

# 02

## Where We Want to Go

### PLAN VISION AND FRAMEWORK

We can't plan for 2050 without a strong guiding star to help us chart our course.

Building on the broad feedback we heard from Norfolk's communities, we can create a consolidated resident-rooted vision for the future, begin a shared understanding for how that future might take shape, and examine ways that the Plan itself may lead us in that direction.

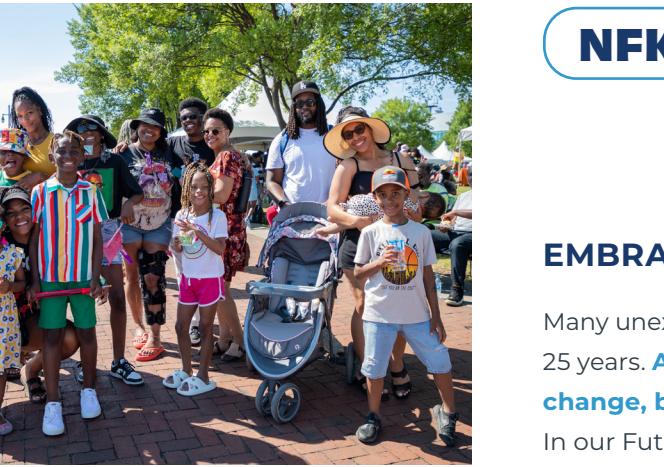


# Emerging Themes

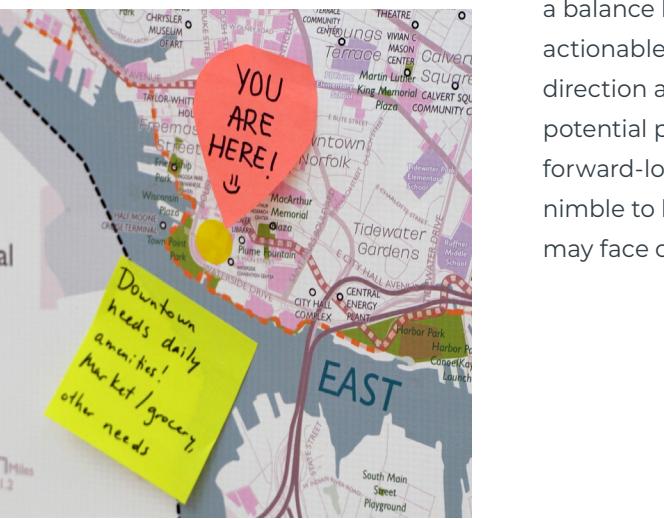
## What Does NFK2050 Need to Accomplish?

Throughout the planning process, one of the primary questions asked of all participants, residents, stakeholders, and leaders was what Norfolk should be in 25 years. **Who do we want to become?** What aspects of who we are now should hold strong, and what need to evolve?

Across all our discussions, several cross-cutting themes consistently emerged in the evolving vision for the city's future. **These themes chart the course for what this Plan needs to accomplish**, and they act as underlying assumptions woven throughout the rest of the document.



(City of Norfolk)



(WRT)

### NFK2050 needs to...

#### EMBRACE CHANGE:

Many unexpected shifts may occur in the next 25 years. **A long-range plan has to anticipate change, but set a flexible path forward.**

In our Future Land Use planning and Pillar-specific recommendations, we have to strike a balance between being visionary and being actionable—between defining a clear future direction and allowing flexibility for multiple potential pathways to reach it. What results is a forward-looking plan that can be durable and nimble to better navigate the uncertainties that may face our city through 2050.

#### ENCOURAGE GROWTH:

A census analysis shows that Norfolk's population has held relatively steady for several decades. Meanwhile, its neighbors—and the region—are growing.

Although some aspects of growth can be challenging to manage, many of the actions residents have asked for will be easier to achieve with more people: a higher tax base to pay for infrastructure and resilience projects, walkable communities with local neighborhood amenities, and more of an ecosystem to support small businesses.

Though literal growth beyond the current city boundary is not feasible, our analysis determined that **there is more room to grow within the current city boundaries of Norfolk than one might think**. The city's streets, parcels, water and sewer infrastructure, and other physical framework were built to support the 1960s peak population of 300,000.

Stimulating growth through welcoming new residents, retaining current families, and generally being a city of choice—where people of all backgrounds want to move and put down roots—is a key underlying assumption of NFK2050.

#### CONTRIBUTE TO A CULTURE SHIFT:

The City of Norfolk will lead the efforts to spearhead NFK2050 and its implementation, but the city can't build the community's vision alone. By 2050, Norfolk and its residents may need to embrace a cultural shift: toward grassroots, bottom-up approaches to resilience and sustainability; away from reliance on automobiles; toward a broad perception of Norfolk as a welcoming, family-friendly city; and toward greater acceptance of diverse housing types and a gentle increase in density to accommodate all who wish to live here.

**The city's actions are important, but Norfolk residents can help to make the city the place we collectively envision**, and our current culture and trajectory may have to shift accordingly to do so.

## NFK2050 needs to...

### ACKNOWLEDGE RISK:

Norfolk is already a national leader in resilience planning, but environmental threats continue to intensify. Sea levels and flood events will continue to encroach on our properties and our public assets. The cost of the infrastructure and mitigation measures needed to protect our city and our most vulnerable neighbors needs to come from a wide range of sources. In our land use and development decisions, **we need to be clear-eyed about the potential for risk, even as we commit to protecting our neighbors.**

### THINK LIKE A REGION:

Norfolk is one of many unique cities in the constellation that makes up the Hampton Roads region, but Norfolk's downtown, naval base and other major jobs centers, airport, and many diverse neighborhoods and residents all contribute to its role as the urban heart of the region.

Though a citywide plan adopted by the City of Norfolk cannot govern neighboring municipalities, **NFK2050 is intentional about setting land use and policy ideas that will be collaborative with our neighbors** and anticipate future physical, social, and economic connections across our borders and bridges.

### BUILD ON HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE:

In an era when many workers can choose to take root where they wish, why might they choose Norfolk? When our young residents come of age, what keeps them here? When military families have concluded their tours of duty, why might they stay rooted in our city?

The answer has to be in our overall quality of life: the character of our neighborhoods; our close-knit communities, where neighbors look out for each other; our parks and trails, accessible from every community; our access to water; our welcoming stance to new residents; our support for our business community; and our ease of getting around the city without needing a car.

Rather than pointing solely towards large-scale top-down projects, **the work of NFK2050 lies in enhancing our everyday lives and our communities**, and helping them to be the best versions of themselves.

### PRESERVE OUR SENSE OF PLACE:

Norfolk is one of the oldest cities in the United States and has a long, rich, and complex history. **Our identities and stories are rooted in our unique neighborhoods, and we should preserve and build on this sense of place.**

Norfolk's diverse housing stock, historic neighborhoods, strong downtown core, light rail infrastructure, and widespread access to nature are singular even within Hampton Roads, and that urban character is what makes us special. While there are ideas from other cities and communities throughout NFK2050 as case studies for what's possible, we will ensure they are adapted to our local landscapes and cultures. We can become even more rooted, celebrating our places and our people.

Norfolk is like no other place. The plan for its future should be similarly unique.

### CENTER OUR MOST VULNERABLE:

At every stage, Norfolk residents voiced their concerns for their less fortunate neighbors, and their insistence that, more than anything else, **NFK2050 centers and lifts up our most vulnerable communities.**

Community members want the policy recommendations implemented from NFK2050 to be detailed, targeted, and nuanced in order to make sure they truly benefit all, and not just those already thriving. Stakeholders want to ensure any environmental resilience measures explicitly protect those historically left unprotected. Residents want widespread efforts to center equity, meet neighbors where they are, and shape a more prosperous future for all.

Our city is diverse, and full of grassroots leaders who are actively working to care for their communities. The planning team heard a wealth of empathy from the Norfolk community, and NFK2050 embodies that care in its land use policy recommendations as well.

# NFK2050 Plan Vision

Building on our emerging themes, and with the strong guidance of the diverse voices in Norfolk's neighborhoods and communities, a consolidated Plan Vision encompasses the dreams and aspirations of our city for the next 25 years and beyond.

## By 2050, Norfolk will be...

### **a resilient city**

Norfolk lives in harmony with our natural systems, and is able to withstand future change and bounce back strongly.

### **an equitable city**

Our city provides opportunity for every resident, young and old, and celebrates their unique backgrounds and stories.

### **a family city**

Norfolk is a place where families of all types want to come here, stay here, and take root, feeling welcome and finding support for their needs.

### **a regional city**

Norfolk is an urban, cultural, and economic hub within a prosperous, connected, and diverse region.

### **a growing city**

Our land is used efficiently, and we grow from the strong roots planted in our many neighborhoods.



(City of Norfolk)

**by 2050, Norfolk will be...**  
**a resilient city**

Norfolk lives in harmony with our natural systems, and is able to withstand future change and bounce back strongly.

Norfolk is surrounded on three sides by water. Inlets, creeks, and other waterways are present in almost every corner of the city. With our connections to water and nature, Norfolk can become a *biophilic* city, connecting our innate love for and care of nature to our planning decisions, and providing enormous benefits for our residents and our natural systems together. But our systems can change, and we need to anticipate and plan for that change.

In the next 25 years, changes and disruptions will invariably occur—whether from shifts in climate, technology, the economy, or other large forces from beyond our borders. **When those shifts and changes do occur, our city will be ready:** withstanding shocks and stresses with our protective infrastructure, and bringing our communities even closer together through strong social ties.



(WRT)

**by 2050, Norfolk will be...**  
**an equitable city**

Our city provides opportunity for every resident, young and old, and celebrates their unique backgrounds and stories.

**Every Norfolk resident, no matter their background, history, or means, deserves the opportunity—and the support—to shape their own future.** Our diversity is our strength, and by elevating the stories of all who live here, we celebrate the cultures that define who we are. Norfolk is a city where long-term residents can live side by side with newly-arrived visitors, students, and other individuals seeking a place to put down roots. Our housing will provide enough diverse options for families of all incomes, sizes, and stages of life. Our business community will support entrepreneurs and innovative approaches to building wealth. In all our future planning, we will lift up our unique stories and provide opportunities for each other.



(City of Norfolk)

**by 2050, Norfolk will be...**  
**a family city**

Norfolk is a place where families of all types want to come here, stay here, and take root, feeling welcome and finding support for their needs.

We are a city that centers and supports families of all shapes, sizes, ages, and configurations, and that commitment will be visible in many ways. Parks and open spaces provide joy, respite, and space for activities for all ages. Streets are safe, green, and walkable, creating strong connections to daily amenities. Schools anchor their neighborhoods and create immersive learning environments. Housing options are abundant and meet needs for all stages of life.

Norfolk's future rests on its ability to attract, retain, and encourage families to come here, stay here, and **put down deep roots into their local community.**



(City of Norfolk)

**by 2050, Norfolk will be...**  
**a regional city**

Norfolk is an urban, cultural, and economic hub within a prosperous, connected, and diverse region.

With a connected and lively downtown, Norfolk is a cultural and economic destination for the entire Hampton Roads region. We lie at the hub of the region's connective infrastructure, host the world's largest naval base, are a leader in defense, shipping, and maritime industries, and proudly claim the only light rail system in Virginia.

With all of these benefits, Norfolk will embrace its role as a leader in the region, the state, and the eastern seaboard. **Working together with our sister cities, we can build collaborations and share in future abundance** by committing to local investments in our infrastructure and our economy.

by 2050, Norfolk will be...  
**a growing city**

Our land is used efficiently, and we grow from the strong roots we have in our many neighborhoods.



(WRT)

Norfolk's land is a finite resource, and we must be good stewards of what we have. As we think towards the future and how we might invite more residents to call Norfolk home, we need to remain nimble and responsive in our approach towards land use and development: **preserving the beloved character of our communities, while making room for new neighbors.**

Growing our city's economy and population will take deliberate policy and design decisions. By being intentional about that growth, we can benefit from the virtuous cycle it will spur: increased fiscal health, allowing for additional investments, ultimately leading to widespread and equitably distributed prosperity in our neighborhoods and our individual households. Norfolk's future is bright and growing, and we can plan to get there together.



# Plan Pillars

Rooted in the Plan Vision and our community voices, NFK2050's Goals and Actions are organized under four primary Pillars. These Plan Pillars are aspirational, and outline the heart of the collective vision for Norfolk's future development.

Early in the planning process, the NFK2050 team made the decision to streamline the contents of the Comprehensive Plan for accessibility, clearly communicating the plan's vision for the future of our city. Instead of listing the planning recommendations under the City departments that will implement them, or as discrete physical planning topics, the team instead identified four active phrases that act as foundational Pillars, grouping related plan topics while outlining broader aspirations for where and how positive change might happen across the next 25 years.

In essence, **the Plan Pillars translate the Plan Vision statements into the language of comprehensive and physical planning**, setting the stage for how we might accomplish the shared vision and outlining the city we aspire to grow into by 2050.

Opposite are the final 4 Plan Pillars and their primary Plan Topics:

- **Celebrating Our Community:** This Pillar takes root in Norfolk's neighborhoods, art, culture, history, sense of place, and city facilities and services, building on all that makes our city special as our greatest asset.

- **Growing Equitably:** This Pillar addresses Norfolk residents' most urgent needs by tackling goals and strategies to diversify and strengthen Norfolk's housing and economic development.

- **Embracing Nature:** Rooted in the natural environment, this Pillar builds on our parks, waterfronts, habitat, sustainability, and leadership in resilience work so Norfolk can live in harmony with our surroundings.

- **Connecting the City:** Bridges, tunnels, rail, highway, and multimodal transit infrastructure, as well as the utilities and critical infrastructure under our feet — this Pillar includes all our transportation and utility systems.

All of the NFK2050 Plan Goals, Actions, and Strategies are organized under these Plan Pillars, which you can read in Chapter 4.



## CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

Norfolk is blessed with many distinct and proud neighborhoods. Long-time residents and newcomers alike embrace the quality of life that comes with waterfront access, investment in the arts, and diverse walkable neighborhoods. How can we expand what's already great about our city for all residents and stakeholders?

**PLAN TOPICS:** Historic Preservation; Public Art & Culture; Placemaking; City Facilities & Services



## GROWING EQUITABLY

Norfolk has diverse housing types and jobs in many strong industries. Historically, though, the growth and prosperity of Norfolk hasn't benefited every community equally. As we grow into 2050 and beyond, how can we make sure all our neighbors are lifted up towards a brighter future?

**PLAN TOPICS:** Housing; Economic Development



## EMBRACING NATURE

Nature is all around us — even in an urban environment. Norfolk is full of amazing parks, waterfronts, and even habitats for wildlife. The city's increasing flood events and sea level rise may challenge this balance, though. How can we embrace nature while developing our urban places and reducing the threat of future flooding?

**PLAN TOPICS:** Resilience; Parks and Open Space; Sustainability



## CONNECTING THE CITY

New assets developed in the city only truly benefit everyone if they are freely accessible and well-connected. Despite increasing transit and bike options, Norfolk residents tend to still rely on cars, furthering congestion. How can we better connect our strong neighborhoods to each other and to the entire Hampton Roads region?

**PLAN TOPICS:** Mobility & Transportation; Utilities; Critical Infrastructure