

# Celebrating Our Community

Norfolk's sense of community can be understood through multiple lenses. From historic districts that reflect centuries of change, to mermaids, murals, and neighborhood festivals, the character of Norfolk lives not only in our built environment, but in the stories our communities continue to tell. Preserving and celebrating this richness is essential to shaping a future that is both rooted and forward-looking.

Community is reflected in Norfolk's many "third places," public spaces where neighbors gather, socialize, and build relationships outside of work and home. Civic leagues, parks, schools, libraries, and churches are part of the city's strong social infrastructure. Our public art, from mermaids to community murals, also highlight our strong local pride. These spaces help define what it means to live here, and why so many choose to stay.

**But celebration is also a form of investment.** Supporting safe, vibrant, walkable neighborhoods means ensuring people can meet their daily needs within a short walk, whether that's a grocery store, a transit stop,

or a local café. Prioritizing our historically underrepresented communities, and telling their stories through events and public spaces, is key to honoring the full identity of the city.

**In a time of regional growth and demographic change, Norfolk's history and character can be a powerful asset.** It draws new residents, retains longtime neighbors, and connects us to each other. By investing in our stories, spaces, and people, we can ensure our identity isn't just preserved, but lived, shared, and celebrated.



**Seeing all the great things that the city was doing between the light rail and the nightlife downtown, and a lot of really interesting and progressive things were happening in Norfolk—I just knew that I would end up back here.**

— Norfolk resident, Workshop #1, October 2023



(City of Norfolk)



(WRT)

(City of Norfolk)



**We have a pretty diverse neighborhood which I think is great for us as adults and also great for the kids. I feel like we've stumbled down to kind of like a magical little community."**

— Norfolk resident, Phase 1 Engagement

## What We Heard:

Norfolk is a city with a unique tapestry of vibrant neighborhoods, each with its own character, weaving together stories of resilience, diversity, and creativity.

By 2050, residents hope to see this tapestry grow even richer—a city boldly celebrating its culture, history, and people. This future should be deeply rooted in preserving landmarks, activating the waterfront, and fostering pride and belonging across the city. Murals should transform downtown spaces into canvases of collective expression, while public art along the Elizabeth River Trail could reflect the community's diverse heritage. Historic treasures like Fort Norfolk should be highlighted, and the Southside's historic districts need greater investment.

Residents want waterfront areas alive with family-friendly activities, gathering spaces, and cultural events—balancing resilience and activation strategies to connect people to the water that defines Norfolk.

**By 2050, residents aspire to live in a vibrant, welcoming Norfolk—where history, art, and culture inspire big dreams.**



(City of Norfolk)

**By 2050, Norfolk will be a safe place where people want to raise their families, start their business, and enjoy time together.**

— Norfolk resident, Phase 2 Engagement



# Goals:

## **GOAL 1:**

**Celebrate and Preserve Neighborhood Identity, Character, and Histories**

## **GOAL 2:**

**Support Complete and Healthy Neighborhoods**

## **GOAL 3:**

**Support Safe and Vibrant Places**

## **GOAL 4:**

**Support and Strengthen Community Facilities and Services**

# Big Ideas:

! **Highlight city neighborhoods** by incorporating neighborhood specific wayfinding, branding, and history campaigns by Ward.

! **Designate new historic neighborhoods and landmarks**, prioritizing Norfolk's communities whose histories have not been widely told.

! Create **Cultural Corridors** throughout the city, where streets/ districts are themed around the history/identity of the neighborhood (e.g., art installations, historical markers, and events).

! Host regional, national, and international events and **attract new events** to the city.

! Promote **mixed-use development** with active ground floors, community amenities, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape improvements.

! **Test public amenities**, programming, infrastructure, and sites, gathering data and community buy-in for permanent improvements.

! **Assess food deserts in the city** to improve access to healthy food.

! Pursue incentives for **building improvements** to encourage property owners to invest in their buildings, storefronts, and houses.

! Equitably **expand public art** opportunities in every neighborhood.

! Build on existing **cultural arts districts** to ensure local artists and makers have access to affordable studio spaces, live/work options, and exhibition venues.

! **Fund public realm improvements**, walkability and placemaking efforts, transforming Norfolk's neighborhoods into vibrant destinations.

! **Connect existing and future city facilities** to their surrounding neighborhoods using safe and fully accessible multimodal networks.

**GOAL 1:****Celebrate and Preserve Neighborhood Identity, Character, and Histories**

Discover and promote the unique stories, histories, culture, and character of Norfolk's neighborhoods; highlight and promote Norfolk's **unique sense of place**, community, culture, and identity to benefit existing and future residents, employees, and visitors.

Norfolk is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own unique character, making up a vibrant melting pot of people, cultures, and ideas. With so many things to celebrate, it is paramount that Norfolk continues to market and spotlight these strengths to our own residents, while also attracting new residents and visitors to the city. Storytelling, wayfinding, and social events can all be harnessed to better highlight the variety

and complexity of our places and our people, connecting residents to each other and rooting them in their unique places.

Norfolk's landscapes and buildings have held space for countless lives and stories. Our efforts to preserve, share, and tell our histories can and should continue to evolve, incorporating equity, resilience, and accessibility into our historic preservation practices.



**1. Highlight city neighborhoods** and showcase several neighborhoods per year, raising awareness of the wide range of diverse communities in the city.

- a.** Inventory and document all methods by which neighborhoods are currently highlighted and branded throughout the city.
- b.** Prioritize neighborhoods not traditionally served by preservation or placemaking initiatives to collect and tell new stories.
- c.** Identify "community champions" and empower them to help prepare and implement community engagement strategies, building on the NFK2050 Champions program and the Neighbors Building Neighborhoods Academy.
- d.** Incorporate neighborhood-specific wayfinding, branding, and history campaigns by Ward, on a rotational basis.
- e.** Continue to support community-led block parties, Open Streets, or other pop-up events across the city to build social cohesion, especially in highlighted neighborhoods.

**2. Collect, preserve, and distribute oral histories and **incorporate innovative storytelling and emerging technologies** in preservation work to broaden audiences.**

- a.** Continue and expand City-sponsored historic survey and designation initiatives by including oral histories, particularly when surveying unknown or underrepresented histories.
- b.** Establish a digital storytelling platform where residents can contribute photos, stories, and historical insights to share with each other.
- c.** Create storytelling events in Norfolk's neighborhoods to encourage intergenerational sharing and to build cross-cultural empathy.
- d.** Support scholarship and City-sponsored historic surveys of the recent past (e.g., the past 30 years).
- e.** Support programs that include immersive experiences such as reenactments, interactive exhibits, or virtual reality (VR) experiences at historic and maritime sites.
- f.** Create and maintain digital maps and other georeferencing applications to connect the public with local history, currently designated historic sites, eligible historic sites, and other preservation initiatives.
- g.** Georeference aerial images, Sanborn maps, and other digitized resources to support innovative programming and research.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**AUDIBLE'S "STORYBUS", NEWARK, NJ**

Newark's Story Bus is a colorful mobile hub for collecting and sharing the stories of the city's diverse residents, piggybacking on community events and inviting stories, testimonials, and oral histories.



(Talking Eyes Media)

**3. Update the City's Local Historic District Guidelines** and establish a process for ongoing reviews and updates.

**4. Update the City's *Architectural Survey Update Work Plan***, and fund recommended survey and designation initiatives.

**Norfolk's Architectural Survey Update Work Plan:** A City document inventorying the city's historic and cultural architecture. Accessible via the NFK2050 website.

**a.** Conduct an audit of currently designated and surveyed resources and prioritize underrepresented narratives and resources in future survey and designation initiatives.

**5. Support the promotion, and in some cases designation, of **historic neighborhoods and landmarks**, prioritizing Norfolk's communities whose histories have not been widely told.**

**a.** Include more diverse stories and broader representation of narratives by revisiting and updating *Norfolk's National Register of Historic Places* nominations.

**b.** *National Register of Historic Places:* The United States' official list of sites, buildings, structures, districts, and objects deemed worthy of preservation for historic significance or great artistic value.



(Benjamin Rasmussen)

**b.** Pursue and expand funding to support preservation and celebrate heritage in Norfolk's marginalized and underrepresented communities.

**c.** Acknowledge and memorialize historical injustices in situ (e.g., sites of Norfolk's former slave trade, etc.).

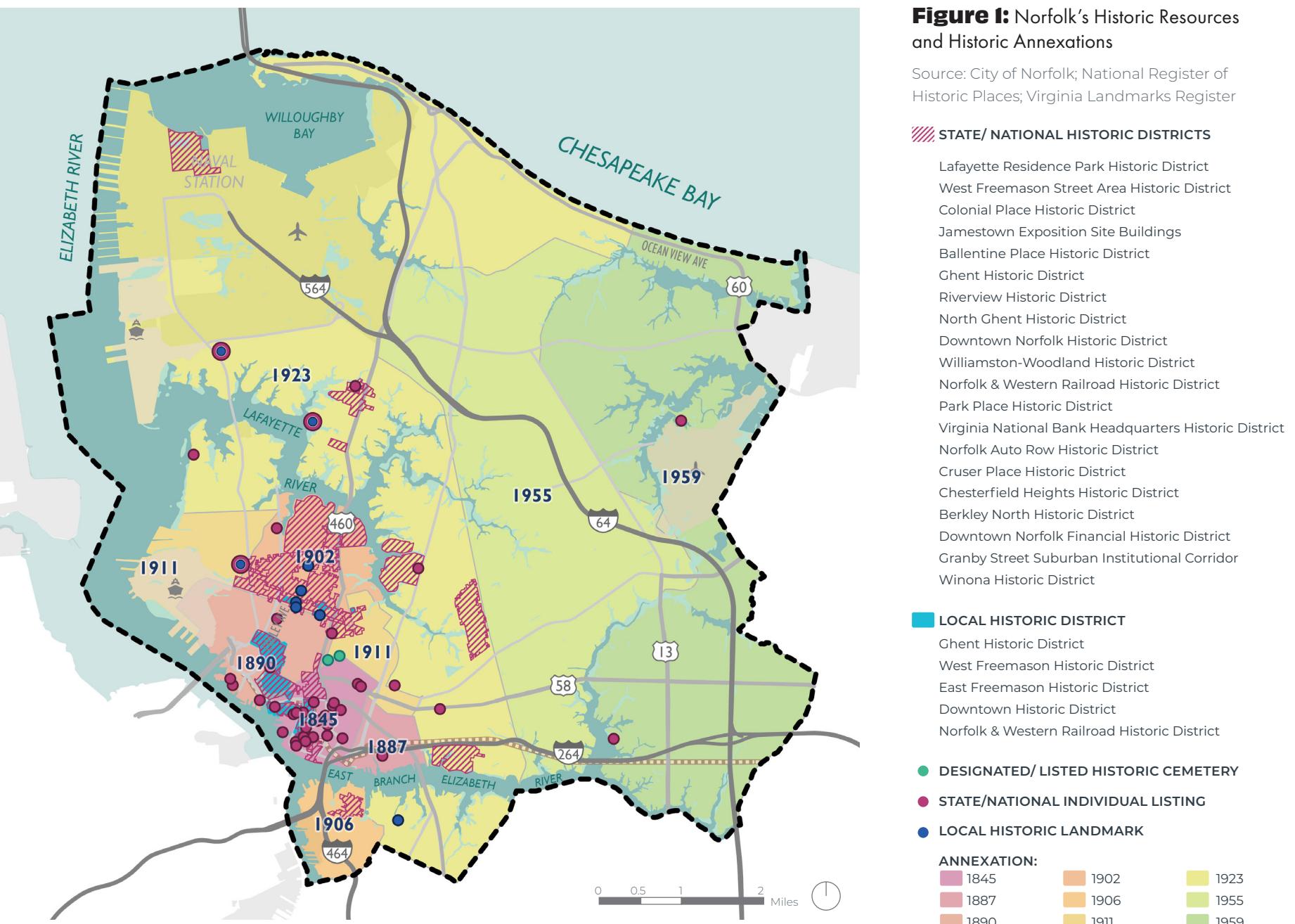
**d.** Explore local historic designation for neighborhoods experiencing redevelopment and growth pressures to help preserve their unique character.

**e.** Explore different kinds of local designations, including types that focus on important intangible cultural histories.

**BEST PRACTICES:**

**LA ALMA LINCOLN PARK HISTORIC CULTURAL DISTRICT, DENVER, CO**

La Alma Lincoln Park was designated as a Historic Cultural District in 2021, recognizing the neighborhood not for its architectural but for its cultural significance in Denver's Chicano community.



**Figure 1:** Norfolk's Historic Resources and Historic Annexations

Source: City of Norfolk, National Register of Historic Places; Virginia Landmarks Registry

**STATE/ NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Lafayette Reservoir Park Historic District  
West Freemason Street Area Historic District  
Colonial Place Historic District  
Jamestown Exposition Site Buildings  
Ballentine Place Historic District  
Ghent Historic District  
Riverview Historic District  
North Ghent Historic District  
Downtown Norfolk Historic District  
Williamston-Woodland Historic District  
Norfolk & Western Railroad Historic District  
Park Place Historic District  
Virginia National Bank Headquarters Historic District  
Norfolk Auto Row Historic District  
Cruser Place Historic District  
Chesterfield Heights Historic District  
Berkley North Historic District  
Downtown Norfolk Financial Historic District  
Granby Street Suburban Institutional Corridor  
Winona Historic District

**LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Ghent Historic District  
West Freemason Historic District  
East Freemason Historic District  
Downtown Historic District  
Norfolk & Western Railroad Historic District

**DESIGNATED/LISTED HISTORIC CEMETERY**  
**STATE/ NATIONAL INDIVIDUAL LISTING**

**LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK**

**ANNEXATION:**  
1845  
1887  
1890  
1902  
1906  
1923  
1945  
1887  
1911  
1911  
1955  
1959  
1959  
1959  
1959

**6.** Share historic sites and stories broadly, ensuring **accessibility for all**.

a. Incorporate barrier-free urban design, landscape, and architectural measures into the City's Historic District Design Guidelines, to expand seamless physical access at historic sites open to the public.

b. Incorporate user-friendly measures (e.g., 502-compliant measures) into all online and digital historic resources.

**7.** Establish an ongoing program that maintains existing **historic trails and markers** (e.g., the Cannonball Trail), and provides a mechanism for expanding and connecting historic trails.

**8.** Encourage the use of **“deconstruction” practices during the removal of historic buildings** and structures, as

opposed to demolition, focusing on salvaging materials for reuse.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**SAN ANTONIO DECONSTRUCTION AND SALVAGE INITIATIVE, SAN ANTONIO, TX**

Sparked by sustainability concerns, the City of San Antonio runs a robust building deconstruction and material reuse program helping residents divert building waste from landfills into new construction sites.



(San Antonio Reuse)

**9.** Promote purposeful infill development to **adhere to existing neighborhood form and character**.

a. Promote the awareness and relevance of pattern books and guidelines for developers (e.g., Missing Middle Pattern Book, Design Principles for Multifamily Development) about the range of housing types that are unique to Norfolk and complement housing options in the region.

b. Evaluate if additional pattern books may be needed to ensure new infill development and renovations are consistent with neighborhood character, and update regulations accordingly.

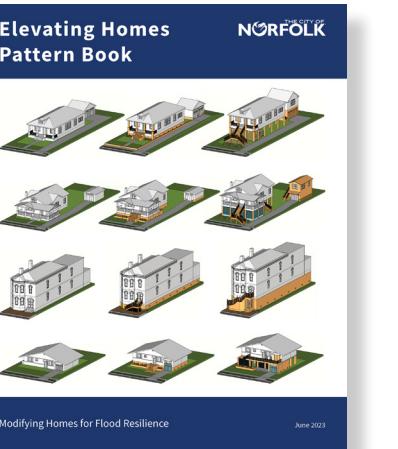
c. Explore further revisions to zoning regulations to ensure that infill development is compatible with surrounding properties, using the Future Land Use Plan and its Place Types for guidance.

d. Develop specific architectural guidelines for maintaining and updating houses in any newly designated historic or cultural district.

e. Explore programs and resources to provide design assistance for property owners complying with the best practices in pattern books.

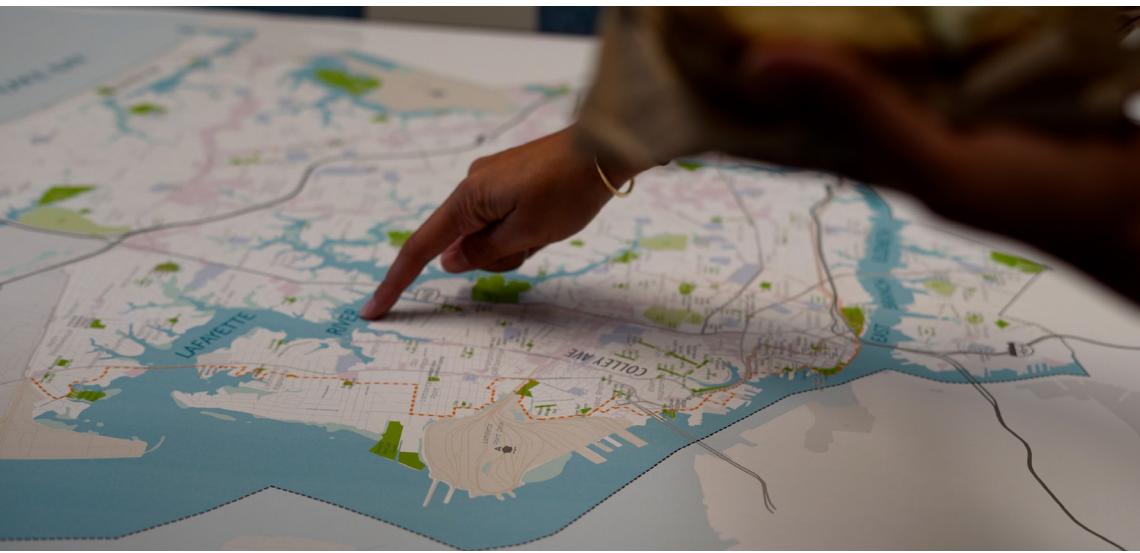
**10.** Encourage the use of the ***Elevating Homes Pattern Book*** to support cost-effective and resilient home modifications with design and construction guidance to **help homeowners adapt to flood risks** while maintaining the historic integrity and character of the home.

 **LOCAL SUCCESS:**  
**ELEVATING HOMES PATTERN BOOK**



The goal of this pattern book is to provide safe, resilient homes by raising homes out of the floodplain, creating opportunities to reduce flood insurance costs as well as costs associated with the preparation for and recovery from major flood events. Using the pattern book also allows owners to elevate their homes responsibly - retaining the architectural character of their neighborhoods.

**11.** Create **Cultural Corridors** throughout the city, where streets/districts are themed around the history/identity of the neighborhood (e.g., art installations, historical markers, and events). Prioritize areas that do not currently have these physical markers and elements.



(WRT)

**12.** Conduct a **hazard and disaster vulnerability analysis** of historic resources that includes recommendations for adaptation strategies.

**13.** Incorporate **hazard mitigation** and recovery for historic and cultural resources into local hazard mitigation planning efforts.

**14.** Preserve and research Norfolk's **historic cemeteries**, especially in underrepresented communities or those with fewer historic resources.

- a.** Explore funding resources for using tools like Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to support archaeological research.
- b.** Work with libraries/archives to document findings.
- c.** Survey known historic cemeteries, particularly those related to underrepresented communities or those threatened by climate change hazards.

**15.** Create and brand a **unified Norfolk identity** to align outreach efforts across the city, using the current City of Norfolk branding as a basis.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**RVA BRANDING, RICHMOND, VA**

Venture Richmond, an organization devoted to enhancing the vitality of the Richmond community, worked with students at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to create a city brand and logo as a way of building pride within the city and attracting attention outside of it. The widespread community buy-in to the RVA concept and the ripples it has caused has provided an identity for the city and an outlet for its energy.



(Venture Richmond)

**16.** Launch a **"Welcome to Norfolk"** brand/identity program that positions Norfolk as a welcoming city for new residents, immigrants, and military families.

- a.** Coordinate between City departments and external partners to manage orientation for new arrivals with available housing, small business support, education, healthcare, language assistance, and local services.

- b.** Explore incentives and programs to attract remote workers and entrepreneurs to move to Norfolk.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**TULSA REMOTE PROGRAM, TULSA, OK**

The Tulsa Remote program offers a \$10,000 grant and various benefits to attract remote workers to live and work in Tulsa. By 2023, the program had welcomed over 2,000 participants, significantly contributing to the local economy and has been credited with generating over \$62 million in new labor income for Tulsa.

**17.** Guide and support new **heritage tourism** strategies, highlighting and celebrating lesser-known historic and cultural sites in partnership with local organizations and community champions.

**18. Leverage Norfolk's Downtown waterfront** as a gateway for tourism by developing a unique Norfolk experience around the water.

- a.** Connect cruise ship visitors to tourist attractions and tours, especially in and around Downtown.

- b.** Promote longer tourism visits by linking sites of interest, creating communication or programmatic alignments.

- c.** Develop a plan to ensure the continued vitality of Norfolk's historic waterfront and pursue funding mechanisms to support maintenance and improvements.

**19.** Promote and enhance the **natural and recreational resources** that provide tourism-related economic advantages (e.g., the Elizabeth River Trail).

**20.** Develop a **Sustainable Tourism Plan** focused on economic, environmental, and social sustainability in partnership with interested stakeholders (e.g. transportation agencies, hotels, museums, etc.).

**Sustainable Tourism Plan:** A plan for encouraging tourism that is not just economically beneficial, but also takes into consideration long-term environmental and social sustainability so as not to negatively impact the destination (i.e., allowing fewer tourists into ecologically sensitive zones, hiring local employees at a living wage, etc.).

**21.** Continue to host regional, national, and international events and **attract new events** to the city.



Harborfest (City of Norfolk)

- a.** Attract niche and growing sporting events (e.g., criterium bike races, pickleball tournaments, etc.) that do not require a large structural capacity but have a large benefit to the local economy.

- b.** Work with other cities in the region to identify and pursue opportunities to attract large events with mutual economic and cultural benefits.

**22.** Leverage city events and its tourism attraction to **promote existing local businesses**.

- a.** Distribute travel vouchers that can be used in local small businesses to promote local tourism.

## GOAL 2:

### Support Complete and Healthy Neighborhoods

Enhance and encourage **walkable mixed-use districts** connected to city services, amenities, transit, and nearby neighborhoods, supporting healthy communities along the way.

Some of Norfolk's neighborhoods are equipped for residents to access amenities, but others require leaving the community to meet daily needs. Not everyone can rely on cars to run errands or find a comfortable place to gather outside their home. Carefully planned neighborhood centers can use the tools of urban design, placemaking, and a diverse mix of businesses and amenities to make lively community hubs for all. In turn, this thoughtful planning will help improve both the physical and mental health of our communities.



- 1.** Identify districts, in accordance with the Future Land Use Plan, to promote **mixed-use development** with active ground floors, community amenities, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape improvements.
  - a.** Assess current commercial districts and their amenities to understand where key uses are missing (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies, libraries, coffee shops, laundromats, banks, plazas/seating areas, etc.) and what is accessible for pedestrians and cyclists in adjacent neighborhoods (e.g., conduct a walking audit, etc.).
  - b.** Develop a list of areas with missing amenities as a focus for targeted physical and economic improvements.
  - c.** Encourage shared use parking, especially in Community Mixed-Use, Corridor Mixed-Use, Regional Activity Center, and Sustain – Traditional Character Place Types, so that excess space in business parking lots can be used by neighboring business patrons or residents who live in the area, opening up on-street parking for other uses (e.g., bike lanes, rain gardens, etc.).
  - d.** Target streetscape improvements in these districts for green infrastructure, seating areas, tree planting, wayfinding, and other placemaking initiatives.
  - e.** Promote adaptive reuse, façade and signage improvements, and vacant building reuse in target districts to accommodate new business types.
  - f.** Continue to provide grants for strategic commercial corridors, focusing on areas within the Community Mixed-Use and Corridor Mixed-Use Place Types, to improve facades, support small businesses, and target streetscape improvements.
  - g.** Support existing City programs, such as the **Capital Access Program (CAP)** and **Commercial Corridor Program**, and explore creating new programs to help fill financial gaps in the marketplace for entrepreneurs to either start or expand their business and revitalize commercial corridors.

**Streeteries:** an outdoor dining area, typically located on sidewalk or on-street parking spaces, that is designed to allow restaurants, cafes and bars to expand their seating options beyond their indoor space.

- 2.** Streamline arc reform regulations, form guidelines, and zoning in target areas to encourage a range of commercial and community uses and ground-floor storefronts.
  - a.** Support and accommodate outdoor seating and **"streeteries"** in designated areas to bring commercial activity into public and private spaces, utilizing the Norfolk Outdoor Spaces Guidelines.
  - b.** Encourage code changes to allow food trucks in public spaces and to incentivize pop-up eating establishments.
  - c.** Allow street vendors and on-site produce sales in designated public areas to supplement larger commercial businesses.

d. Consider a “Livable Communities Initiative” to streamline by-right development of mixed-use projects, integrating walkable and transit-oriented streets that are easily accessible by surrounding neighborhoods.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**LIVABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE, LOS ANGELES, CA**

The LCI is a group that advocates for neighborhoods holistically combining mixed-use housing (3-5 stories), complete streets, climate resilience, and multimodal transit, suggesting zoning and building plan standards to accommodate these shifts in urban fabric.



(L.A. Livable Communities Initiative)



**3.** Leverage longer redevelopment timelines to **test public amenities**, programming, infrastructure, and sites, gathering data and community buy-in for permanent improvements.

a. Implement **tactical urbanist** initiatives like pop-up plazas, food truck parks, and parklets in parking spaces to test out the configuration and location of public activities in key districts.

○ **Tactical urbanism:** Commonly known as DIY Urbanism or Planning-by-Doing, tactical urbanism refers to a city, organizational, and/or citizen-led approach to neighborhood building using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyze long-term change. Common examples include pop-up parks, temporary bike lanes, painted crosswalks, and outdoor seating installations.

b. Co-locate pop-up uses at existing social infrastructure (community centers, rec centers, etc.) to incorporate more “daily needs” for local residents (e.g., groceries, food, coffee, etc.) in a “one-stop-shop”.



Pop Up Park (WPA)



**4.** Evaluate the city’s current providers of fresh food (grocery stores, produce markets, farmers’ markets, community gardens) to **assess food deserts**, working with existing entities such as the Norfolk Food Policy Council.

○ **Food desert:** Food deserts are geographic areas where residents’ access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within convenient traveling distance.

**I would love to see improvements that make people want to come out and celebrate!** — Norfolk resident, Phase 1 Engagement



- a. Support public-private partnerships to improve access to healthy food and eliminate food deserts within the city.
- b. Incentivize affordable, healthy food grocers within food desert areas through partnerships and financial or regulatory tools.
- c. Partner with Norfolk Public Schools to develop creative ways to encourage healthy eating at school and at home.
- d. Consider zoning changes for uses that do not provide some level of fresh produce.



(City of Norfolk)

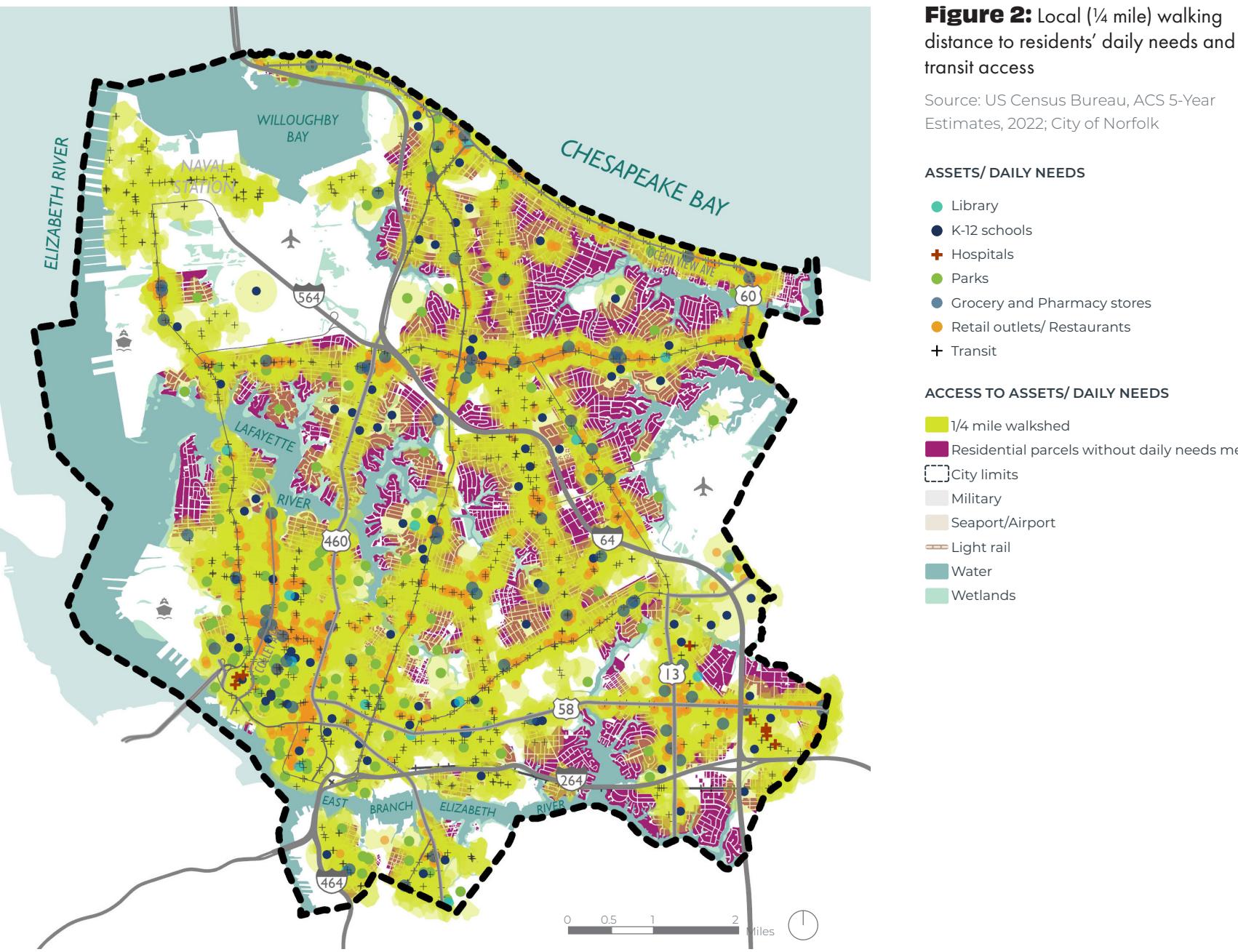
**5. Encourage community gardens and urban agriculture to help meet the need for equitable fresh food access in collaboration with grassroots community leaders and support existing programs (e.g., Grow Norfolk).**

- a. Evaluate and define agricultural uses in the Zoning Ordinance, specifically to allow for small-scale community-focused food production.
- b. Target regulation reform and incentives to encourage community gardens and urban agriculture in underserved areas.
- c. Make publicly-controlled vacant land available for community-facing agricultural uses.
- d. Collaborate with Parks/Recreation facilities and local School facilities to use open space for teaching gardens.
- e. Assess and revise codes to allow for rooftop farming.

**6. Support the efforts of the Norfolk Department of Public Health and other industry partners to improve the health and quality of life in the city.**

- a. Evaluate whether zoning regulations or land use policy changes can be made to mitigate contributions to Norfolk's key public health issues, as listed in the Department's Community Health Needs Assessment.
- b. Support the Norfolk Department of Public Health in its development of a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and assist with implementation.

**7. Consider a Health in all Policies (HiAP) approach, which integrates community health into all significant policy decisions and documents.**



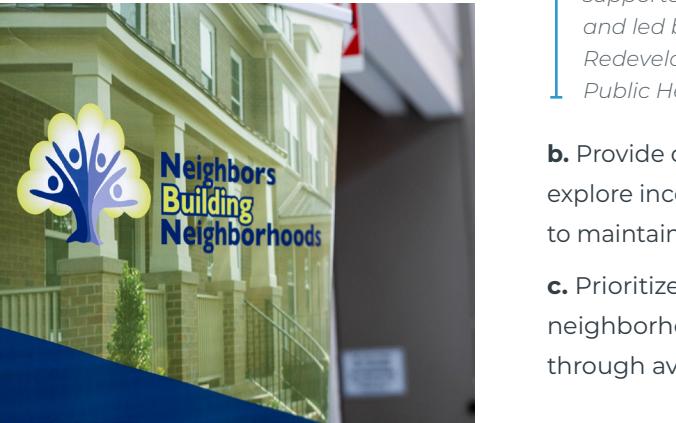
**8. Consider representation from health professions on City boards and commissions.**

**9. Invest in programs, such as **Neighbors Building Neighborhoods**, that build capacity and social capital among residents to work together to identify and mobilize the positive attributes of their neighborhood (assets), invest through improvements to their homes and neighborhood blocks, and position them as excellent places to live.**

**10. Continue to support home maintenance and other home improvement programs and initiatives.**



Beach clean up (City of Norfolk)



Neighbors Building Neighborhoods (WRT)

**11. Pursue incentives for **building improvements** to encourage property owners to invest in their buildings, storefronts, and houses.**

**a.** Implement the *Healthy Housing Initiative* and other programs to improve neighborhood health and safety by addressing unhealthy housing conditions and expanding rehabilitation programs to include rentals.

**○ *Healthy Housing Initiative:*** A public initiative to address unhealthy housing conditions, supported by the National League of Cities and led by the City of Norfolk, Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and the Public Health Department.

**b.** Provide clear technical assistance and explore incentives to existing and new residents to maintain and modernize properties.

**c.** Prioritize efforts to reinvest in neighborhoods with high home repair needs through available state and federal programs.

**12. Incentivize and educate landowners and developers to **develop underutilized parcels** or vacant buildings to enhance neighborhood revitalization.**

**a.** Consider enhancements or modifications to the vacant building registry program to further incentivize property owners to address and maintain abandoned residential and non-residential buildings.

**13. Support the efforts of the Department of Neighborhood Services to **regulate and enforce** overgrown shrubs, trees, and other vegetation, as well as derelict buildings, returning abandoned housing to safe and useful occupancy (e.g., Derelict Structures Program).**

**14. Support the efforts of the Department of Human Services to advance rapid rehousing with case management, positive youth development programming, and senior focused activities through the **Program for Improving Capacity and Capability (PICC)**.**



Neighborhood revitalization (City of Norfolk)

**15. Support the activities of the **Community Engagement Street Team (CEST)** to improve resident access to benefits programs, assistance, and support services due to a lack of transportation.**

## **GOAL 3:** **Support Safe and Vibrant Places**

Highlight Norfolk's diverse arts community, expand public art throughout the city's public spaces, and promote safe and vibrant spaces and activities.

The Mermaid City is full of creativity. Public art brings character into our open spaces, while cultural events, supportive workspaces, and arts districts provide important spaces for our artists and makers. But our culture doesn't end when the sun sets; finding ways to accommodate safe and vibrant nightlife and entertainment, while balancing safety and other regulations, is paramount to a culturally rich city.

**1.** Consider developing a **strategic arts and culture plan** to address all arts and cultural aspects of Norfolk (e.g., music, arts, entertainment) and set the tone for arts and culture policy within the city, such as where and when to install public art.

**2.** Sustain and equitably **expand public art** opportunities in every neighborhood.

**a.** Support and encourage private efforts to create and maintain temporary artwork such as murals, mermaids, utility box art, and billboards.

**b.** Explore funding opportunities to leverage new development to support art in public spaces (e.g., parks, plazas, waterfronts, rights-of-way, etc.).

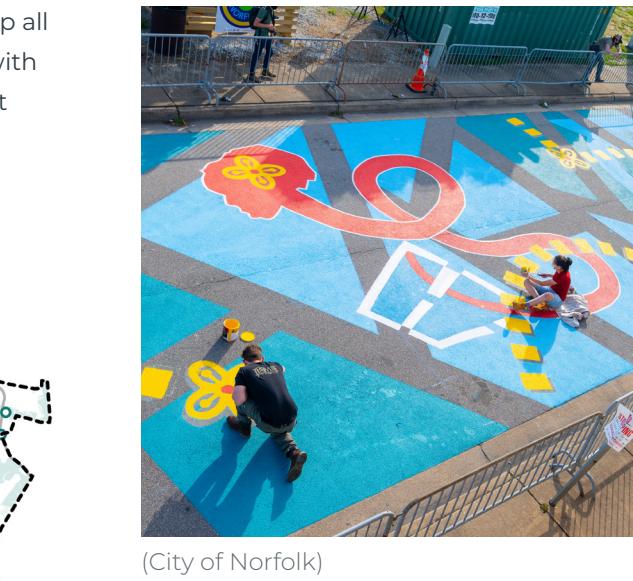
**c.** Consider sites for public art on bridges and infrastructure, in our airport, at transit stops, and in other public places around the city.

**d.** Continue efforts by Norfolk Arts to map all public art in the city and communicate with residents and artists through their robust social media presence.



**Public Art, Murals and Sculptures**

● Mermaid sculpture	● Pavement Medallion
● Artifact	● Photography
● Mobile installation	● Sculpture
● Mural	● Relief
● Painting	● Museum



(City of Norfolk)



(WRT)

**3. Incentivize arts and cultural programming** in neighborhood-wide development, and for arts-based commercial corridor revitalization.

**4. Support artists**, makers, and cultural producers to be able to live and work in Norfolk.

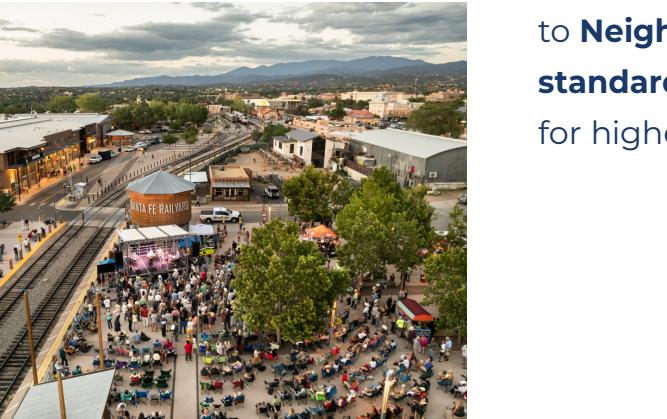
- a.** Provide event-based opportunities for artists and makers to increase exposure.
- b.** Work with affordable housing developers to equitably incorporate live/work spaces for artists and makers, particularly from underrepresented communities.
- c.** Support affordable work and performance spaces for local and emerging artists, musicians, and makers, in order to lower the barrier to entry.

**5. Build on existing **cultural arts districts**** (e.g., NEON District) to ensure local artists and makers have access to affordable studio spaces, live/work options, and exhibition venues.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**SANTA FE RAILYARD, SANTA FE, NM**

Santa Fe converted an industrial railyard into a cultural and arts hub, integrating historic preservation with local artistic expression to create a thriving place for artists and visitors.



(Tira Howard)

**6. Continue to advocate for Norfolk's **nightlife and entertainment** industry to be vibrant and safe.**

- a.** Consider creating/enhancing a position within the City of Norfolk to help stakeholders navigate permitting, guidelines, and other requirements.
- b.** Collaborate with the Downtown Norfolk Council to highlight and promote efforts like "A Safe Night Out," promoting safe, inclusive, and accessible entertainment and events.

**7. Consider zoning amendments to **Neighborhood Protection standards**** to include protections for higher density residential uses.



(City of Norfolk)

**8. Support the efforts of the Department of Cultural Facilities, Arts, and Entertainment to **maintain and expand the programs and operations** of Seven Venues and the MacArthur Memorial, recognizing and celebrating these venues as the cultural and placemaking anchors that they are.**

**9. Explore **funding options and tools to fund public realm improvements**, walkability and placemaking efforts, transforming Norfolk's neighborhoods into vibrant destinations for local residents and tourists alike.**

**10. Evaluate development regulations to identify ways that the principles of **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** can be incorporated into the design of newly developed and redeveloped areas.**

**11. Engage neighborhoods** in the development and updating of policing strategies, building on existing programs of NPD's Community Services Division.

**12. Explore the creation of an ongoing **"community walk"** program that includes neighborhood residents, City Council members, and an interdisciplinary group of City staff including police, fire, EMS, city planners, code enforcement, and neighborhood engagement staff.**

**13.** Consider installing “blue light” emergency phones in select areas with high crime rates.

**14.** Consider the creation of a **Project Safe Neighborhood Program** that will work to address crime including gun violence among youth.

**15.** Consider the development of a **music audit** to better define the role that music plays in Norfolk and proactively manage how music and its related elements interact with the wider community.

**a.** Map music and wider cultural assets (e.g., public spaces, businesses, tourism assets, educational assets, community assets, number of artists, etc.) and overlay onto other data sets.

**b.** Engage stakeholders and community members through interviews, roundtable discussions, and surveys to help identify gaps in access and other challenges that music can be a part of addressing, such as a lack of cultural spaces or places in disadvantaged communities.

**c.** Conduct a comprehensive analysis to determine the economic impact of music, especially on the nighttime economy.

**d.** Assess zoning and city code regulations and implement reforms to help achieve the goals of the music audit.

 **BEST PRACTICES:**

**MUSIC AUDIT, HUNTSVILLE, AL**

In 2018, the City of Huntsville, Alabama, invested in a music audit that has led to various implementations of the audit's recommendations, including the city hiring a full-time music officer within the economic development department who also works alongside the director of long-range planning. This has led to several music and place-based investments, including the opening of the \$48m city-funded Orion Amphitheater and the redevelopment of the downtown performing arts Von Braun Center. New investments are also bolstering educational programs, while amended zoning is better managing new residential developments around music and cultural venues.



## **GOAL 4:**

### **Support and Strengthen Community Facilities and Services**

Evaluate, align, and plan community facilities and services to anticipate a wide range of community benefits for current and future demographics.

Norfolk provides a wide range of services and facilities to its residents, including recreation, schooling, safety, rescue, and utilities. Supporting these amenities and services promotes health, well-being, and a high quality of life for current and future residents, while also investing in a growing and resilient city population.



Granby High School (WRT)

- 1. Work with Norfolk Public Schools to begin **closing and consolidating** schools to better align facilities with projected school populations and needs, and evaluate the potential for repurposing closed buildings into new spaces for community benefit (e.g., community centers, housing, senior facilities, co-working spaces, etc.).**
- 2. When evaluating potential sites for the location or relocation of a city facility or school, consider vulnerability to flooding and other resilience factors, using the **Future Land Use Plan and Vision 2100** as guides, and review noise and accident potential from aircraft operations using AICUZ.**
- 3. Monitor school facility readiness, ensuring buildings are **well-maintained, safe, and accessible** to residents of all abilities for both learning and public use.**
- 4. Evaluate schools to be designated as **emergency response centers**, increasing facility efficiency and raising public awareness of these sites as safe spaces for their surrounding communities.**
- 5. Continue to coordinate with Norfolk Public Schools and Parks and Recreation to pursue shared recreational and park facilities to increase access of public resources outside of school hours (e.g., an **“open schoolyard”** program).**

## 6. Connect existing and future city facilities to their surrounding neighborhoods using safe and fully accessible multimodal networks.

a. Connect any new public facility or site to the surrounding neighborhood through sidewalk or trail infrastructure and ensure safe access for community residents of all ages.

b. Incorporate best practices from Safe Routes to Schools or similar methodology to highlight the safest routes for surrounding communities to access schools and other facilities.



Walk to School Day (City of Norfolk)

c. Ensure comfort and safety for pedestrians and cyclists visiting city facilities through amenities like bus shelters (built new only when accessible by sidewalks) and bike parking.

**7. Develop and maintain an inventory and assessment of all City-owned facilities to track the longevity and maintenance of buildings and their major systems (building envelope, plumbing, security, HVAC, roof, etc.) to help plan for repair and replacement.**

**8. Develop a Library Facilities Master Plan** to help plan facility improvements for the next generation of library users, and to holistically incorporate other community-facing services.

a. Analyze libraries, community centers, and recreation centers to determine the need for creating, relocating, and/or consolidating facilities given the larger context of projected development and demographics.

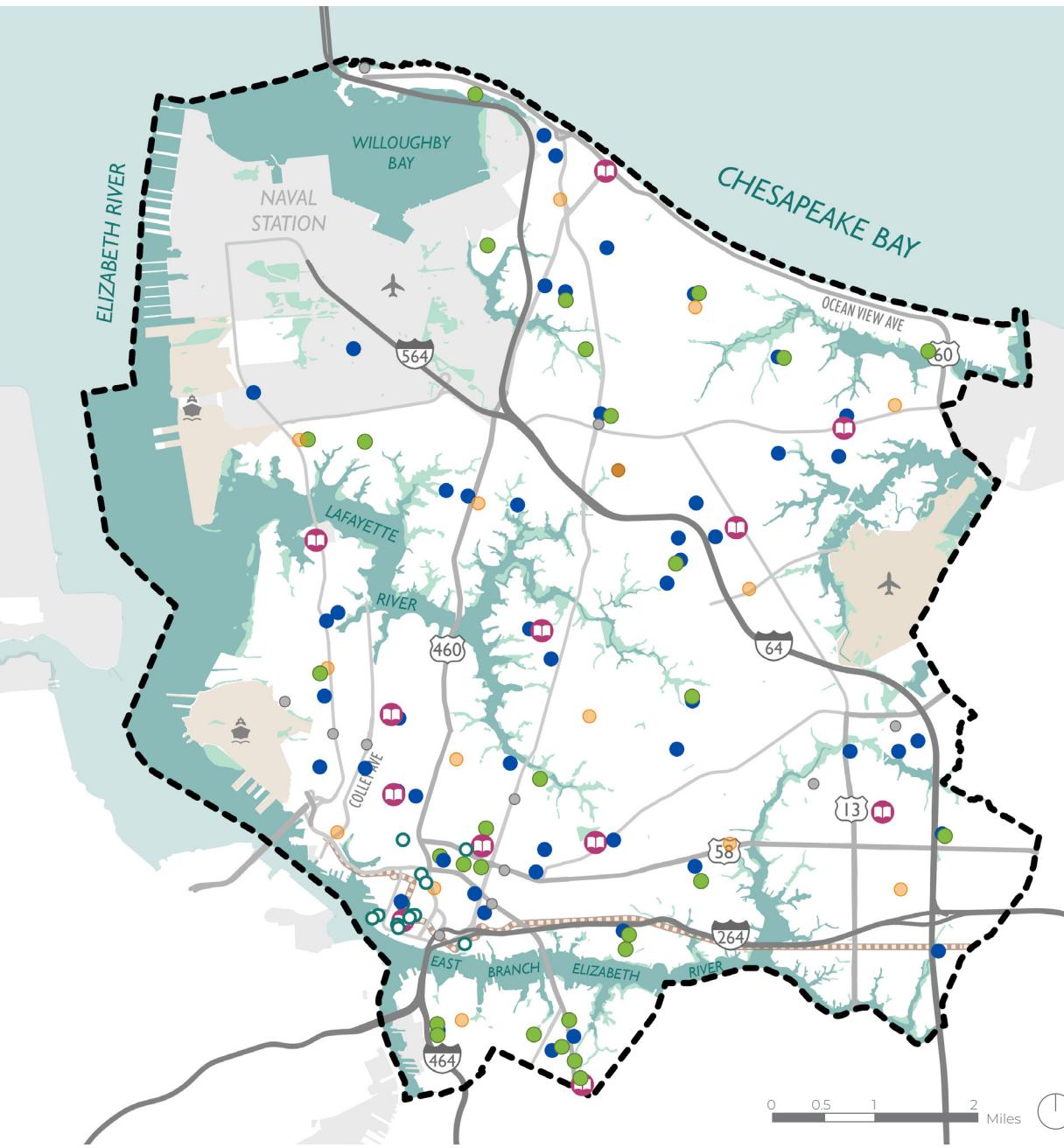


National Read a Book Day (City of Norfolk)

**9. Analyze police precincts and fire stations** to determine the need for creating, relocating, and/or consolidating or closing stations given the larger context of projected development, creating equitable system-wide coverage and minimizing response times.

a. Decrease the average response time of emergency services (fire, police, and ambulance) during service calls.

b. Develop a long-term strategy for expanding training spaces within Norfolk and shared regional facilities for use.

**Figure 3: City Facilities**

Source: City of Norfolk

**CITY FACILITIES**

- Library
- School
- Police Stations
- Fire Station
- Venue
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Works & Utilities

**My favorite part of Norfolk is going to school, hanging out with my friends, going different places around here like North Side Park and local areas with my friend.**

— Norfolk resident, Phase 1 Engagement

- c. Consider incorporating community amenities like recreation and affordable housing into any new fire or police station, in order to foster cross-community relationships and maximize public benefits.

#### **BEST PRACTICES:**

##### **STUDIO GANG, "POLIS STATION," CHICAGO, IL**

Chicago has been intentionally including complementary community uses like recreation, after-school spaces, mental health facilities, and affordable housing into their redeveloped police stations.

- 10. Support the implementation of the **Parks and Recreation Master Plan** as it relates to facility needs and improvements.

a. Assess the current park and trail system for opportunities to add fitness equipment, lighting, water stations, seating, shade, etc.



"Polis Station" conceptual diagram (Studio Gang)

b. Assess facility operating hours to ensure buildings are open at times that best fit community needs.

c. Develop a maintenance plan for existing parks and facilities.

d. Assess current recreation centers for service overlaps and potential repurposing for fewer, larger ones.

e. Build larger, regional recreation centers for intergenerational and multipurpose use.

f. Geographically align parks, pools, and recreation centers better to equitably meet the needs of community.

g. Make necessary repairs and improvements to community parks, prioritizing those with the highest percentage of issues as depicted in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

h. Design parks, waterfront access, and facilities to be accommodating and inclusive for all populations.

- i. Consider partnerships with non-profit and private sector organizations to assist in maintaining and operating facilities.
- j. Design parks and recreational facilities to maximize flexibility of uses, adapting to meet evolving needs of nearby residents.

- 11. Support Norfolk Parks & Recreation's efforts to increase **programming for youth and seniors**.

- 12. Continue support of and consider enhancements to the **Norfolk Real Time Crime Data Center**, leveraging technology and advanced analytics to provide critical information to first responders, and assist with criminal investigations and community safety.

- 13. Explore opportunities to collaborate with neighboring localities to integrate police, fire, and EMS dispatch systems in order to **reduce response times across city lines**.

- 14. Work with the Department of Human Services and community organizations to establish a center that provides **language resources** to

community members, to include interpretation and translation,

non-native English learning programs, and assistance in accessing City services and programs. The center may co-locate with other human service providers and facilities.

- 15. Create a **mentorship program for youth and/or young adults** ages 14-25 to prepare them for adulthood by encouraging career exploration, team building, and goal setting.

- 16. Ensure new **public potable water supply infrastructure** is designed to withstand groundwater impacts and risks, such as saltwater intrusion.

- 17. Continue support of **Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD)** and City of Norfolk improvements to the wastewater and stormwater systems.

- 18. Monitor revenue streams and identify opportunities for **new sources of funding** to support needed public facilities and services.

## Celebrating Our Community: Putting Actions in Place

To truly celebrate our community, Norfolk must do more than preserve - we must elevate. That means marking neighborhood gateways with pride, illuminating untold stories through public art and historic recognition, and creating spaces where culture, commerce, and daily life thrive side by side. From safe, vibrant nightlife to live-work spaces that keep creativity rooted in place, every investment in neighborhood identity is an investment in the city's shared future.

Now is the moment to expand the canvas—ensuring that every resident, every street, and every story is part of what defines Norfolk, and part of what moves us forward.



(City of Norfolk)

Where in the city could  
these ideas go? 

Promote **mixed-use development** with active ground floors, community amenities and pedestrian friendly streets 

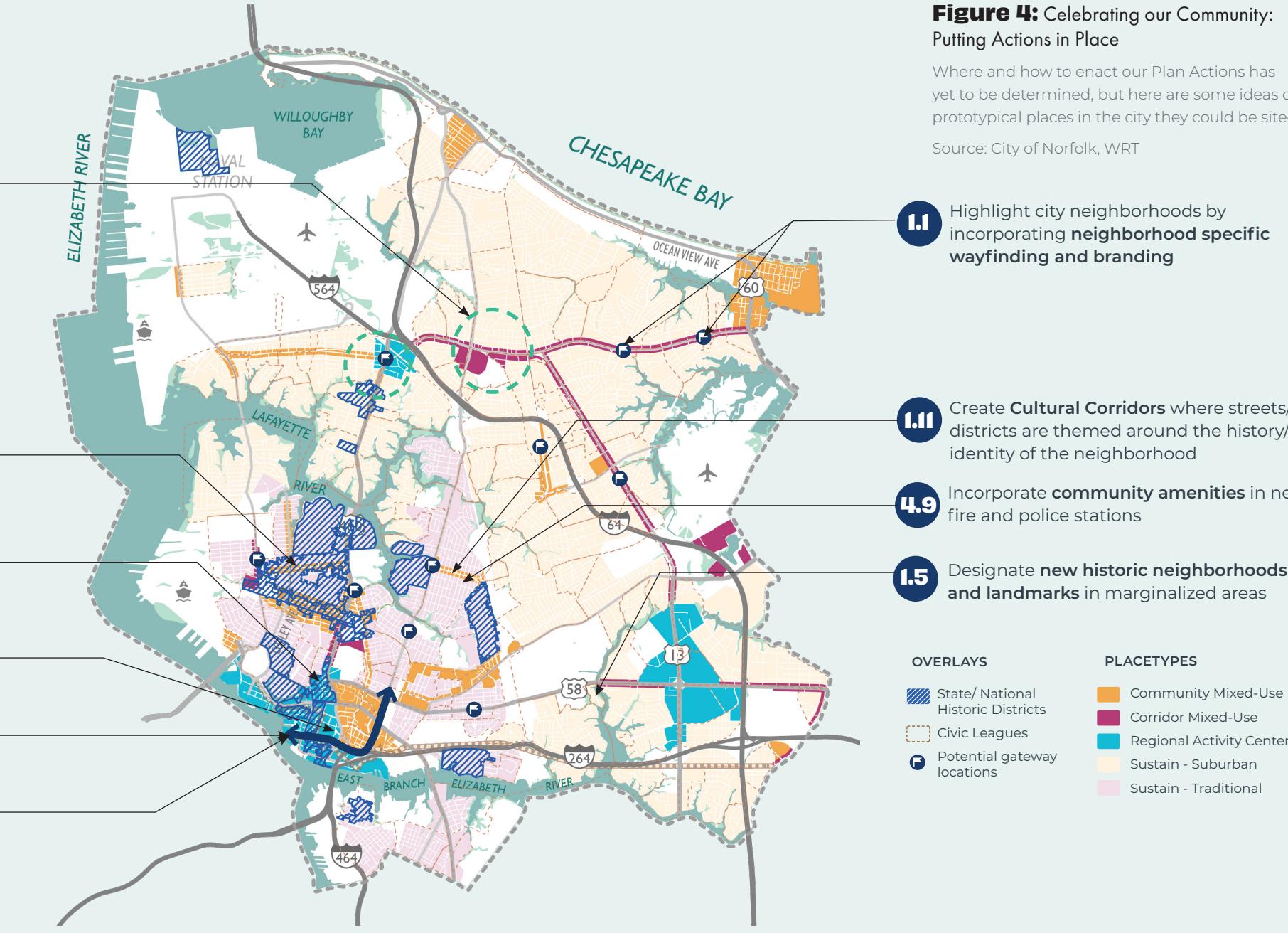
Encourage **community gardens** and urban agriculture to meet the need for equitable fresh food access 

Build on existing **cultural arts districts** to provide local artists affordable studio, live/work and exhibit spaces 

Advocate for **Norfolk's nightlife** and entertainment industry to be vibrant and safe 

**Expand and connect historic trails** 

Leverage Norfolk's Downtown waterfront as a **gateway for tourism** by connecting cruise visitors to tourist attractions 



**Figure 4:** Celebrating our Community:  
Putting Actions in Place

Where and how to enact our Plan Actions has yet to be determined, but there are some ideas of prototypical places in the city they could be site.

Source: City of Norfolk, VR

**1.1** Highlight city neighborhoods by incorporating **neighborhood specific wayfinding and branding**

**1.11** Create **Cultural Corridors** where streets/districts are themed around the history/identity of the neighborhood

**4.9** Incorporate **community amenities** in new fire and police stations

**1.15** Designate **new historic neighborhoods and landmarks** in marginalized areas

### OVERLAYS

- Community Mixed-Use
- Corridor Mixed-Use
- Civic Leagues
- Regional Activity Center
- Potential gateway locations

### PLACE TYPES

- State/ National Historic Districts
- Sustai - Suburban
- Sustai - Traditional