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**Title of Document:** A Plan for Downtown Norfolk 2020

**Prepared By:** Urban Design Associates

**Prepared For:** City of Norfolk

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**Civic League(s)/Organization(s) Affected:** Downtown, Freemason Street Area  
Association, Ghent Neighborhood League

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Planning and Community Development.

A VISION FOR THE NEXT DECADE

# NORFOLK 2020

This Plan UPDATE for Downtown Norfolk continues Norfolk's tradition of using physical planning as a primary tool for economic development. Synergy—using every project to create another—will continue to be the plan's driving force. Public investment will continue to be used strategically to catalyze private development. Large and small projects will be coordinated with public investments to create urban spaces and districts. This UPDATE marks the beginning of a new era for Downtown. Light Rail Transit is under construction as the plan is being written. With the various issues associated with gasoline and mandates to reduce carbon emissions, the LRT system will greatly enhance Downtown's role as the unique center of the region. Transit stations will be key focal points in Downtown's interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly streets and public spaces. All of the needs of daily life will be within walking distance or accessible by transit, thereby reducing auto dependency. Downtown will increasingly become the destination of choice. Additional initiatives will be developed along the NET shuttle bus route. Together, these initiatives will establish all of Downtown as a Transit-Oriented Development. Although a series of key projects is either underway or in the planning stage, much of the area available for redevelopment is not yet ready for detailed planning. Therefore, a major focus of this UPDATE is the framework of transportation and pedestrian open space which will encourage future private investment. This UPDATE includes two initiatives which build on the success of the Waterfront, multiple new initiatives whose focus is alternative modes of transportation including Light Rail Transit. Together, these represent the completion of the renaissance of Downtown's urban core. This UPDATE also begins the process of creating strong connections between Downtown and the neighborhoods of the City. The first step will be to overcome the physical barriers which have separated Downtown from these neighborhoods, and the next step will be to coordinate Downtown efforts with the planning programs of those neighborhoods.

**1980** | Downtown was clear of blighted structures, new roads had been built, and the first new office and civic buildings in separate clusters around the new City Hall, on East Main Street, and along Brambleton Avenue at St. Paul's Boulevard had been developed. One development, a hotel, had been built on the vacant waterfront.



**1990** | The Waterfront had become the most desirable address, with The Waterside and Town Point Park attracting visitors from all over the region and beyond. Office towers were built with waterfront views, and along Main Street. Freemason and Ghent were thriving as revitalized neighborhoods with a mix of new housing and restored historic houses.



**2000** | Downtown was restored as the primary retail center of the region with the construction of MacArthur Center, the revival of Granby Street as a retail and restaurant destination, and the repositioning of Waterside as an entertainment facility. The Tidewater Community College campus was established. Boush Street had become a residential address linking Granby Street with the Freemason area. The Waterfront was expanded with the construction of Nauticus, the berthing of the USS Wisconsin, and the completion of Harbor Park. The Norfolk Electric Transit (NET) system was in place to link all major destinations with parking facilities. The Chrysler Museum and Harrison Opera House expansions were completed, reinforcing their key roles in the region's cultural arts.



**2010** | The core of Downtown continued to strengthen with the construction of two major office towers, 1,000 units of high quality Downtown apartments, new retail shops, a Hotel and Conference Center, the Cruise Terminal, and the construction of the LRT system. Adjacent areas such as Freemason are being extended with new residential and hotel development to establish a presence along Brambleton Avenue. Improvements to Brambleton Avenue will make it possible to connect Downtown with the Chrysler Museum and the Opera House area as well as with Ghent. Similar improvements along St. Paul's Boulevard are being coordinated with the planning effort for St. Paul's Quadrant to the east.



## DOWNTOWN NORFOLK 2020: From the Ball Park to the Opera House

The Master Plan for 2000 established a Vision of Downtown with a continuous, interconnected environment from Harbor Park to the Opera House. This aerial view illustrates how a series of new initiatives, which build on the previous accomplishments, can make this vision a reality by 2020. Four Downtown stations for a new transit rail system will introduce an alternate mode of transportation, link the new initiatives, and contribute to the future success of Downtown.



## WATERFRONT-RELATED DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Waterfront will continue to be a public amenity that serves the entire City and the Region. The continuous pedestrian park will be extended to Harbor Park. Improved pedestrian crossings across Waterside Drive and other streets will serve as extensions of pedestrian routes and will better connect this park to Downtown through the following series of initiatives.

**Granby Connector and Hotel Conference Center:** The Granby Connector will provide safe pedestrian access between Otter Berth and Downtown at the 100 block of Granby Street. Behind the



historic buildings in that block, a hotel conference center fronting on Main Street will greatly improve Norfolk's capacity to attract major conferences and events.

**East Main Street and Harbor Park:** Waterfront mixed-use development and improvements to waterfront pedestrian paths and the entrance to Harbor Park will occur. This waterfront segment also includes the Ferry Landing and leads to East Main Street and the Government Center complex.



## TRANSIT-ORIENTED INITIATIVES

The four Downtown stations of the new Light Rail Transit system are the focus of coordinated initiatives which combine public investment in streetscape improvements with private investment in development.

**Government Center Station:** The station is in the middle of a new Civic Green for the City. On one side, the new Courthouse will create a landmark along St. Paul's Boulevard. On the other, City Hall, now more visible, creates a dramatic terminus for Main Street and marks the edge of a new office district that extends to Waterside Drive. The public space between the LRT station



and St. Paul's Boulevard will include a new memorial to Commemorate the End of Massive Resistance.

**MacArthur Station & Slover Library:** The Station is the center of a public Market Square with cafés, news stands, and an information center for Downtown activity. New upgraded facilities at the MacArthur Memorial on the east side of the Station will include a book shop. The City Hall Avenue facade of MacArthur Center has new shops and is more accessible with new pedestrian crosswalks. The Slover Library, with a glass atrium connecting the Seaboard Building



with a new building, is on the west side of the Station, adjacent to the newly restored facade of the Selden Arcade.

**Monticello Station:** One block from Granby Street, the Station provides access to new mixed-use development with ground floor shops, an office tower, and residential buildings. It also provides access to MacArthur Center, which includes its mixed-use final phase, and to the Tidewater Community College. The TCC Core Campus has been completed with a new Student Center and additional academic spaces.



**The Museum Station:** Located at the intersection of York and Yarmouth Streets, the Station serves the Chrysler Museum and Ghent in addition to the Freemason area. The Museum's expansion program includes facilities that will extend to Brambleton Avenue along a linear park that lines Duke Street. Large-scale new apartments, hotels, and mixed-use buildings will combine with the streetscapes to create a gracious Boulevard that is easy for pedestrians to cross, thereby connecting the area north of Brambleton to the core of Downtown.



**The NET Downtown shuttle bus system is the focus of a series of initiatives:** Granby Street north of Brambleton will have new streetscapes, a small town square, and a series of new developments. The former Greyhound site will become a mixed-use development. Monticello Avenue will have improved streetscapes, including the edges of Scope Plaza and the Federal Courthouse, as well as a redeveloped hotel on the Radisson Hotel site.



This aerial view illustrates how the next phase of this framework and a series of new initiatives, which build on the previous accomplishments, can make this vision a reality by 2020.

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# 2020

# NORFOLK 2020

## INITIATIVES IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

**Government Center Station TOD:** A new civic green and Courthouse complex will create this gateway into the core of Downtown. Future development and a reconfigured street pattern are recommended for sites currently occupied by the existing court building and the areas south of the City Hall tower.

**MacArthur Station TOD:** MacArthur Station, in the heart of the Downtown, will be accompanied by a variety of small-scale shops, plazas, an information center, a new library, and activity areas to become the hub of Downtown.

**Granby Connector / Main Street:** The final phase of connecting the west end of the Downtown core to the Waterfront will include the renovation of Towne Point Park, the Granby Connector directly linking the waterfront with Granby Street and a new Conference Center and Hotel at the intersection of Main and Granby Streets. Nauticus and the Half Moon Terminal will provide a western terminus for Main Street.

**Monticello Station TOD:** The new station will provide access for both Granby Street and a new series of developments on the long undeveloped east side of Monticello Avenue. It will also serve Scope and the Tidewater Community College campus.

**NET TOD:** An expanded NET line to the north provides new access for properties north of Brambleton making those properties and streets an integral part of Downtown. Potential areas include the Federal Courthouse area, the former Greyhound Terminal site, the Radisson Hotel complex, Granby North, the Opera House area, and other opportunities along the Monticello corridor up to 21st Street.

**Museum Station TOD:** A series of residential and hotel developments along this thoroughfare have been coordinated to enhance the character of Brambleton Avenue, to promote pedestrian crossings, and to maximize the use of the transit station. It is named the Museum Station to emphasize the fact that it will be accessible to the Chrysler Museum from the south side of Brambleton within a five-minute walk.

## CONNECTIONS TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Downtown core is indicated in white on the diagram below in order to emphasize this new phase of planning which establishes connections to the neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown. Recommendations include:

**The pedestrian crossings** along St. Paul's Boulevard and Brambleton Avenue should be improved.

**LRT stations** to the East at Harbor Park, Brambleton Avenue (Norfolk State University) and Ballentine Boulevard (Broad Creek) and to the west at Fort Norfolk (Eastern Virginia Medical Center) should lead to improved access to the nearby neighborhoods and employment centers.

**Expanded NET:** The NET should be expanded to include an additional service that will begin in Downtown and then extend north along Granby Street to 21st Street, west to Colley Avenue, and then south to the Fort Norfolk Medical Center station of the LRT. Areas in the blue tone on the diagram below would be within a five-minute walk of a NET station.

**A bicycle path** will be added to further establish connections between Downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods.

This expanded system of transit provides opportunities along the waterfront, especially at Fort Norfolk and Harbor Park. The Harbor Park Initiative will include a terminus for the High Speed Rail system which will have a dramatic impact on the Brambleton south area. Opportunities for compact, high quality development within neighborhoods should be planned in partnership with the neighborhoods themselves.

## FRAMEWORKS

**Downtown Network:** The interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly streets and public spaces, together with the Light Rail Transit Line and the NET, serve to link together the previously separated areas of Downtown and create a framework for coordinating development. The diagram with the NET line in blue and the LRT line in red (bottom right) uses a dark tone to indicate the streets and blocks which will be within a five-minute walk of a transit station. The lighter tone indicates a ten-minute walk. All of these properties can be considered suitable to accommodate Transit-Oriented Development. It is recommended that modified zoning requirements, including relaxed parking requirements in the area north of Brambleton Avenue, reflect this new reality.

**Crossing Barriers:** The key to creating a unified Downtown and making new areas attractive for quality development is to overcome the wide, high-speed thoroughfares which are barriers that isolate the core of Downtown. Pedestrian and local vehicular connections will be created through the use of an innovative approach to the timing of traffic lights and well designed crosswalks which will be aligned with the sidewalks on both sides of the thoroughfares. These include a series of crosswalks along Brambleton Avenue and St. Paul's Boulevard.

**Brambleton Avenue:** Key crosswalks will be provided at Monticello Avenue, Granby Street, Boush Street, Duke Street, Yarmouth Street, and Bottertott Street. These will link the Freemason area with Ghent and provide pedestrian access to the Chrysler Museum and the Opera House, and serve as a means for northern neighborhoods to have access to the LRT at the Museum Station.

**St. Paul's Boulevard:** A long barrier between the amenities of Downtown and the neighborhoods to the East, this thoroughfare will have seven improved crossing points. Charlotte, Freemason, and Market Streets crossings should be coordinated with the planning process for St. Paul's Quadrant. City Hall Avenue, Plume Street, Main Street, and a relocated Union Street will connect the Downtown core with the Government Center, East Main Street, and Harbor Park.



A Brambleton Avenue



B Monticello Avenue



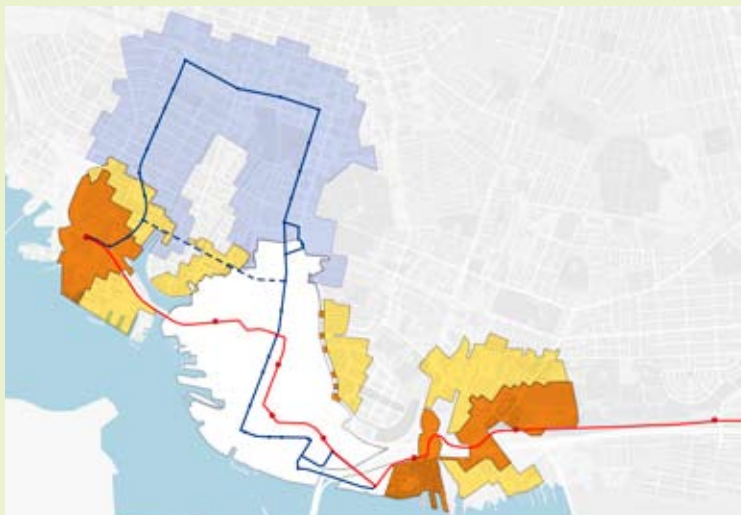
C MacArthur Station



D Government Center Station



E East Main Ferry Terminal and Harbor Park



— LRT Route   
 — NET Route   
 — Temporary NET Route   
 — NET 5 minute walk   
 — LRT 5 minute walk   
 — LRT 10 minute walk   
 — Bicycle Path

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