

CHAPTER 1: VISION AND INTRODUCTION



A general plan, referred to as a comprehensive plan in the *Code of Virginia*, is a local government’s guide to future physical, social, and economic development. Comprehensive plans are not meant to function as land use regulations in themselves, but instead serve as the basis for local land use decisions through the provision of a long range vision of the community in the future.

The Commonwealth of Virginia specifically requires local planning commissions to “prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction” [*Code of Virginia*, Section 15.2-2223] and that adopted plans be reviewed at least every five years. Norfolk’s comprehensive plan, the *General Plan of Norfolk*, was adopted in 1992, and based on both its age and the many changes in the City since that time, a new general plan is needed. Some of the specific major changes and issues that have emerged since the adoption of the *General Plan of Norfolk* in 1992 include the following:

- Expanded community involvement and engagement in local government operations and decision making.
- Advanced technology and communication permitting more citizen involvement.

- Greater awareness of environmental challenges such as flooding and sea level rise.
- Increased transportation options, including light rail, and the desire to become a more bikeable and walkable city as part of the more balanced total transportation network.
- Commitments for greater efficiency and transparency in government, linked to funding and economic challenges.

This new general plan, *plaNorfolk2030*, responds to these changes and establishes a vision and guide for the development of the City over the next 20 years.



VISION

Comprehensive plans are often referred to as maps to the future. *plaNorfolk2030* is no different in that regard; it charts the course to Norfolk’s future. In order to develop a map, one must have a destination in mind. Otherwise, if you do not know where you are going, any road will lead you there. The destination for a community is found in the vision that the citizens and elected officials have for their community.

In the case of *plaNorfolk2030*, the vision for where Norfolk will be in 2030 is:

Norfolk, a real city that is a great place to live, work and play, with:

- Strong and safe neighborhoods where people want to live, each with its own unique identity and design;
- A comprehensive transportation system – rare among cities of its size – that offers a wide variety of choices, while also serving as a regional transportation hub;
- A healthy economy that provides varied employment opportunities for a well-trained workforce, a world class port, a strong military presence, with a vibrant Downtown and thriving commercial centers throughout the City;
- A sustainable environment that is not simply protected, but enhanced;
- A variety of well-maintained housing options that are affordable and accessible to all residents;
- Opportunities for learning that extend through all stages of life;
- A well managed government that provides efficient and accountable public services to its citizens;
- A wide variety of cultural and recreational opportunities that lead to a fun and healthy lifestyle for a diverse population;
- A long and rich history that is reflected in its architecture and cultural resources; and
- A commitment to regional cooperation, recognizing the importance of a regional approach in the 21st Century.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

plaNorfolk2030 is organized into 13 chapters, beginning with this Vision and Introduction chapter. The next 11 chapters each address a unique topic area corresponding to a different part of the vision statement. The first of these is the “Identifying Land Use Strategies” chapter, which sets the plan on a path to create “a real city that is a great place to live, work, and play,” taken directly from the first statement

of the vision. Each subsequent chapter corresponds to the next statement of the vision. Concluding the plan is an Implementation chapter that speaks to how the plan is to be implemented, updated, and amended.

The chapters are as follows:

- **Chapter 1. Vision and Introduction**
This is the introduction to the Vision for the City of Norfolk and serves as the basis for *plaNorfolk2030*.
- **Chapter 2. Identifying Land Use Strategies**
Norfolk is a mature, developed city. Of Norfolk's nearly 28,000 acres of land, only 3.1% is vacant. New development is either the result of redevelopment or infill. The Land Use chapter outlines the steps necessary to aid the development of complementary land uses or facilitate land use change.
- **Chapter 3. Creating and Maintaining Healthy and Vibrant Neighborhoods**
Norfolk is a city of neighborhoods and has a long history of neighborhood planning. Successful *plaNorfolk2030* implementation will enable residents to take greater ownership of their neighborhoods.
- **Chapter 4. Providing Transportation Options**
Norfolk continues to plan for a true multi-modal transportation system, permitting safe and efficient travel by automobiles, mass transit, pedestrians and bicycles. Investment in transportation choices is essential to supporting both economic development activities and housing choices.
- **Chapter 5. Enhancing Economic Vitality**
Norfolk is the business, cultural, educational, and medical center of the Hampton Roads region. To continue this role, Norfolk seeks reinvestment, reuse, and redevelopment of existing properties and supports education and lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Chapter 6. Promoting Environmental Sustainability**
Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs is the key to preserving the natural environment and preparing for potential risks posed by natural events. In addition to protecting and enhancing the environment, Norfolk strives to conserve resources and reduce the overall impact of the built environment on the natural environment.
- **Chapter 7. Ensuring Housing Choices for All**
Norfolk focuses significant resources on making its housing stock and neighborhoods competitive and attractive in the regional real estate market, while still striving to maintain affordability for both homeowners and renters.
- **Chapter 8. Supporting Lifelong Learning**
Norfolk provides its residents, from birth through retirement and beyond, with opportunities to develop their skills and interests.

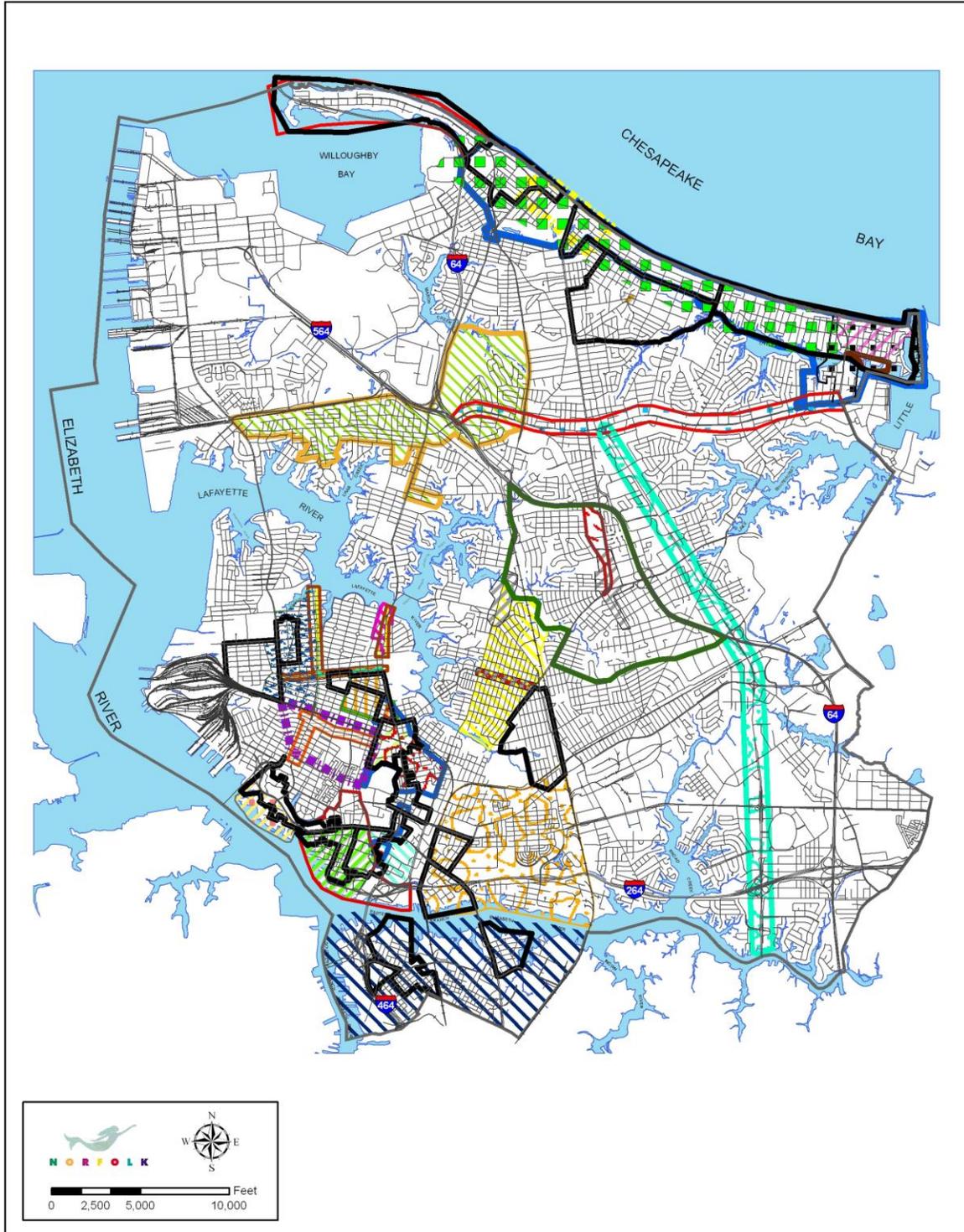
- **Chapter 9. Delivering Quality Community Services**
Norfolk is committed to providing effective and efficient services to its citizens, ensuring continued high quality of life.
- **Chapter 10. Enjoying Daily Life**
Norfolk, as the urban center of the Hampton Roads region, provides multiple opportunities for people to relax and play. The continued and expanded availability of such opportunities is critical to the success of any vibrant city.
- **Chapter 11. Preserving Our Heritage**
Norfolk has a long and rich history that is reflected in its architecture and cultural resources, which Norfolk continues to embrace and protect.
- **Chapter 12. Fostering Responsible Regional Cooperation**
Vibrant metropolitan regions are the key to growth and development. Hampton Roads communities seek to improve regional economic competitiveness through enhancement of regional amenities and services. In addition, there are opportunities to develop regional approaches to emerging issues such as sea level rise.
- **Chapter 13. Implementing plaNorfolk2030**
plaNorfolk2030 must be used in its entirety, including both text and maps, to guide decision making about physical development and public infrastructure.

Chapters 2 through 12 begin with a restatement of the appropriate vision statement, general background information, and an identification of key issues related to the topic. Each chapter contains one or a series of goals, each with a number of outcomes, metrics, and actions. Goals are general statements of the ideals toward which the City strives. Outcomes define what success would look like for that goal while metrics provide a method to measure progress towards achieving that goal. Actions define the specific steps necessary to realize each outcome, and ultimately, each goal. Together, the actions form a work plan for the City, summarized in the implementation chapter.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT

At the direction of the Norfolk City Planning Commission and with the concurrence of City Council, staff initiated an update of the *General Plan of Norfolk*. The process of drafting *plaNorfolk2030* began with re-examination of the *General Plan of Norfolk*, adopted in 1992. Each of that plan's goals, policies, and actions were reviewed to determine its implementation status and whether it should be included in the new plan. City Council reviewed the more than 90 neighborhood area plans and studies undertaken since 1992 to determine what should be included in the new plan (see Map VI-1) to ensure that citizen expectations arising from prior planning efforts continue to be properly reflected.

MAP VI-1. PLANS AND STUDIES SINCE 1992



The vision statement for *plaNorfolk2030* was developed by the City Planning Commission and subsequently reviewed and affirmed by City Council. The plan elements were developed by a series of technical advisory teams, one for each element, composed of technical experts including City staff which were charged with drafting a series of desirable goals and outcomes tied to metrics, as well as the actions that would be necessary to accomplish them. The information developed by these groups was compared to the requirements of the *Code of Virginia*¹, to ensure consistency with State requirements, and compiled to form a complete draft plan which was reviewed and approved by the City Planning Commission in a series of 8 meetings.

The initial work of the City Planning Commission was reviewed with the community through a series of 6 open house meetings conducted throughout the City, an online forum for community discussion and distribution of the draft plan at all libraries. Over 150 citizens participated in the open houses, providing approximately 425 unique comments that were recorded and reviewed with the City Planning Commission, resulting in numerous adjustments to the revised draft plan.

The revised draft plan was then submitted to the formal review and adoption process, including review by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) specified in the *Code of Virginia* [Sections 15.2-2225 and 15.2-2226].

USING THE PLAN

plaNorfolk2030 must be used in its entirety, including both text and maps, to guide decision making about physical development and public infrastructure. It is intended to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in development patterns with amendments made when determined to be necessary. Chapter 13, Implementing *plaNorfolk2030*, outlines the procedures for both use of the plan and amendments to the plan.

¹ *Code of Virginia* [Sections 15.2-2223 and 15.2-2224] requires that the plan address: land use; transportation, including a transportation map, with cost estimates for improvements; affordable housing; Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act comprehensive plan requirements; and implementation. Communities in the coastal region must adopt an environmental program based on the regulations adopted by the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Board. These regulations are designed to guide and assist local governments with administering an environmental program that promotes the commitments of the Bay Act.

