

# DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & ZONING TOWN OF CAPE CHARLES, VA





## *"Virginia's Cape"*

The Town of Cape Charles, Virginia is seeking an experienced professional to serve as the Director of Planning & Zoning. The successful candidate will be committed to preserving Cape Charles' unique character while helping guide thoughtful, sustainable growth that benefits both current and future generations. Reporting directly to the Town Manager, the candidate will also serve as a member of the Town's leadership team responsible for directing services, programs, and operations of the Planning & Zoning Department. The Director will provide guidance and supervision of employees, prepare the departmental budget, and provide leadership for a highly visible function within the Town's government.

This recruitment profile describes the Town of Cape Charles to prospective candidates, identifies Town priorities, and outlines issues, challenges, and opportunities that the new Director will face. The profile also describes the Town's 'ideal' candidate in terms of qualifications, leadership style and desired characteristics determined to be necessary and desirable for the position.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to submit a cover letter, resume, writing sample and professional references to the Berkley Group via email to [Jenelle.Richards@bgllc.net](mailto:Jenelle.Richards@bgllc.net). While the position is open until filled, review of candidates will begin on or around July 20, 2026; however, highly qualified candidates may be invited for an interview at any time. Inquiries relating to the Director of Planning & Zoning position may be directed to:

Jenelle Richards  
Berkley Group  
P.O. Box 181  
Bridgewater, Virginia 22812  
Email: [jenelle.richards@bgllc.net](mailto:jenelle.richards@bgllc.net)  
Mobile: 757-504-4556

## WHY CAPE CHARLES?

Cape Charles is at a pivotal moment in its history. Significant opportunities exist in waterfront redevelopment, housing, tourism, resiliency planning, infrastructure investment, economic development, historic preservation, and long-range land use planning. The next Director of Planning & Zoning will have the opportunity to help guide these initiatives and leave a lasting impact on the community for generations to come.

Few planning positions in Virginia offer the opportunity to shape the future of an entire community while preserving one of the Commonwealth's most distinctive historic waterfront towns.



## LOCATION & BACKGROUND

Located on Virginia's scenic Eastern Shore, the Town of Cape Charles is a vibrant waterfront community situated along the Chesapeake Bay in Northampton County. Founded in 1884 as the terminus of the New York, Philadelphia, and Norfolk Railroad, Cape Charles has evolved from a historic railroad and maritime center into one of Virginia's most distinctive coastal destinations. The Town is known for its walkable historic district, public beach, thriving downtown, and unique blend of small-town charm and progressive community planning.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Cape Charles has a population of approximately 1,341 residents, though seasonal visitors and second-home owners significantly increase the community's population throughout much of the year. The Town's strategic location on the Chesapeake Bay, combined with its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, provides convenient access to the Hampton Roads metropolitan area while preserving the character and pace of a traditional Eastern Shore community.

Cape Charles has experienced substantial investment and growth over the past two decades, becoming a recognized destination for tourism, recreation, retirement living, and waterfront development. The Town's historic architecture, public amenities, and commitment to thoughtful planning has made it one of Virginia's most sought-after small coastal communities.



## GOVERNMENT

The Town of Cape Charles operates under a Council-Manager form of government. The governing body consists of an elected Mayor and a six-member Town Council, all elected at-large by Town residents. The Town Council establishes policies, adopts ordinances, approves the annual budget, and provides strategic direction for municipal operations.

The Town Manager oversees the day-to-day administration of municipal services and implementation of Council policies. The Planning & Zoning Department plays a critical role in supporting the Town's vision for responsible growth, historic preservation, economic vitality, and environmental stewardship.

## THE POSITION

The Director of Planning & Zoning serves as the Town's principal planning professional and provides leadership for community development, land use administration, zoning enforcement, development review, and long-range planning initiatives. Reporting to the Town Manager, the Director works closely with elected officials, developers, residents, regional partners, advisory boards and stakeholders to guide development in a manner consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and community vision.

The Town of Cape Charles is committed to professional management, collaborative leadership, and continuous improvement. The Director will become part of an experienced leadership team that emphasizes integrity, accountability, teamwork, innovation, and exceptional customer service. The successful candidate will help advance a culture of organizational excellence while supporting thoughtful growth and preserving the unique character of one of Virginia's most distinctive coastal communities. This is an exceptional opportunity for a planning professional to make a lasting impact on a community that values both its historic heritage and its future.

The Director will promote land use planning and natural resource management for the Town and implement related programs and regulations. The Director will also serve as staff liaison and prepare meeting agenda materials for the Planning Commission, Historic District Review Board, Harbor Area Review Board, Wetlands and Coastal Dune Board, and Board of Zoning Appeals. The Director will be responsible for responding to public requests regarding land use management, natural resources, flood hazards, and zoning ordinance enforcement.

## PLANNING & ZONING DEPARTMENT

The Town's Planning & Zoning Department is responsible for guiding both the current and long-range development of one of Virginia's most distinctive coastal communities. The Department administers the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance, historic preservation requirements, and Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act regulations, while overseeing rezonings, variances, site plans, zoning compliance, and development review activities. Department staff work closely with residents, business owners, developers, and elected officials to ensure growth and development are consistent with the Town's vision, historic character, and environmental stewardship goals.

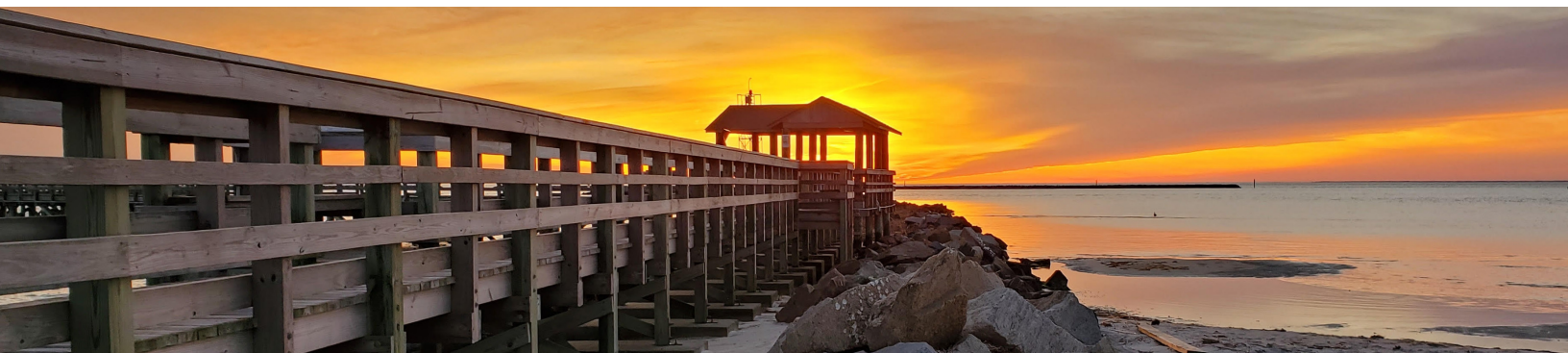
The Department consists of four (4) positions: the Director position, a Planning & Zoning Deputy, a Planning & Zoning Technician, and an Inspector/Zoning Compliance Officer position that is shared with the Town's Building Official. In addition to daily planning and zoning responsibilities, the department provides staff support to the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Historic District Review Board, Wetlands Board, and Harbor Area Review Board, making it one of the Town's most visible and community-facing departments.

For Fiscal Year 2026, the Town budgeted approximately \$422,030 for Planning & Zoning operations, reflecting the importance of planning, development review, historic preservation, and land-use management within the community. As Cape Charles continues to experience residential, commercial, tourism, and waterfront development activity, the Department plays a critical role in balancing growth and economic opportunity with the preservation of the Town's unique historic, cultural, and coastal assets.

# OPPORTUNITIES, ISSUES & CHALLENGES

The next Director of Planning & Zoning will work in a dynamic and evolving planning environment shaped by continued growth, redevelopment interest, and Cape Charles' unique coastal character. The successful candidate can expect to address the following opportunities, issues, and challenges during their first several years of service:

- Become familiar with the Town's planning and development framework, including current development projects, adopted planning documents, zoning regulations, and organizational culture
- Establish productive and collaborative working relationships with the Mayor and Town Council, Town Manager, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, staff, developers, property owners, and community stakeholders
- Assume leadership of ongoing development review, permitting, zoning administration, and code enforcement activities while ensuring continuity of service and responsiveness to customers
- Evaluate departmental operations and identify opportunities to improve efficiency, customer service, communication, recordkeeping, and development review processes
- Assess existing zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and development standards to determine whether updates are needed to address changing community needs, development trends, and best practices
- Work closely with Town leadership to manage current development pressures, evaluate redevelopment proposals, and address emerging land use and growth management issues
- Support implementation of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, strategic initiatives, economic development objectives, and community vision through proactive planning and policy development
- Enhance public engagement efforts and foster transparent communication regarding planning, zoning, and development-related matters
- Ensure zoning administration and code enforcement activities are applied consistently, fairly, and in accordance with adopted ordinances, policies, and legal requirements
- Maintain professional development and leadership within the planning profession, including obtaining or maintaining relevant credentials
- Balance growth, redevelopment, and economic development opportunities with the preservation of Cape Charles' historic character, architectural heritage, natural resources, and sensitive coastal environment
- Address housing-related challenges, including workforce housing, housing affordability, and the land use implications of a growing population and increasing development demand
- Coordinate with Town leadership and regional partners to plan for future infrastructure needs associated with continued residential, commercial, and tourism-related growth
- Navigate increasingly complex development proposals and heightened community expectations while maintaining transparency, professionalism, and public confidence in the planning process.
- Position the Town to respond proactively to changing economic conditions, environmental challenges, sea-level rise considerations, and other long-term resiliency issues affecting coastal communities
- Build a high-performing Planning & Zoning Department founded on professionalism, collaboration, accountability, excellent customer service, and continuous improvement.



# QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION, & EXPERIENCE

The following education and experience factors outline the qualifications for successful performance:

- Minimum of five (5) years of professional municipal planning experience, with demonstrated leadership experience in an organization with comparable size/scope of responsibility, possessing a broad skill set appropriate to the breadth of the Town's planning and zoning operations
- An undergraduate degree, with a preferred concentration in Urban Planning, Public Administration, Public Policy or a related field; A Master's degree in Urban Planning or a related discipline, while not required, is strongly preferred
- Experience leading teams in a supervisory or director role is desired
- Strong knowledge of Virginia planning and zoning laws and processes
- Certifications related to zoning/planning such as Certified Zoning Administrator (CZA), Certified Zoning Official (CZO), American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) preferred, or must be willing to pursue certification if not currently held
- Any combination of education and experience that qualifies an applicant may be considered in lieu of the criteria listed above



## CURRENT MAJOR INITIATIVES

The Planning & Zoning Department is currently leading or supporting several high-priority initiatives that will guide the future growth and development of Cape Charles, including:

- Harbor & Railroad District Master Plan implementation
- Comprehensive Planning and long-range land use planning
- Housing and Workforce Housing Strategies
- Historic Preservation and protection of the Town's unique architectural character
- Development Review Process Improvements to enhance efficiency and customer service
- Ordinance Modernization, including updates to zoning and development regulations
- Coastal Resiliency Planning to address sea-level rise, flooding, and environmental sustainability
- Strategic Plan Implementation in support of Town Council priorities
- Economic Development Initiatives that encourage sustainable business growth and investment
- Downtown and Waterfront Redevelopment that balances redevelopment opportunities with preservation of the Town's historic identity

## PERSONAL TRAITS & DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS

- Demonstrates the highest standards of integrity, ethics, fairness, and professionalism, fostering trust through honest, transparent, and consistent decision-making and communication.
- Possesses outstanding interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to listen effectively, understand differing perspectives, and build productive relationships with elected officials, residents, developers, business owners, staff, and community stakeholders.
- Communicates complex planning, zoning, land use, and development issues clearly and effectively to both technical and non-technical audiences through written, verbal, and public presentations.
- Practical problem solver and sound decision-maker who can balance competing interests, navigate challenging situations, and develop thoughtful, solution-oriented recommendations.
- Exhibits strong leadership and management abilities, including the capacity to establish departmental priorities, improve processes, and ensure efficient and effective service delivery.
- Serves as a coach, mentor, and role model, empowering employees through professional development, collaboration, accountability, and a positive team-oriented work environment.
- Possesses exceptional organizational skills, attention to detail, and the ability to successfully manage multiple projects, priorities, and deadlines simultaneously.
- Demonstrates resilience, adaptability, and composure under pressure while maintaining a positive attitude and focus on achieving results.
- Professionally competent and confident, while remaining humble, approachable, and receptive to new ideas and perspectives.
- Has a genuine interest in becoming an active member of the community and contributing to the Town's long-term success through thoughtful planning, responsible growth, and exceptional public service.
- Maintains the ability to interpret and explain complex ordinances, development regulations, site plans, and technical information in a manner that promotes understanding, transparency, and informed decision-making.
- Equally comfortable interacting with field staff, department employees, residents, business owners, appointed boards, and elected officials, fostering strong relationships throughout the organization and community.
- Excellent communication, leadership, organizational, and public presentation skills
- Ability to interpret and communicate complex ordinances, site plans, blueprints, and development regulations



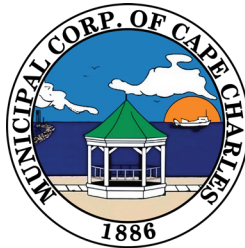
## COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Compensation for the Director of Planning & Zoning is within the hiring range of \$76,700 - \$92,000 annually, dependent upon qualifications and experience. The successful candidate will be provided with the Town's benefits package including participation in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS), health/dental/vision insurance, paid time off (PTO), paid holiday leave, professional development and training, life insurance, and other benefits provided for all Town employees. Relocation assistance may be available.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Initial review of candidates will begin on or around July 20, 2026. Applications received after that date may be considered until the position is filled. Timely submittal will ensure the most advantageous review. Highly qualified candidates may be invited to interview at any time. To be considered, please submit a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and professional references to Berkley Group, via e-mail to [jenelle.richards@bgllc.net](mailto:jenelle.richards@bgllc.net). Questions may be directed to:

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For Additional Information, visit: <https://www.capecharles.org/>

The Town of Cape Charles is an Equal Opportunity Employer