

CHAPTER 11: TOWN OF ACCOMAC

TOWN PROFILE

The Town of Accomac is known for its historic architecture and is the County seat for the County of Accomack. Before settlers first arrived in what is now Virginia, Native Americans called the Eastern Shore “Accawmacke”, meaning “across the water place”. The original shire of Accomac was created in 1634 and was made up of the entire Eastern Shore. The name was changed to “Northampton” in 1642, and over 20 years later, the area was divided into two counties-Northampton and Accomac. In 1940, the County of “Accomac” officially became “Accomack” ([Accomack – Virginia](#)). In 1786, Virginia officially established the Town as Drummondtown and was renamed Accomac in 1893, which came as a result of a petition to the Virginia General Assembly for a town to exist at the courthouse site (*Town of Accomac Comprehensive Plan*, 1989). The Town of Accomac was incorporated in 1944 and includes just 250 acres, 0.4 square miles ([Accomack – Virginia](#)).

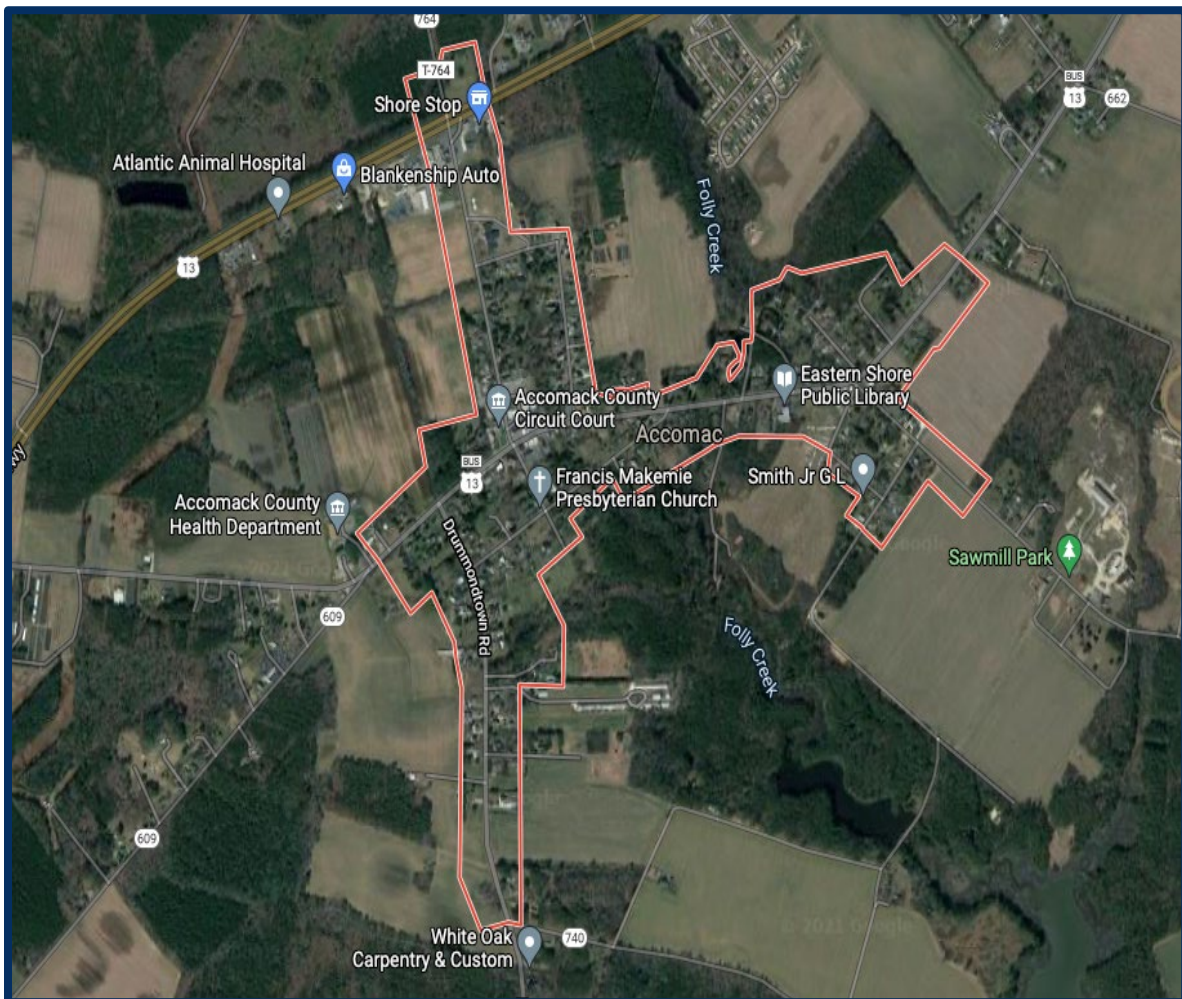


Figure 1: Accomac Context and Google Map

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 the 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

According to the American Community Survey Estimates, Accomac had a population of 479 in 2019. The median age is 48.1, about ten years higher than the median age for the nation. This is indicative of an older population, with over 25% of the population above the age of 62. About 20% of the population speak a language other than English, with the other languages being primarily Spanish. This is important to consider in the event of a potential hazard in order to ensure all citizens are able to access important safety information.

Table 1: Accomac Demographic Information

	2020	2014*	2010**
Population	519	485	519***
Median Age	48.1*	43.1	44.0
Disability	69*	46	NA
Income			
Median Household Income	\$50,625*	\$41,750	NA
Poverty Level	12.6%*	5.5%	NA
Language			
Only English	80.1%*	81.0%	95.8%
Other	19.9%*	19.0%	4.2%
Spanish	16.3%*	16.7%	3.4%
Indo-Euro	3.6%*	2.3%	0.8%
Asian	0.0%*	0.0%	0.0%
Other	0.0%*	0.0%	0.0%

Source: U.S. Census 2020, *ACS, 2014-2019, **ACS, 2010, ***U.S. Census, 2010

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.

According to Table 2, the majority of Town residents work in the Educational and Health Care Services industry (22.7%), followed by the Manufacturing industry (16.7%). The high percentage in the Manufacturing industry is likely due to nearby poultry processing plants, such as Perdue Farms and Tyson Foods. These companies often have policies in place to mitigate the economic impact for both the company and the employees; however, long-term closures would have strong negative impacts on the Town. There would be a 'domino effect' from such a closure, as employees in that industry wouldn't have spending dollars for rent, local shops, nor family necessities. Other dependent agricultural businesses would be at a loss as well, particularly noting the increasing trend of individuals in the agricultural industry. The Town of Accomac hosts an abundance of local government entities, which may employ residents of Accomac as well.

Table 2: Accomac Local Workforce Industry

Civilian Employed Population						
Industry	2019		2014		2010*	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Agriculture, forestry, fishing/hunting, or mining	10	5.1%	6	3.4%	0	0.0%
Construction	11	5.6%	5	2.8%	19	11.6%
Manufacturing	33	16.7%	28	15.8%	21	12.8%
Wholesale trade	0	0.0%	7	4.0%	0	0.0%
Retail trade	12	6.1%	21	11.9%	17	10.4%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	11	5.6%	0	0.0%	4	2.4%
Information	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.8%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rentals	5	2.5%	6	3.4%	10	6.1%
Professional, scientific, waste management	20	10.1%	10	5.6%	35	21.3%
Educational and health care services	45	22.7%	48	27.1%	31	18.9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, food	23	11.6%	32	18.1%	2	1.2%
Public Admin	13	6.6%	11	6.2%	16	9.8%
Other	15	7.6%	3	1.7%	6	3.7%
TOTAL CIVILIAN EMPLOYED POPULATION	198	-	177	-	164	-

Source: ACS, 2014-2019, *ACS, 2010

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 Town of Accomac hosts an abundance of local government establishments, i.e., the Health Department, Accomack County School Board, Eastern Shore Public Library, Planning District Commission, Accomack County Circuit Court, Accomack County General District Court (Juvenile, Magistrate), Accomack County Jail and Sherriff's Office, as well as several law and financial offices. Accomac also has a gas station, auto repair shops, and a lunch café.

Table 3: Accomac Business Establishment Types

	Total Establishments
Industry Code Description	2021
Agricultural, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	-
Construction	3
Manufacturing	-
Wholesale Trade	-
Retail Trade	-
Transportation and Warehousing	-
Information	-
Finance and Leisure	-
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	-
Administrative and Support and Waste Management Remediation Services	-
Health Care and Social Assistance	2
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	-
Accommodation and Food Services	2
Other Services (Except Public Admin)	-
Total, All Establishments	10
Total Employees	-

Source: Personal Communications, Mayor Pat Smith, July 15, 2021

BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE

§201.6(d)(3) 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.

As shown in Table 4, Accomac had a total of 215 total housing units in 2019. Nearly 23% of these units are vacant, which is important as unoccupied homes pose more of a threat during a hazard due to lack of maintenance or unsecured yard debris.

Table 4: Accomac Housing

	2019	2014	2010*
Total Housing Units	215	238	198
Occupied	166	179	158
Vacant	49	59	40
Owner-Occupied	121	114	131
Renter-Occupied	45	65	27
Median Housing Value	\$152,500	NA	NA

Source: ACS, 2014-2019, *ACS, 2010

TRANSPORTATION

The Town of Accomac corporate limits cross over Route 13 Highway, but the majority of the Town is located about a half-mile from the highway. Business 13 runs through the Town and connects back to the main highway. Drummond Town Road splits off of Business 13 and runs through several seaside towns. Church Road also connects Accomac directly to the Town of Onley, which hosts several fast-food restaurants, gas stations, a Walmart and Food Lion, and several other services.

According to the 2019 five-year estimates by the American Community Survey, there are nine occupied housing units without a vehicle. The measure of vehicles available to households is one indicator of a household's ability to evacuate when necessary. Star Transit and Shore Ride are available for residents; however, it is highly unlikely these services would operate during a hazard.

Table 5: Accomac Vehicles Available per Household

Vehicles Available	2019
None	9
One	74
Two	45
Three or more	38

Source: ACS, 2014-2019

COMMERCIAL AREAS

The majority of Accomac is made up of Accomack County administrative offices, the Accomack County Public School administration, the regional Planning District Commission, and the Eastern Shore Public Library along with several attorney offices. These buildings are all located in the center of the Town, off Courthouse Avenue and Front Street.

Commercial areas in Accomac are limited. There is a gas station off the highway within Town limits as well as a farm, lunch café, and an auto repair shop.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

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.

Aside from the several government offices previously noted, the Town has many other community facilities. The Accomac Town Hall is located next to the Accomack County Courthouses along with the Accomack County Police Department. The Town of Accomac does not have its own police department or fire and rescue services.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police protection is provided by the Accomack County Sheriff's Department, stationed in the center of the County administration offices, and the Virginia State Police. Fire protection and EMS services are provided by Accomack County and surrounding towns.

WATER SUPPLY & SEWAGE DISPOSAL

The Town currently relies on groundwater wells and septic systems. Accomac is located in Wellhead Protection Area C-Perdue Area. Other major withdrawers from the area include the Town of Accomac, Perdue, Riverside, and the Towns of Onancock and Parksley. Additional large withdrawals could have an impact on water quality from saltwater intrusion and deterioration of water quality.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

The Town contracts with Davis Disposal for weekly residential trash collection, which is transported to a county transfer station.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Saw Mill Park, located on Joynes Neck Rd, is equipped with a baseball/softball field, concession stand, playground equipment, picnic tables, and a hiking trail. Public Wi-Fi is also available (<https://www.co.accomack.va.us/>). The Accomack County Parks and Recreation Department office is also located within Town.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Accomac is a designated State Historic District and features restored colonial architecture ([About the County | Accomack County](#)). The Eastern Shore Public Library is currently located here, but will be moving north to the Town of Parksley.

DRAINAGE DITCHES

Maintenance of drainage ditches and storm drains in Town is the responsibility of VDOT and the County. Due to the low, flat terrain in the Town, localized flooding during heavy rains is often an issue. Drainage is provided by ditches along the roads which provide adequate drainage, except during heavy rains (*Town of Accomac Comprehensive Plan*, 1989). More than likely, this could be mitigated with the regular and proper maintenance of drainage ditches and possibly replacement culverts.

SCHOOLS

Accawmacke Elementary School is located in Town as well as all of the Accomack County School Administration offices. There are also approximately 2-3 private day cares in Accomac.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Town of Accomac is relatively flat with slopes between 0-2% and in some areas, 0-6% (*Town of Accomac Comprehensive Plan, 1989*¹). Elevation is approximately between 35-40 feet. Suitability and limitations of the soils have a significant impact on the chances of future development. Due to septic issues all over the region, Hampton Roads Sanitation District plans to run pipes into the Town of Accomac as well as several other Towns on the Eastern Shore; however, it will likely be several years before this project is complete.

LAND USE LAND COVER

Primary land use in the Town of Accomac is residential. Residential land use in the Town comprised approximately 83% of total acreage within corporate limits in 1989 (*Town of Accomac Comprehensive Plan, 1989*¹); however, this has absolutely changed since then. The other largest areas of land use in the Town include vacant use and public use. It is likely that public use is much higher than the Town's most recent comprehensive plan states, as the most recent plan was adopted in 1989. There is very little agricultural land use in Accomac.

GROUNDWATER

The Town of Accomac is completely reliant on groundwater as its source of potable water. Coarse sand deposits underneath the ground called aquifers store the water and exist up to 300-feet below ground, with salt water occupying 300+ feet below ground. The balance between withdrawal and recharge is maintained through the continuous observation of water levels and water quality (*Town of Accomac Comprehensive Plan, 1989*).

The Town has previously experienced issues with groundwater due to the amount of groundwater usage by Perdue, causing shallow wells in the Town to become dry. Since this instance, Perdue has begun to more closely monitor their groundwater usage, stabilizing the water table (*Town of Accomac Comprehensive Plan, 1989*).

¹ Due to the age of the Town's most recent comprehensive plan and the lack of additional resources, a good portion of the information provided in this section is likely out of date. The Town of Accomac has expressed interest in updating their plans. We hope to include more accurate and up-to-date information as it becomes available.

HAZARD PREPAREDNESS & COMMUNITY CAPABILITIES

PREVIOUS HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

§201.6(b)(3), §201.6(c)(3), §201.6(d)(3) This is the first year the Town of Accomac has participated in the hazard mitigation planning process. The Town has not updated their Comprehensive Plan since 1989.

Table 6 : Town of Accomac Hazard Mitigation Resources

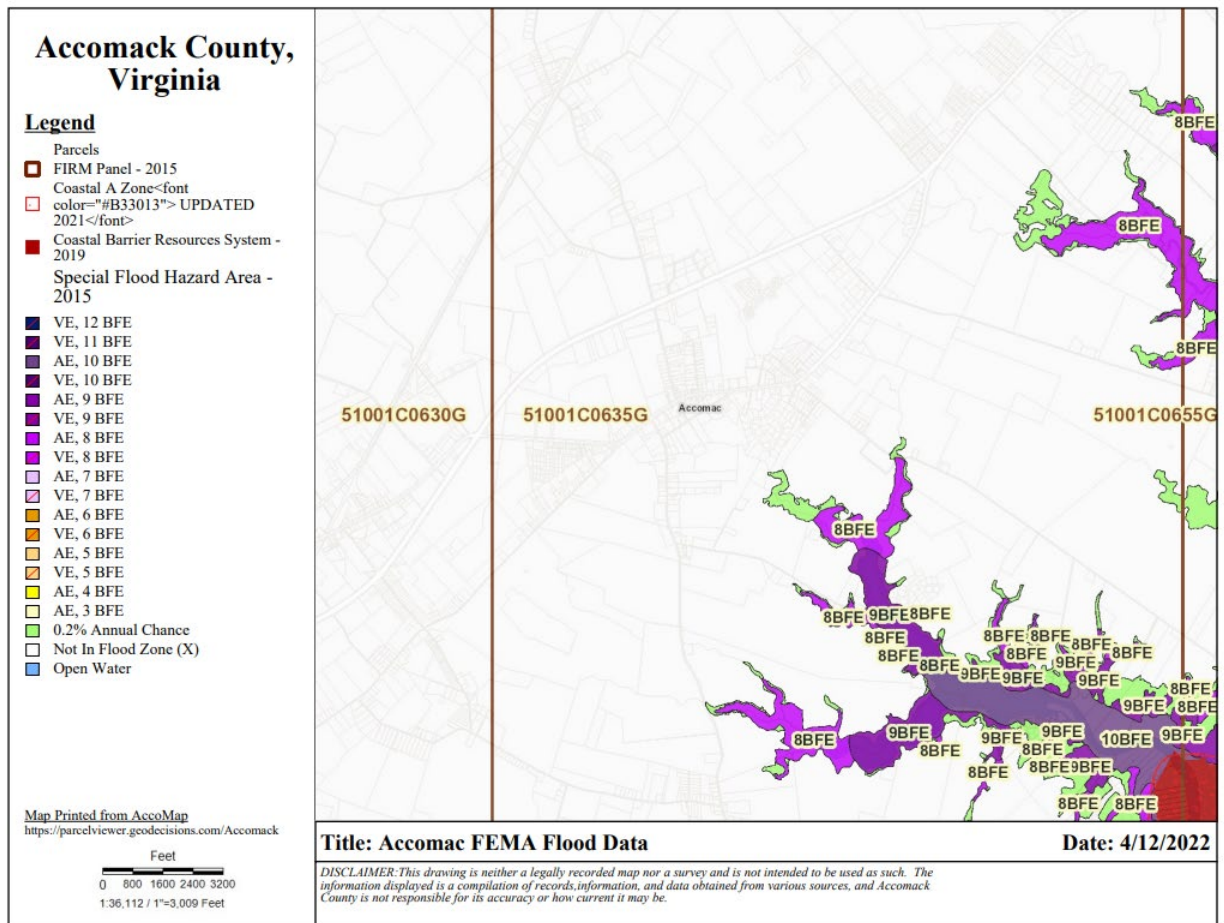
	Ordinances, Plans, & Publications														Resources, Committees			
Authority	Building Code	Chesapeake Bay Act	SWMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning &/or Subdivision Ordinance	Storm Water Regulations	Transportation Infrastructure Inundation Vulnerability Report	All Hazards Preparedness Brochure	Emergency Operations Plans	Mutual Aid Agreements/Documents	Neighborhood Emergency Help Plan	Virginia Hurricane Evacuation Guide	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 on March 16, 2009. There are no identified Special Flood Hazard Areas in the Town. More information on repetitive loss properties, NFIP policies and claims, and the CRS program can be found in Chapter 6: Coastal Flooding and Chapter 9: The Region.

Figure 2: Town of Accomac FIRM Base Flood Elevation (BFE)



HMGP

The Town has not participated in the HMGP.

HAZARDS 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.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND READINESS

The Mayor for the Town of Accomac stated the Town did not see many effects from the COVID-19 pandemic (Personal communications, Pat Smith, July 15, 2021). The Town did not accept CARES Act funds; therefore, those funds remained with the County. The Town will be better prepared in the event of another similar hazard in the future by providing informational leaflets (Personal communications, Mayor Pat Smith, July 15, 2021).

HIGH WIND

No part of the Town lies in the wind-borne debris area. This area extends one-mile inland from the coast. The Town lies in the 110-120 mph design wind zone (Accomack County Building Code). Most of the residential areas are older and have mature trees in and around the homes. Falling branches or trees may cause damage to structures or power lines during high-wind events.

STORM WATER FLOODING

Stormwater flooding has the greatest and most frequent impact on the Town. The Town is underlain by some soils that are unsuitable for drainage and rainwater. A secondary hazard from standing water is the potential for mosquito-borne diseases that could impact the health of residents. Maintenance of drainage ditches are the responsibility of VDOT and the County. Drainage issues are commonly experienced where the ditches are not maintained as regularly.

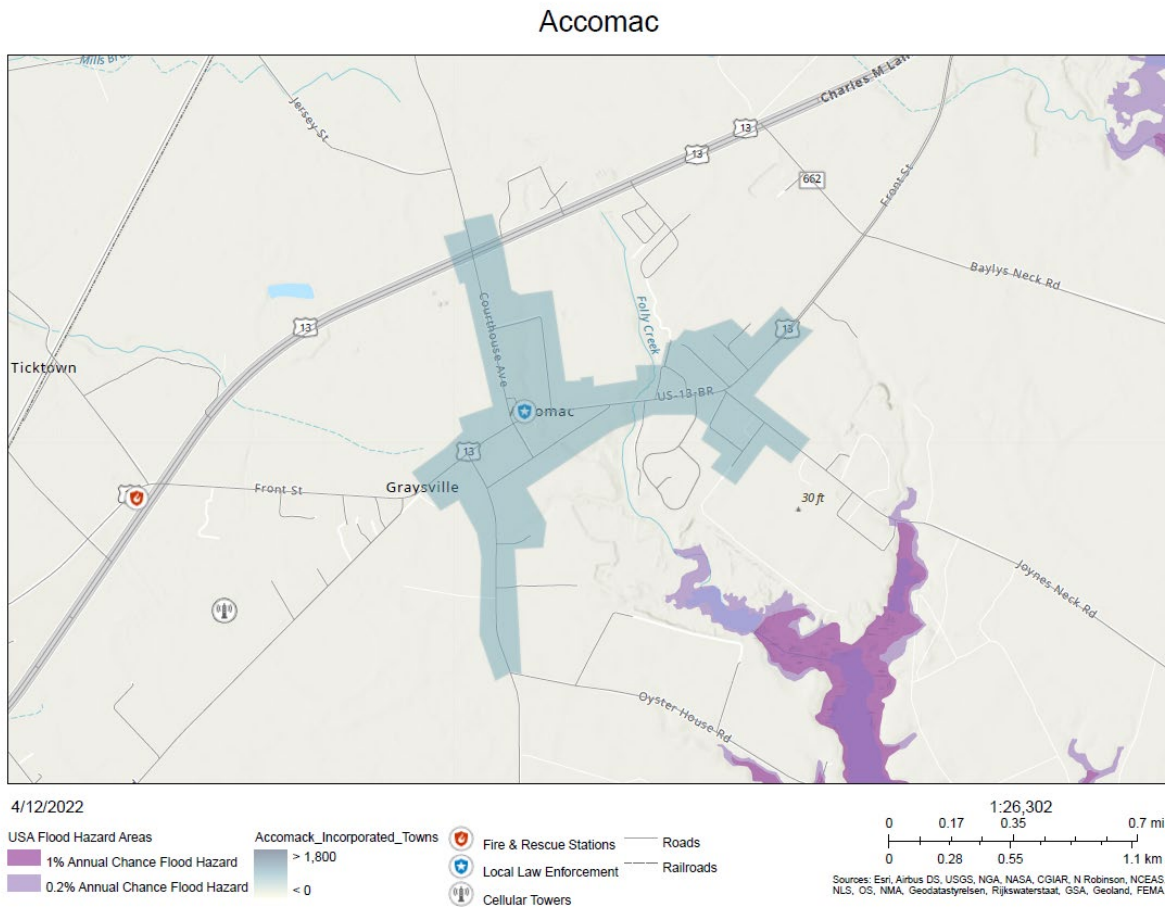
COASTAL EROSION

No structures are at immediate risk to coastal erosion.

COASTAL FLOODING

No portions of the Town lie within a Special Flood Hazard Area or within the X zone, which is the 500-year floodplain. The threat of coastal flooding within the Town is considered to be minimal.

Figure 3: Town of Accomack Flood Hazards to Infrastructure



HAZARDS OF LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

GROUND WATER CONTAMINATION

The Town faces a threat of ground water contamination from several sources including failed septic systems within the Town, leaks and spills of petroleum-based products from underground storage tanks, and major industrial facilities within the area. Major ground water withdrawers in the area are Perdue, Tyson Foods, the Towns of Onancock and Parksley, and Accomack County Nursing Home. Large withdrawals of ground water in the vicinity increase the possibility of well interference, salt water intrusion, and a deterioration of water quality.

ICE & SNOW STORMS

A large ice storm impacted the Town in the late 1990s. The ice storm downed tree limbs and power lines in the region and severely limited travel.

TORNADOES

Tornadoes have not historically hit within Town limits, but they have occurred on the outskirts of Town and are a relevant concern.

CRITICAL FACILITIES

The following table lists the critical facilities and their relative importance to the Town. The only Town-owned building is currently vacant and dilapidated. Plans for renovations and future use are unknown. The Public Library currently located in Accomac is being relocated to the nearby Town of Parksley in the near future.

Table 7: Town of Accomac Critical Facilities

Facility	HMP 2016	HMP 2021	Hazards	No of People Affected	Loss potential	Relocation Potential	Retrofit Potential
Town-Owned Facilities							
Town Hall (Vacant, dilapidated)	-	X	Storm Water Flooding, Wind, Fire	479+	Inconvenience	Yes	Yes
Other Facilities (Not Town-Owned)							
Eastern Shore Public Library	-	X	Storm Water Flooding, Wind, Fire	1,000+	Minor Disruption	Yes	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 storms, tornadoes, and mosquito-borne disease.
2. Although no part of the Town lies within any flood zone, due to soil types, topography, and inadequate drainage system, stormwater flooding is the most common hazard experienced by the Town.
3. The Town joined the NFIP on March 16, 2009.
4. Older construction and mature trees in residential areas increase risk from damages from wind and snow events, as branches are likely to come down causing secondary wind/snow damages and power outages.