

# Regional Update

A Monthly Report of Activities on the Eastern Shore of Virginia

January 2004

## Landlords Wanted

In early December, the A-NPDC's Section 8 staff pulled 200 families from the waiting list for rent assistance. These families were issued vouchers on December 17th and 18th and will be searching for suitable housing. We are looking for landlords who would like to participate in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. Some of the landlord benefits are:

- ability to select family
- rents comparable to unassisted housing
- direct deposit of payment available
- no obligation to participate for subsequent vacancies

Anyone interested in additional information or in participation as a landlord should contact Josie James or Bobbie Wert at 787-2936.



## Regional Partnership Re-Qualified

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Regional Partnership has requalified under the Virginia Regional Competitiveness Program. Bill Shelton, Director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, wrote in the notification letter, "We are delighted that the Eastern Shore Regional Partnership remains committed to undertaking regional activities that will enhance the future economic competitiveness of the area." The application for requalification was evaluated in categories such as economic development, education, housing and wastewater treatment.

The Partnership, a coalition of business, civic, education, and government leaders, originally qualified for the state program in 1998 for a 5-year period. It resulted in the Virginia Space Flight Academy, a local office for the Small Business Development Center, engineering work for a Workforce Development Center at the Community College, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Portal on the Internet, and the Network Future series of e-commerce seminars.

To requalify, the Partnership's 36 members worked through a year-long process to select seven new projects to help our local economy. The seven projects were approved by both Counties' Boards of Supervisors in July.

The Partnership has identified the following projects to improve the economic competitiveness of our region:

1. Promote the efforts of the Public Service Authority and liaison between the private sector and the PSA.
2. Develop the Wallops Commercialization Center, a business incubator to assist commercialization of business and service activities.
3. Develop a Regional Downtown Revitalization Program to provide staff for efforts in 5 Shore towns using the Main Street Program approach.
4. Identify demand for broadband Internet access and recruit suppliers of affordable high-speed Internet access.
5. Start a workforce development education program that provides information to parents, guidance counselors, and students on all the options available in preparing for careers.
6. Create an Academical Village, a collection of 35-40 quality, affordable apartments for teachers, to be a tool for attracting and retaining new teachers for both school systems.
7. Develop an Eastern Shore Heritage Trail to encourage travelers to get off U.S. Route 13 and enjoy the scenic beauty, wildlife, history, shops and restaurants of Accomack and Northampton counties.

# Downtown Chincoteague Grows New Businesses

Three new businesses will be opening soon in Chincoteague's downtown business district. The historic Masonic Temple building will be the new home of Blue Heron Books and a high speed internet service to be operational this spring. The owners will make extensive renovations and will be receiving design assistance through the downtown revitalization program.

Blue Heron Upholstery (no connection) will also locate on Main Street. The shop's owner has been making old

furniture new for over five years.

Island Retail of Ocean City will be opening a second location of their T-Shirt Factory in the downtown building being vacated by Family Dollar.

The Chincoteague Preservation Association will be working with the Planning District Commission staff to develop an inventory of commercial buildings as part of the Town's revitalization program. This information will be used to help attract other new businesses to Main Street.

# Historic Rehab & Enterprise Zone Presentations

There will be opportunities for local businesses and homeowners to learn about Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and Enterprise Zone incentives at presentations in January and February.

The tax codes of the United States and of the Commonwealth of Virginia provide incentives for taxpayers who contribute to the preservation of old and historic buildings. By rehabilitating eligible buildings, taxpayers can qualify for substantial income tax credits. Learn all about it at presentations by Paige Weiss of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources on January 27. She'll be at Stella's in Onancock at noon, and at the Palace Theater in Cape Charles at 6:30 pm.

The Virginia Enterprise Zone program provides incentives to companies that create new full-time jobs or invest in real estate improvements. The Eastern Shore's Zone covers all of Northampton County and lower Accomack County. Businesses in the Zone can earn job grants, income tax reductions, and real estate improvement tax credits. Mike Locher of Goodman & Company will make a presentation about the Enterprise Zone on February 24 at 6:00 pm at Little Italy Restaurant in Nassawadox.

To attend any of these three presentations, please pre-register by calling Sarah Gromow at the Small Business Development Center, 789-3418.

# Household Income Growth on the Eastern Shore

The median household income in Accomack and Northampton Counties is growing faster than in the state as a whole. From 1990 to 2000, the median household income in Virginia increased 40%, but it grew 48% in Accomack and 56% in Northampton.

Household income improvement is also seen in a breakdown of households by income brackets. The Eastern Shore

of Virginia experienced a dramatic increase in the number of households in upper income brackets from 1990 to 2000. The only income bracket that had a decrease was the under \$25,000 bracket. There were 2,069 fewer households at the lowest income level, despite the fact that the total number of households in the region increased by 2,855.

**Number of Households by Income Eastern Shore of Virginia**

|                      | 1990   | 2000  | % Change |
|----------------------|--------|-------|----------|
| Less than \$25,000   | 10,799 | 8,730 | -19%     |
| \$25,000 to \$49,999 | 5,113  | 6,802 | +33%     |
| \$50,000 to \$74,999 | 1,222  | 2,958 | +142%    |
| \$75,000 to \$99,999 | 325    | 1,062 | +227%    |
| \$100,000 or more    | 275    | 1,037 | +277%    |

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## Elaine Meil Hired as Regional Planner

The A-NPDC has hired Elaine Meil of Yorktown as the new Regional Planner. Ms. Meil has a B.S. in Geology from Virginia Tech and a Masters Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University, and comes to the A-NPDC from a position with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

As the A-NPDC Regional Planner, Ms. Meil will be preparing the Eastern Shore Hazard Mitigation Plan, providing GIS and data services, and assisting with other planning projects.

The A-NPDC welcomes Elaine and her husband Conrad to the Shore.

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## United Way 100% Participation

The United Way of Virginia's Eastern Shore 2003 campaign had 100% participation from the staff of the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission.

Over the past twelve years, the United Way has been the conduit through which the people of the Shore have donated over two million dollars to local service agencies. Most of the money has come from people who were solicited at their workplaces and given the opportunity to fulfill pledges through payroll deductions.



### How to Contact the A-NPDC

If you have questions or comments about anything in this publication, please don't hesitate to contact the Planning District Commission.

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