

Norfolk's Zoning Ordinance Executive Summary

Norfolk's new zoning ordinance was unanimously adopted by City Council on January 23, 2018 and takes effect March 1, 2018. The ordinance was rewritten to strengthen the City's commitment to vibrant neighborhoods, economic diversity, and coastal resilience.



The new zoning ordinance encourages and supports development that makes Norfolk more resilient, both physically and economically, recognizes the four established character districts, is user-friendly and supports streamlined development processes. It allows us to take a proactive and innovative approach to address flooding and position the mermaid city as the coastal community of the 21st Century and a model for other coastal communities to follow.

Resilience

The Ordinance contains a number of pioneering approaches in response to the long-term challenges posed by sea level rise, one of which requires all development within the City to meet a resilience quotient. The requirement is measured on a points system covering three



separate resilience elements: risk reduction, stormwater management, and energy resilience. This innovative points system ensures that new development will be more resilient and environmentally-friendly while providing flexibility to builders by allowing them to choose which measures to include in the development. Additionally, new or

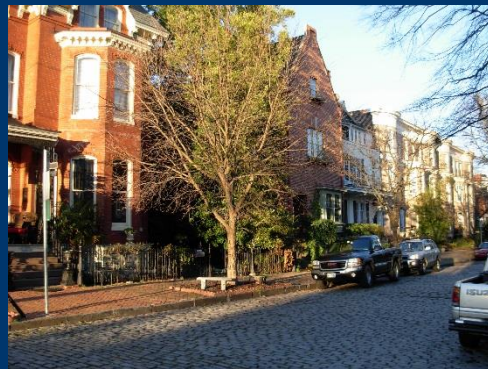
expanding development must meet minimum requirements for first floor elevations 1.5 – 3 feet above flood level.

The ordinance allows for easier mixing of use in commercial corridors to encourage more vibrant and pedestrian-friendly communities, whether one walks, bikes or drives. Increasing

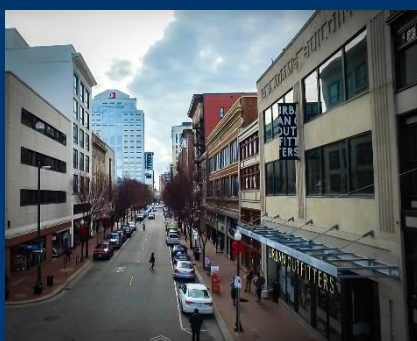
the housing use and diversity also includes provisions for more live-work units, providing a broader range of home occupations. As one example of this, the ordinance allows home-business owners to ask for permission to see clients in their home, something that wasn't previously available. Additionally, the ordinance creates more housing options, such as accessory dwelling units (or in-law suites) in many areas of the city.

Neighborhood Character

The ordinance also reflects the need to preserve and enhance Norfolk's unique development character. Character districts were established to apply different standards to different areas, with four district character districts – Downtown, Traditional, Suburban, and Coastal – each having standards that address their historic and planned development character. Form standards for each character district establish guidelines for how new buildings can be developed while maintaining the integrity of that neighborhood's character. These standards focus on form and not design, including things such as porch or garage locations in residential development and window glazing or parking location in commercial development. Form standards apply to all uses, but vary based on character district.



Streamlined Development Processes and Permitting Flexibility



The new zoning ordinance includes clearly defined expectations so that there are no surprises for both applicant and the neighborhood/residents. There is a clear understanding of every step in the process up front, including checklists, meeting guidance and review criteria. There are also clear performance standards for each use making it easy to understand what is expected of a new use at the outset. This improved process empowers the neighborhood and allows all to give their input at the beginning of the process, so that any compromises between the builder and the neighborhood can be agreed upon at the start.

Additionally, flexible use regulations will allow expedited approval for certain businesses, removing several uses from the list of those requiring time-consuming approval processes. By applying consistent standards across an entire category of uses, new businesses are able to navigate the process more efficiently and effectively.

Norfolk's zoning ordinance creates policy through the lens of resilience. This ordinance helps shape our city now as well as prepare for future challenges, both natural and socio-economic. It addresses factors with an innovative approach, guaranteeing that development will be more resilient, while still providing builders options and flexibility to achieve this. The ordinance protects the unique character of Norfolk's neighborhoods while still allowing freedom in design. Clearly defined procedures will increase the efficiency of the process. This resilience-focused zoning ordinance effectively positions Norfolk as the coastal community of the future.

