability for the remaining households in Poquoson continues to remain an issue. While many families in Poquoson are able to afford the typical home in the City, families with lower than average incomes are using a higher percentage of their household income towards mortgage payments. Of the households with incomes less than \$20,000 annually, 43% of these families pay more than a third of their monthly income on housing.

Apartment rents average \$574 per month in Poquoson. This is somewhat higher than other Peninsula suburban communities and much higher than the average rent in all Hampton Roads localities, which is \$479 per month. Again, assuming monthly housing costs represent one-third to one-fourth of a household's monthly expenditures, the household would need to earn between \$1,722 and \$1,916 per month (or \$20,664 to \$22,992 a year) to rent such an apartment. While this type of housing is affordable to many citizens, many others will be unable to afford such rental rates. Table 2 indicates that of the households with incomes less than \$20,000 annually, 82% of these families pay more than a third of their monthly income on rent.

Citizen Comments

Comments generated at the Public Input Session and through the Citizen Opinion Survey suggest that most citizens are satisfied with the existing housing stock in the City. Other citizen comments regarding housing include the following:

Citizen Opinion Survey Results

- Over 70% supported the adoption of a property maintenance code.
- Less than 1% of the survey respondents suggested they were leaving Poquoson due to lack of desired housing.
- Very few respondents supported the development of additional mobile home parks and apartments.



- Slightly more than 50% of survey respondents suggested that they would support additional multi-family housing if it were specifically designed for retirees and the elderly.

Public Input Session Comments:

- Several people suggested that housing for the elderly and young families is a concern.
- Cluster housing received only modest support.
- Most people supported maintaining the City's large minimum lot size.
- Several participants suggested that property maintenance should be addressed.

Housing Needs

Housing for the Elderly and "Empty Nesters"

As our population continues to age, housing for the elderly will become a more pressing need in Poquoson. According to the 1990 census, there were 929 persons comprising 8.4% of the population aged 65 or over living in Poquoson. Population projections developed by the Virginia Employment Commission indicate that this figure will increase to nearly 1,842 persons by the year 2010, marking a 98% increase over this 20-year period. These numbers also mirror a national trend of an aging population.

Only two private elderly care facilities currently operate in the City. These institutions can provide care for up to 100 people. Clearly, these existing institutions alone will not be able to accommodate the future demand for elderly housing.

While many senior citizens are physically able to remain in homes and neighborhoods in which they have lived so many years, those with limited retirement income and diminishing strength often have difficulty coping with housing expenses and household demands. Also, for the elderly, housing must compete with other goods and services, particularly medical services, for a share of the household budget. With these issues in mind, long-range elderly housing needs should be addressed.

Perhaps the most critical factor that should be taken into account when responding to the housing problems of the elderly is what older people want. Although some older people welcome a new and separate lifestyle such as condominium living units, and some need special nursing care, most are capable of leading independent lives albeit with some support services. They do not want to be removed from their homes and neighborhoods in spite of the problems posed by their



housing situations. As a result of these and other factors, a variety of mechanisms have been developed to enable the older population to "age-in-place."

There are several methods that could be utilized to provide a greater supply of housing for the elderly. One method is to continue providing opportunities but also provide jobs for health care workers. Appropriate assisted care facility locations could be included as part of a PRD as a Conditional Use in the Residential Districts. Such facilities are also good transitional uses between commercial and low-density residential areas.

Accessory apartments for the elderly (sometimes referred to as "granny flats") also provide additional housing opportunities. Such accessory apartments should provide independent-living units developed in connection with existing single-family homes and are usually created in one of the following four ways:

1. From existing space in the primary dwelling.
2. From a combination of existing and newly created space.
3. From space in an existing accessory building.
4. From the addition of a new accessory building.

Some generalizations can be made about the types of households that are likely to install accessory units in, or conjunction with, their homes. These types of households include:

- The elderly with limited incomes that live in large single-family homes with underused space.
- Empty nester households (defined below).
- Families whose financial misfortune has put them in a position of risking the loss of their homes if additional income is not generated to help meet housing expenses.
- Single-person homes usually occupied by a middle-aged or retired person.
- Households with an older relative who is still able to live substantially independently, but either wants or requires some degree of assistance in order to maintain that independence. A variation of this is the older relative who creates the unit in order to have a younger family member nearby, while still retaining privacy.

Although accessory units present possibilities for housing the elderly, either as homeowner or tenant (living in either the primary or accessory unit), it is clear that the group of people who are interested in and could benefit from the presence of accessory apartments, the City might benefit as well. Some advantages of accessory apartments include:



- a source of affordable housing;
- a more efficient use of existing housing;
- maintenance of existing housing;
- housing diversity with minimal disruption to the neighborhood;
- neighborhood stability; and
- improved local government control (especially of already existing illegal apartments).

Poquoson should continue to utilize the accessory apartment provisions of its Zoning Ordinance, however, with more emphasis on utilizing these structures to provide alternative housing options for the elderly.

Shared Living Arrangements (Group Homes)

Home sharing can be defined as two or more unrelated people living together in the same dwelling unit, sharing living space and expenses. The benefits of home sharing for the individual and the community are the same as those associated with accessory apartments. Residents can continue to live independently with the financial and personal support of housemates. This allows communities to maintain the existing housing stock and community/neighborhood stability, while reducing the demand for community services.

The City of Poquoson Zoning Ordinance does not currently provide any specific provisions for the creation of group homes. A Zoning Ordinance amendment could be developed to allow the establishment of group homes on a limited basis, within certain sections of the City, with a conditional use permit.

Another somewhat unique population in Poquoson that is not being adequately served by the existing housing stock in the City are the empty nesters. "Empty Nester" households are simply couples of all income levels whose children have moved out and who, as a result, have more space in their homes than they require. Many empty nesters do not need a 3,000 square foot home on a 25,000 square foot lot, which is becoming the norm in Poquoson. Our current Zoning Ordinance is really tailored toward large homes on large lots, and the trend in Poquoson is for new subdivisions to offer homes in the \$175,000+ range. An ideal home for any empty nesters couples includes only one or two bedrooms and has a small yard that is easily maintained. It is important to not that empty nesters do not place as much strain on City services, such as schools, since there are no children living in the home. This means those homes for empty nesters, and the resultant real estate tax revenue, would probably have a positive impact on the tax base.

There are three methods that could be used to broaden the available housing opportunities for empty nesters - townhouses, condominiums as part of Planned Residential Developments (PRD). Townhouses and apartments, while not generally supported by most citizens in Poquoson, outside of a planned setting, would likely be acceptable to citizens if such units had positive benefits to the City. High-end townhouse, condominium developments as part of Planned



Residential Developments (PRD), on the other hand, would likely have several positive community impacts. One benefit is simply that such housing units would broaden the available housing opportunities for empty nesters and the elderly. Secondly, the construction of apartments as part of commercial developments, such as allowed in the Village Commercial District noted above, would certainly enhance the economic viability of surrounding businesses. Condominiums would also provide additional housing opportunities for the elderly and empty nesters and should be encouraged as part of commercial developments. Condominium development has the greatest potential along our waterfronts. High-end condominiums constructed as part of a marina complex would provide a unique housing opportunity and would significantly increase the value of some of our underutilized waterfront property.

Moderate and medium density Planned Residential Developments, also commonly referred to as conservation subdivisions are another way to provide housing for unique populations such as moderate-income families, the elderly and empty nesters. Medium density subdivisions simply allow developers to build subdivisions at higher densities in exchange for the perpetual maintenance of maximum open space areas. Such moderate or medium density subdivisions typically consist of individual lots that are smaller than the minimum lot sizes currently allowed in Poquoson. The elderly and particularly empty nesters are attracted to these subdivisions because of the smaller homes and lots that require little or no maintenance.

A more detailed discussion of waterfront condominiums and medium density developments is included in the Land Use Element.

Home Pride Program

One method to address a number of housing needs in Poquoson is through the institution of a Home Pride Program. The goal of such a program would simply be to institute a variety of methods to improve and maintain the existing housing stock in the City. Components of this program would include the following:

Property Maintenance Code - Adoption of the property maintenance code would establish minimum building maintenance standards to protect occupants from health and safety hazards that arise from the improper maintenance of structures and property. The Property Maintenance Code, more than anything else is a preventive maintenance measure. Preventive maintenance on homes pays large dividends to individual homeowners and entire neighborhoods. It preserves property, ensures the avoidance of most costly repairs, increases property values, and acts as a stimulus to neighbors to maintain and improve their property.



Housing Inventory - A housing inventory would be developed to include the condition, age, and assessed value of the suspect homes. This inventory would be used as a monitoring mechanism for future planning for rehabilitation, replacement, and/or demolition of dilapidated structures.

Community/Volunteer Improvement Programs - This would be a consortium of local community service groups - Kiwanis, Exchange, Woman's Club, etc. that would provide volunteer labor for small-scale home improvements. These groups would provide a valuable source of free labor for elderly, single parent, and physically challenged homeowners.

Loan Program - Home Pride Loan Program participants would be eligible for low interest loans from local lending institutions. The greatest barrier to some homeowners considering home improvement projects is the inability to qualify for loans.

Contractor/Retailer Discounts - Home Pride Program participants would receive discounts from contractors and retailers for home improvement projects. The contractors and retailers would benefit by an increased customer base and additional work opportunities.

Grants - The program would also include a more aggressive attempt to garner state and federal grants for local housing rehabilitation, infrastructure improvements, and preventive maintenance. Specific grants currently available to Virginia localities include: *State Programs* - Residential Repair and Renovation, Virginia Low Income Weatherization Program, Emergency Home Repair Grant Program, Local Housing Rehabilitation Program, and the Residential Shoreline Sanitation Program. *Federal Programs* - Weatherization Assistance Program and Community Development Block Grants.

Real Estate Tax Exemptions - Another viable component of this program would be to offer a partial real estate tax exemption for substantially rehabilitated, renovated, or replaced homes in the City.

The development of the Home Pride Program would enhance housing opportunities for the elderly and moderate-income families and would help to ensure that our existing older housing stock remains in good condition.

HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Goal:

Promote decent, safe, sanitary, affordable, and aesthetically pleasing housing for all Poquoson residents.



Objectives:

1. Promote low-density residential development to preserve the overall suburban character of the City.
2. Provide opportunities for a variety of housing types and arrangements so that suitable housing will be available to households of a wide range of income levels.
3. Promote the upgrading of housing conditions by encouraging maintenance and upkeep of housing and property by the owner.
4. Consider expanding the opportunities for the development of group homes and accessory apartments as a means to increase the stock of affordable housing, particularly for the elderly.
5. Provide opportunities for the construction of townhouses and condominiums only as part of commercial developments or planned development.
6. Identify areas for residential rehabilitation projects.
7. Encourage adequate housing opportunities for the physically challenged, elderly citizens, and moderate-income families.
8. Encourage pride in home ownership and a sense of community responsibility for neighborhood character.
9. Maintain and increase public and private efforts to improve the condition, availability, and accessibility of the City's housing stock.

Strategies:

1. Continue to encourage large lot residential developments for all subdivisions not specifically designed to serve populations with special needs.
2. Provide for Planned Residential Developments within the City's Zoning Ordinance to promote housing for the elderly and empty nesters.
3. Utilize federal and state housing subsidies, grants, and loans to the fullest extent possible in order to meet the needs of the elderly and lower income families, and to rehabilitate the suspect housing.



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4. Develop a housing inventory to include the condition, age, and assessed value of suspect homes and use as a monitoring mechanism for future planning for rehabilitation, replacement, and/ or demolition of dilapidated structures.
5. Provide educational programming to encourage the maintenance and repair of housing to prevent deterioration.
6. Institute a Home Pride Program to improve and maintain the existing aging housing stock in the City.
7. Adopt a Property Maintenance Code per citizen demand and to protect occupants from health and safety hazards that arise from the improper maintenance of structures and property.
8. Support housing rehabilitation efforts sponsored by local community service and volunteer groups.
9. Consider offering real estate tax exemptions for substantially rehabilitated, renovated, or replaced homes in the City.
10. Revise Zoning Ordinance to expand the opportunities for the development of group homes and accessory townhouses as a means to increase the stock of affordable and elderly housing.
11. Utilize medium density housing, accessory townhouses, and group homes for affordable housing in-lieu of affordable apartment complexes.



Parks and Recreation

Introduction

Parks and Recreation provides leisure facilities and programs in an effort to enhance and enrich the quality of life of a community. Parks protect and preserve land and other natural resources for a variety of passive and active recreational pursuits. Recreation not only includes leisure activities that occur in parks, but also encompasses athletic, social and educational programs that take place outside of the park setting. The availability of nearby recreational facilities greatly affects the range of leisure activities, and the associated quality of life opportunities, of the local population. Because it is beyond the means of most individuals to provide capital intensive recreational facilities for their own use, it is appropriate and necessary for local governments to do so. The provision of parks and recreation facilities and programs also brings a community closer together through increased interaction.

Existing Conditions

The City of Poquoson offers a variety of recreational facilities for both active and passive recreation that are available to all City residents. The Parks and Recreation Department administers a number of programs and special events for children, adults and seniors.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

To a great extent the provision of recreation facilities in Poquoson is guided by the “school/park” concept: a cooperative agreement between the Poquoson City Schools and City Council which provides for the shared use of school buildings for recreation programs and park facilities for school athletics. As a result, most City recreation programs are in City schools. Other City recreational facilities include:

South Lawson Park - South Lawson, a multi-purpose park, constructed in 1983, is located at the end of South Lawson Road and includes *two* soccer fields, outdoor volleyball court, play equipment and two picnic shelters. The park is primarily used as a soccer complex for league practice and games.

Municipal Park/Pool - Municipal Park is in the central part of the City and includes a softball field, walking trail, picnic area and swimming pool. The softball field is used throughout the year by the girl’s High School softball team, little league, fall baseball and recreational girl’s softball. The Municipal Swimming Pool, constructed in 1980, is opened on Memorial Day weekend and remains open until Labor Day. During this time the department teaches swimming lessons to children and adults, holds swim team practice and meets, teaches water aerobics and has an open swim for the public. The Poquoson Seafood Festival and several other special events *are* held in Municipal Park.



Phillips Park - Phillips Park is adjacent to the Primary School, High School and Municipal Park. This park includes three soccer fields, a baseball diamond, three tennis courts and Kid's Island an active children's play area with various playground equipment. The High School baseball and girl's soccer teams, adult softball leagues, little league, American Legion Baseball and youth soccer use Phillips Park.

Messick Park - Messick Park is located along Ridge Road and includes a baseball diamond that is primarily used for practice and informal play *along with* play equipment and an outdoor basketball court.

Messick Point Boat Landing -The Messick Point boat landing at the end of *Messick Road*, constructed in 1992, provides parking spaces and a boat launching area to Front Cove. Land adjacent to the landing is also owned by the City of Poquoson and is used for Parks and Recreation events such as "Fireworks in the Marsh" and "May Day".

Community Center - The Poquoson Community Center is located on Odd Road adjacent to Phillips Park. Various community groups including the Peninsula Agency on Aging that sponsors programs for senior citizens use the Center. It is scheduled to be returned to the school system upon completion of the Municipal Building renovations.

Recreation Programs

The Department of Parks and Recreation annually offers more than 70 programs for adults and youth. Available to young people are a wide range of programs including tennis, soccer, basketball, volleyball, field hockey, street/roller hockey, track and field, baton, gymnastics, swim team and lessons, karate, baseball, softball, basketball, day and sports camps and before/after school recreation programs. Adult programs include tennis, softball, basketball, volleyball, exercise classes, swimming lessons, water aerobics, lifeguard classes, art and craft classes, open gym and day trips.

There are also a number of independent recreational leagues in Poquoson including Little League, two Youth Football leagues, Select Soccer, AAU Baseball, Softball and Basketball, Cub Wrestling and American Legion.

Special Events

The Parks and Recreation Department also sponsors several special events including:

- The **Poquoson Seafood Festival**, a seafood, music and craft event.
- **Child Fest**, an afternoon of fun celebrating children.
- **Holiday Toy Drive**, collecting toys and food for the needy.

- **May Day**, produced with the Poquoson Art League, an event featuring artwork, seafood, music and heritage.
- **Fireworks In The Marsh**, an annual Independence Day Celebration.
- **Easter Egg Hunt**, a morning spent with the Easter Bunny collecting smiles and eggs.

The Parks and Recreation Department

While many of Poquoson's recreational facilities were constructed many years ago, the Parks and Recreation Department was not established until 1980. In 1980 the Department included the Director and one Parks Maintenance worker. The Department ran the Municipal Swimming Pool, offered a handful of programs and assisted with the coordination of 10 different leagues for team play. Since then the Department has grown and in 1997 offered over 70 different programs, activities, and special functions and currently has a total staff of 40 seasonal part-time, 6 full-time and 451 volunteers.

Mission Statement

"The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide facilities, quality services and programs that are affordable, friendly, and open to all citizens. The Department will provide a forum for the community to develop opinions and programs that contribute to the social, economic, and physical quality of life. In addition, the Department will endeavor to communicate information on topical subjects of interest to members, facilitate social contacts among the citizens and promote this community as a good place to live, play, work and visit."

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board is a citizen's group appointed by City Council that works with the Parks and Recreation Department on program assessment and development, long range planning, and customer service. The Board developed a Master Plan for Parks and Recreation that was adopted by the City Council in 1995. The Board, consisting of six members representing each electoral district in the City and one at large member, also advises the Planning Commission and City Council on issues that affect parks and recreation facilities and programs identified in the Comprehensive Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Capital Improvements Plan and Annual Financial Plan. In June of 1996, the Board conducted a Recreational Facility Assessment Study of all existing parks. The study compared existing structures to current state and national standards. The study was adopted as an appendix to the Master Plan that same year.



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Demand For Parks and Recreation

What makes Poquoson different from other localities regarding leisure activities is its high citizen participation rate. In 1997 nearly 85% of Poquoson's residents participated in one or more parks and recreation programs. Consequently, the number of recreation programs for children and adults has increased over the past five years. The number of youth programs increased 31% between 1993 and 1997 while the number of adult programs increased 77%. The number of program participants also increased dramatically between 1993 and 1997. Youth participation increased by 51% and adult participants by 59% during this five-year period.

Comparison of Existing Facilities with State Standards

The Virginia Division of Planning and Recreation Resources developed the Virginia Outdoors Plan in 1994 and updated it in 1996. The Plan provides recreational facility standards based on a jurisdiction's population. The table below identifies those recreational facility needs in Poquoson based on the population:

Table 1 - Poquoson Recreational Facility Shortages

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Current Supply</u>	<u>Recommended Units/Population</u>	<u>Shortage</u>
Beach	0 acres	25' Shore/1,000	275' Shoreline
Indoor Pool	0 pools	1pool/10,000	1 pool
Picnic Areas	16 picnic tables	10 tables/1,000	94 tables
Baseball Fields: 350' x 350'	1 field	1field/6,000	1 field
Softball Fields:	1 field	1field/3,000	3 fields
Golf	0 holes	9 holes/25,000	9 holes
Playgrounds: Neighbor	0 acres	3 acres/1,000	33 acres
Sports Complex	16 acres	4 acres/1,000	28 acres

In addition to the facility shortages listed above, growing participation in both private and public recreation programs has placed a heavy burden on athletic fields in the City, which are also used for school sports. Not only does this create difficulty in scheduling field use, but also makes it



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almost impossible to establish and implement a turf management program. This contributes to overuse of fields thus resulting in poor and unsafe field conditions. The overall shortage of fields and indoor facilities forces the Parks and Recreation Department to limit the participation of children and adults because there are not enough recreational areas to accommodate all those who want to play.

Citizen Comment

City of Poquoson residents were given three opportunities to comment on parks and recreation: the comprehensive plan development public input sessions, citizen opinion survey, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board needs assessment survey. The results of these surveys indicate the following:

- Strong support for the construction of bikeways/sidewalks.
- The following parks and recreation facilities were inadequate: trails and bike paths, gyms, football fields, soccer fields, community rooms, picnic facilities, playgrounds, swimming pools, and senior/teen facilities.
- Broadly supported programs include the following: athletics, adult trips, bicycling, exercise fitness facilities and classes, swimming, walking/jogging, and adult education programs.
- The most widely desired new recreational facilities include: bikeways, recreation center, athletic fields, new parks, beach, picnic areas and an indoor swimming pool.
- In general, citizens have indicated a willingness to pay higher taxes for increased recreational programs and facilities.
- The need for additional recreational facilities in the western portions of Poquoson was also frequently mentioned, as was the expansion of the Municipal Park area.
- Citizens were extremely satisfied with current program offerings but wanted to see development of more and varied programs for teens, adults and seniors.

Future Needs

In addition to those items listed in the Goals, Objectives and Strategies section of this element, the following items have been identified as primary future needs:

Bikeways, Sidewalks and Trails

Clearly the development of additional bikeways, trails and sidewalks was the most frequently cited need during the public input process. The purpose for developing a comprehensive system



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of bikeways, sidewalks and trails is primarily as an alternative mode of transportation but also for increased recreational opportunities. Other benefits of a "pedestrian system" include energy conservation, reduced noise and air pollution, motor vehicle traffic reduction, health and fitness improvement, as well as other personal and economic benefits.

The City currently provides only 2 miles of formal sidewalks/bikeways. These facilities are located along portions of Wythe Creek Road and Poquoson Avenue. The only trails in Poquoson are within Municipal Park. A formal system of bikeways, sidewalks and trails is an integral component to enhancing the quality of life in Poquoson. The lack of adequate pedestrian facilities makes Poquoson extremely dependent on automobiles for travel anywhere in the City. A pedestrian system should be developed to link the following: parks and recreation facilities, schools, municipal buildings, shopping districts, waterfront access points, and open spaces.

Formal sidewalks/bikeways, meaning asphalt or concrete structures, should be developed along the major collector streets in Poquoson including Wythe Creek Road, Poquoson Avenue, Little Florida Road, Victory Boulevard, Yorktown Road, Hunt's Neck Road, Messick Road, Cedar Road and Odd Road. Consideration should also be given to the construction of formal sidewalks/bikeways along Pasture Road, Brown's Neck Road, Ren's Road and Hudgins Road. All roadway-widening projects involving collector streets should include the construction of formal sidewalks and bikeways. All new roadways including subdivision streets should also include sidewalks and bikeways. The Planning and Engineering Departments should encourage the development of bikeways, sidewalks and trails when reviewing development proposals.

Several trails should also be developed. Trails can be constructed with a variety of materials including gravel, compacted sand, mulch or even pine straw. Trails should be developed within wooded areas, along water features and within parks. Trails are different than formal bikeways/sidewalks in that they are much less expensive to construct and primarily exist for recreational purposes.

The attached Parks and Recreation Facilities Map identifies sidewalk/bikeway locations and trail corridors. Corridors are used when site specific routes cannot be identified.

A formal Bikeways Plan should be developed to provide detailed facility development and location criteria, cost estimates and alternative funding methods.

Recreation Center

The development of a recreation center was broadly supported during the public input process. The Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment survey specifically asked respondents to comment on the creation of a recreation center. The survey respondents cited the following as being needed in a recreation center if constructed: aerobics, gymnastics, indoor gymnasium, dance, exercise/weight training equipment; and a swimming pool for recreational swimming, lessons, competitive swimming, water aerobics and therapeutic aquatics.



The development of a recreation center including all of the facilities noted above would cost approximately 3 to 4 million dollars. By constructing the facility in Municipal Park, attached to the existing pool, the cost is reduced to less than 1 million dollars. It becomes less difficult for the City to finance such a facility with General Fund monies or a bond initiative. A new recreation center located in Municipal Park takes advantage of existing facilities and land. A recreation center in this area would place it in the center of town and maximize resources.

Programming of a new recreation center will enhance current existing city programs and functions. As well as, allowing for increased recreational opportunities and school activities. The facility will meet the needs of the community and become a focal gathering place for our citizens.

Municipal Golf Course

As a result of the growing popularity of golf for all age groups, regionally as well as on a national level, the city should consider building an 18 hole golf course in the Big Woods Area of the city. A golf course provides many functions as a recreational facility, an economic development tool, a revenue producer and a piece to the regional puzzle. A golf course would link Poquoson into one of the nation's fastest growing golf regions, allowing us to market our resources with Hampton, Newport News, Williamsburg, Norfolk and Virginia Beach. A public/private partnership should be sought to pursue this venture. With the loss of the YMCA, a golf course becomes a quality of life component for the community, a development asset for the Big Woods and a tax revenue source for the city.

Open Space/Green Area

An effort should be made to preserve open space and green areas throughout the city to enhance recreational opportunities and to protect wildlife habitats. Specific attention should be paid to preserving those areas that are along proposed bikeway and trail corridors and adjacent to wetlands. The city should also consider the development of land conservancy that could accept land donations. Such donations would provide tax savings to landowners. The Planning and Engineering Departments should encourage the preservation of open space and green areas when reviewing development proposals.

Fields and Facilities

As noted above, the demand for field space in the city is increasing and the construction of additional fields is needed. One additional sports complex should be constructed to include at least a multi-baseball/softball field complex with a central press box/restroom building, one soccer field and one football field. All of these facilities need to be lighted in order to accommodate the demand for evening play. The park must be a minimum of 20 acres to accommodate the fields and required support facilities, parking, restrooms and buffers. This



sports complex should be located in the western district of the city in order to make the site accessible and convenient to most residents, and to insure that all necessary infrastructure (roads, parking, sewer etc.) is available to serve the site.

Aquatics and Water-Related Activities

The City of Poquoson has over 84 miles of shoreline on Back River, Poquoson River, the Chesapeake Bay and its many tributaries. The vast majority of the shoreline is in private ownership. Given the strong citizen support for waterfront access opportunities, the City should actively pursue the acquisition and improvement of several waterfront sites. Specific improvements should be made to the following

Amory's Wharf - The land surrounding Amory's Wharf located at the end of Poquoson Avenue is a small peninsula consisting of marshland with few trees. A small parking area and concrete boat ramp is at the end of the peninsula. The existing pier is very dangerous and must be removed. A new pier would provide badly needed public access to the water and would provide opportunities for fishing and crabbing. Other improvements that could be developed at Amory's Wharf include historical interpretive signage, picnic areas, restoration of wetland species, and enhanced landscaping.

Dryden Dock - In 1995 the City of Poquoson condemned the old "Dryden Dock", located at the end of Ren's Road, due to its deteriorated and hazardous condition. The dock is not only an eyesore but is also dangerous. The dock should be renovated to its original condition to create a badly needed waterfront access point in the central part of the city. The City could also provide boat sewage pump-out facilities and/or the sale of gasoline to recover the renovation costs.

Messick Point - The City of Poquoson owns approximately 14 acres of land at Messick Point located at the end of Messick Road. The City is actively pursuing economic development proposals for this land area, with the primary uses of the property geared towards seafood related industry. As part of this development, the city should insure that a portion of this property is reserved to accommodate recreational programs such as sailing lessons, canoe and kayak trips and picnic areas.

Blueways - Of its total land area of 9,395 acres, Poquoson has 5,089 acres of wetlands. This includes the 4,100-acre Plum Tree Island Marsh, the largest saline marsh in the lower Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately there are very few public access points into the marsh. Several Blueways should be identified in the City. Blueways are simply navigable portions of the marsh that can be accessed from various public land areas. Blueways are typically marginally navigable waterways that can only accommodate kayaks, canoes or other small watercraft. Blueways development will allow residents to learn more about our marshlands, and will provide enhanced wildlife viewing and exercise opportunities.



Parks and Recreation Goals, Objectives and Strategies

Goal:

Provide for a range of recreational facilities and activities that are appropriate and adequate in number, size, and location to accommodate the needs of all City residents.

Objectives:

1. Develop a “pedestrian system” of bikeways, sidewalks, and trails to give citizens safe access to parks, athletic fields, schools, shopping areas and adjoining neighborhoods and to meet the recreational needs of the community.
2. Provide aquatic facilities and opportunities to the citizens of Poquoson and expand interest in aquatics and water-related activities.
3. Provide access in aquatics to encompass swimming, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, fitness and other desirable water related activities.
4. Identify and prioritize the major roads for inclusion in a plan to extend bikeways and walking paths throughout the city.
5. Provide year round access to an aquatic facility.
6. Open public access to the surrounding rivers and marshes for educational, recreational, adventure and cultural opportunities.
7. Inform and educate the citizens of Poquoson as to the needs, programs, and future plans for aquatics and water-related activities.
8. Ensure that the proposed recreation center provides facilities for the citizens of Poquoson that are accessible to all. In addition, provide programs that are not currently available while enhancing current programs.
9. Construct a recreation center that would include program space to meet the needs of Poquoson citizens.
10. Find a means to relieve the over crowded Community Center and establish a place where seniors and teens can gather.
11. Add new fields and facilities for all age groups in the city to accommodate the growing needs of Poquoson. This multi-field complex should be developed in order to support various different athletic and sporting activities such as baseball, softball, soccer, football, and field hockey.
12. Add lighted fields in both new and existing park locations.
13. Pursue a public/private partnership to establish and construct a golf course in the Big Woods.



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14. Provide a system of open spaces throughout the city to meet the need for additional green space for passive recreation and relaxation.
15. Increase the number of parks and picnic areas within the city to provide adequate leisure time opportunities for all citizens in all areas of the city.
16. Continue implementation of the “school/park” concept to provide cooperation between the school system and the City Council in the provision of recreational facilities.
17. Provide a system of open spaces throughout the city to meet the need for additional green space for passive recreation and relaxation.
18. Increase the number of parks and picnic areas within the city to provide adequate leisure time opportunities for all citizens in all areas of the city.
19. Continue implementation of the “school/park” concept to provide cooperation between the school system and the City Council in the provision of recreational facilities. Consider the particular needs of special populations in the City, such as the young and the elderly, when planning recreational facilities.
20. Consider expansion of existing recreational facilities where feasible.
21. Acquire land in the City for additional recreation facilities as determined to be necessary, and within budgetary constraints, to meet the existing and projected demand for both public and private recreation programs.
22. Increase recreational and boating access to waterways. Promote the provision of open space, green space and recreational facilities in new residential developments.
23. Ensure that athletic fields and other recreational facilities are well maintained.

Strategies

1. Actively involve citizens with the bi-annual updates of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
2. Identify roads that need bikeways and walking trails.
3. Prioritize roads by need and ability to connect with existing structures and linkages to desired land uses.
4. Seek alternative sources of funding for bikeway development including State and Federal transportation improvement funds, Division of Conservation and Recreation monies and other grants.
5. Ensure all new roadways including subdivision streets include bikeways and/or sidewalks.
6. Require all collector street upgrades to include the provision of bikeways and sidewalks.

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7. Consider the development of ordinances that require new developments to include bikeways, sidewalks and activity areas along roads or through developments.
8. Give incentives to developers who provide bikeways, sidewalks, and activity areas as part of their developments.
9. Begin funding for the acquisition of land for construction of bikeways and walking paths through the City's Capital Improvements Program (CIP).
10. Provide a system of paths throughout the Big Woods Development for use by citizens to provide exercise and enjoyment of the surroundings.
11. Reserve a portion of the Messick Point property to be used for adventure and educational based programs such as canoe trips in the marsh, kayak trips through the local waterways, sailing lessons in the spring and fall, and interpretive trips through the marsh.
12. Provide access to an indoor aquatics facility for the purposes of providing year round opportunities for swimming lessons; aquatic exercise and fitness programs; instruction in scuba diving and water safety programs; and therapeutic rehabilitation and fitness programs.
13. Provide access to an indoor aquatics facility for the purpose of fulfilling the needs of the competitive and recreational swimmer.
14. Continue to pursue a public/private partnership to establish a recreation center in Poquoson. This facility should make use of the existing 25-meter outdoor pool to maximize resources and provide appropriate programs to meet the needs of the community.
15. Make improvements to Amory's Wharf including the development of a new pier that would provide badly needed public access to the water and would provide opportunities for fishing and crabbing; include historical interpretive signage, picnic areas, restoration of wetland species, and enhanced landscaping.
16. Renovate the condemned Dryden Dock to provide a badly needed waterfront access point in the central part of the city and also provide additional opportunities for fishing, crabbing and boating. Consider providing boat sewage pump-out facilities and/or the sale of gasoline to recover the renovation costs.
17. Explore the opportunity to develop a public beach and construct a beach if feasible.
18. Develop a map that identifies the locations of all-aquatic facilities and opportunities available in the city.
19. Use the data gathered from the Community Input Sessions and the Needs Assessment Surveys to help design and program the new recreation center.
20. With the completion of the new City Hall and Library Complex, renovate the Municipal Building into Administrative Offices for Parks and Recreation and a Community Center.



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The center would be used by preschoolers, seniors and mature adults during the day and by teens and community groups at night.

21. Approach the Peninsula Agency on Aging and see if it would be willing to assist with the renovations and staffing of the center.
22. Identify the greatest needs for existing fields and facilities in terms of quality improvements.
23. Define costs associated with field and facility improvements and identify the resources needed to accomplish them.
24. Prioritize the targeted parks and recreation facility areas for improvement.
25. Increase the level of involvement from the City of Poquoson in terms of budgeting and resources allocated to parks and recreation.
26. Increase the level of involvement from residents of the City of Poquoson by instilling a greater degree of pride and ownership in the fields and facilities.
27. Implement improvements identified in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
28. Develop a method to monitor the success, benefits, and costs associated with field and facility improvement projects.
29. Design a timeline and budget to achieve the development of needed field and facility improvements.
30. Include specific field and facility improvement plans as part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and incorporate this plan into the City budget.
31. Identify and prioritize lighting needs of fields and facilities.
32. Incorporate gathering places, green space and trails for passive recreation in the Big Woods as part of the City Hall and Library Complex in order to provide a gathering place for citizens and visitors to the new Village Commercial District.
33. Preserve open space and green areas throughout the city to enhance recreational opportunities and to protect wildlife habitats.
34. Retain green areas around those areas that are along proposed bikeway and trail corridors and adjacent to wetlands.
35. Consider the development of a land conservancy that could accept land donations that would provide tax savings to landowners.



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36. Encourage the preservation of open space and green areas when reviewing development proposals.
37. Consider the adoption of ordinances requiring new developments to set aside a percentage of land for recreation and open space.
38. Give incentives to developers who provide land for recreation as part of their development.
39. Work with the Fish and Wildlife Service to identify and develop recreational opportunities within the Plum Tree Island Wildlife Refuge. Activities may include waterfront access, Blueways, marsh viewing areas, public beaches, hunting and fishing.
40. Attract funding for recreational facilities and services through outside grants whenever possible.
41. Use existing facilities as fully as possible and provide for their adequate maintenance before developing new facilities.
42. Conduct survey to identify developer to construct golf course in Big Woods.
43. Identify private sources for partnership in development of golf course.
44. Identify property and pursue long term leases with owners to develop sports complex and neighborhood parks.
45. Establish a Foundation as part of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to take donations of cash and property, and to raise funds for Parks and Recreation needs.
46. Establish sub-committees of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to work on specific needs and issues facing the board, department and city.
47. Organize all independent leagues and associations, as well as schools into a working group to help identify needs, relieve pressure on facilities, resolve scheduling conflicts and help develop new facilities.
48. Identify alternative location for Public Works/Garage and develop existing location into additional park and athletic fields.

