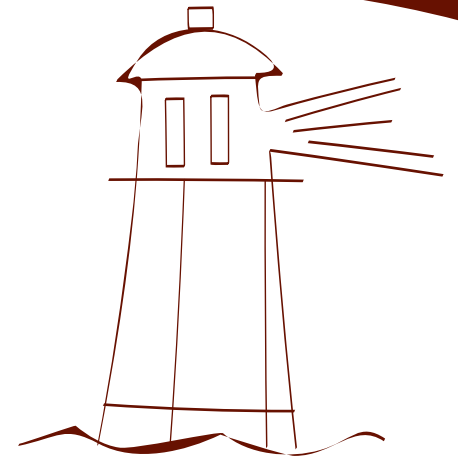


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INTRODUCTION



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It's Our Future



INTRODUCTION

The Plan . . . The Comp Plan . . . The Master Plan . . . The Zoning Plan . . . It has been called all of these (and more). Officially, however, its proper title is the City of Virginia Beach Comprehensive Plan, and the title reflects exactly what it is. The Plan is called ‘comprehensive’ due to the extensive breadth of its focus and the research underlying its recommendations. That breadth of focus and underlying research is critical, because the Comprehensive Plan itself is critical. The ‘plan’ is City Council’s official statement regarding how the physical development of the City should be directed for at least the next 20 years. It must be stressed, however, that the Comprehensive Plan (the ‘Plan’ hereinafter) does not claim and should not claim to have precise answers to all of the issues that may arise over time. The Plan’s role is the establishment of the policy framework within which operates a continuous planning process. That process is a vital means of implementing the recommendations of the Plan and revising the Plan as necessary in response to the unseen issues and opportunities that the future always provides. In that regard, this Plan is a ‘living plan,’ as it is not intended for the Plan to remain just as it is when adopted. The intent is for the Plan to interact with the various situations where it has a role and to be open to change as necessary to respond to recognized challenges and opportunities. The Plan should always be evolving in response to its environment.

CONSISTENCY OF VISION

This Comprehensive Plan is the sixth such plan for the City of Virginia Beach – the first Plan was adopted in 1979. Even though there have been five previous Plans, with the potential for each to be vastly different than the others, all of the Plans have shared a common vision: *creation of a place where people enjoy working, living, playing, and learning in an environment of unparalleled quality and opportunity.* Each Plan contributed to the achievement of that vision by successfully meeting the challenges of that time and anticipating the challenges and opportunities foreseen for the future. In 1979, the first Comprehensive Plan limited growth to those areas of the City where such growth could be supported

Sect on 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia establishes the legal requirements for the preparation and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Among them are the following:

- › The Plan is to be prepared by the Planning Commission for presentation to the City Council for its adoption. The Plan must be evaluated for review at least once every five years.
- › The Plan is to be general in nature. While the Plan is not binding, the City Council has traditionally given great weight to the Plan in its decision making, especially in rezoning matters.
- › The Plan must be based on studies and data that describe existing conditions and trends in the community.
- › The Plan must address certain topics, which are enumerated in the Code of Virginia.
- › As of 2007, the Plan must identify Urban Development Areas, which this Plan does through the use of Strategic Growth Areas, and must incorporate principles of New Urbanism and Neotraditional Development (Sect on 15.2-2223.1).



The “Dome” — a landmark from the years of the first Comprehensive Plan



by adequate facilities. The next Plan, in 1985, sought to establish a closer link among development patterns, citizen needs, and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to improve overloaded facilities in the city. It was amended a year later to formerly recognize the ‘Green Line’, a boundary that defined the urban and rural areas of the City. The 1991 Comprehensive Plan introduced the Transition Area, where a moderate level of growth was recommended provided it was accompanied by significant open space and high quality development. Conditional zoning changes were predicated on adherence to development standards that exceeded regulatory minimums. The 1997 Plan, responding to the reality that the rapid growth of Virginia Beach had slowed to a more normal rate, focused on the establishment of quality as the central feature of the City’s development. Finally, the previous Plan, adopted in 2003, pointed out that the majority of the factors that allowed the rapid growth of the last 25 years of the last century (such as an abundant supply of developable land and a capability to readily supply adequate infrastructure and services) had largely disappeared. Moreover, and possibly more importantly, that Plan stressed that the buildings and the infrastructure of the public and the private sectors built during the rapid growth years were reaching an age where deterioration would be a significant factor, unless aggressive maintenance was introduced.

In response to these two significant issues, the 2003 Comprehensive Plan defined 12 Strategic Growth Areas and established five ‘desired outcomes’ that acted both directly and indirectly to ensure the City continued to grow and remain healthy. Those five desired outcomes, which are listed, have met with much success since 2003, and they remain valid today. The recommendations of this Plan continue to strive to achieve these outcomes.

OUR FUTURE VIRGINIA BEACH

The following are five desired outcomes that we, as a city, want to achieve and from which flow the strategies and recommendations of this Plan:

- 1. We want Virginia Beach to be a city of sustainable development, economic vitality, and lifelong learning.** We want to ensure the opportunity to start and grow a business, or for one to enter into and prosper in the local job market. Moreover, we want Virginia Beach to be on the ‘cutting edge’ of new technologies, particularly those that generate renewable energy, which will ensure continued economic growth that will endure and will be sustainable into the future. In addition to providing our children with a strong foundation for learning and growth, our schools provide venues for public involvement in many activities and are a major source of civic pride. For these reasons, it is important that we recognize the many contributions our school systems make to the overall quality of life in our community.
- 2. We want Virginia Beach to present a broad appeal for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.** Each person must be able to find in Virginia Beach those recreational, educational, social, personal enrichment, employment, housing, shopping, and care and support opportunities appropriate for their stage and position in life.
- 3. We want Virginia Beach to be a city whose public services and facilities work to satisfy the needs of our citizens.** Our roads, schools, parks, libraries, emergency responders, drainage systems, and social support systems must function adequately and efficiently.



4. **We want Virginia Beach to be a city of physical beauty with great appeal.** The City has been blessed with a magnificent natural setting and we have in the past and continue today to express our commitment to preserving the important environmental relationships between our manmade and natural elements. Further, we want our buildings, streets, and public spaces to be designed not just to function well but to have aesthetic appeal and enduring quality.
5. **We want Virginia Beach to be a city of strong neighborhoods.** As our housing stock grows older, some of our neighborhoods are already feeling the stress of decline, and this trend will continue into the future. Our actions must respond to this trend and work toward assisting stressed neighborhoods to remain healthy.

THE CONSISTENCY OF CHANGE

“Nothing endures but change.”

Heraclitus, Greek philosopher (540 BC – 480 BC)

Change is constant. We know that the City of Virginia Beach is changing, just as it has been changing since the first Comprehensive Plan. In the 1970s and 1980s, change was fast, as the City underwent a rate of growth that was, at times, the highest in the United States. An understanding of the forces underlying the changes of those years was instrumental to developing Comprehensive Plans that directed growth in ways that ensured the consistent vision of Virginia Beach as a place where people enjoy working, living, playing, and learning endured and met success.

Today, the change is somewhat slower, and while that slow pace of change is welcome, as it provides more time to anticipate and respond, it is also a concern, because

it can be so slow it can be imperceptible. It is, therefore, vital that we constantly understand what forces are causing or may cause change and how those forces can be directed to help Virginia Beach achieve the vision that has been established. In directing these forces of change, it will be vital that this Plan, like those before it, be amended as necessary to ensure continued success.

The principle of change and necessary amendment is demonstrated well by the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. That Plan encountered one of the most significant forces of change ever to be thrust upon the City of Virginia Beach – a decision of the federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission. On August 24, 2005, the Commission voted to maintain the Navy’s East Coast Master Jet Base at Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana only, if among other things, the cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake and the Commonwealth of Virginia enacted certain legislation to stop and roll back encroachment by incompatible development within the base’s highest Accident Potential Zone (APZ-1) by the end of March 2006.

Prior to the BRAC Commission’s decision, the Department of Defense had revised its list of land uses that are compatible with military operations arising out of NAS Oceana. This change required modifications to the land use recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan as well as to the uses permitted by the Zoning Ordinance within the Air Installations Compatible Use Zones (AICUZ), as uses that were previously deemed ‘compatible’ in such areas, such as residential uses, were no longer considered compatible.

In response to the BRAC Commission’s decision, City Council adopted a compliance plan on December 20, 2005. The plan included eighteen (18) ordinances, two property acquisition plans (for property in Accident Potential Zone 1 and the Interfacility Traffic Area), and

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extensive amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, in February 2007, the City and the Navy entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), pursuant to which City and Navy representatives jointly review discretionary development applications for uses affected by AICUZ regulations at an early stage of the application process. As a result, the City Council is provided with a valuable tool to determine whether a particular application meets the requirements of those regulations. The foregoing measures are a clear reflection of the City's commitment to safeguard the future of NAS Oceana as the Navy's East Coast Master Jet Base.

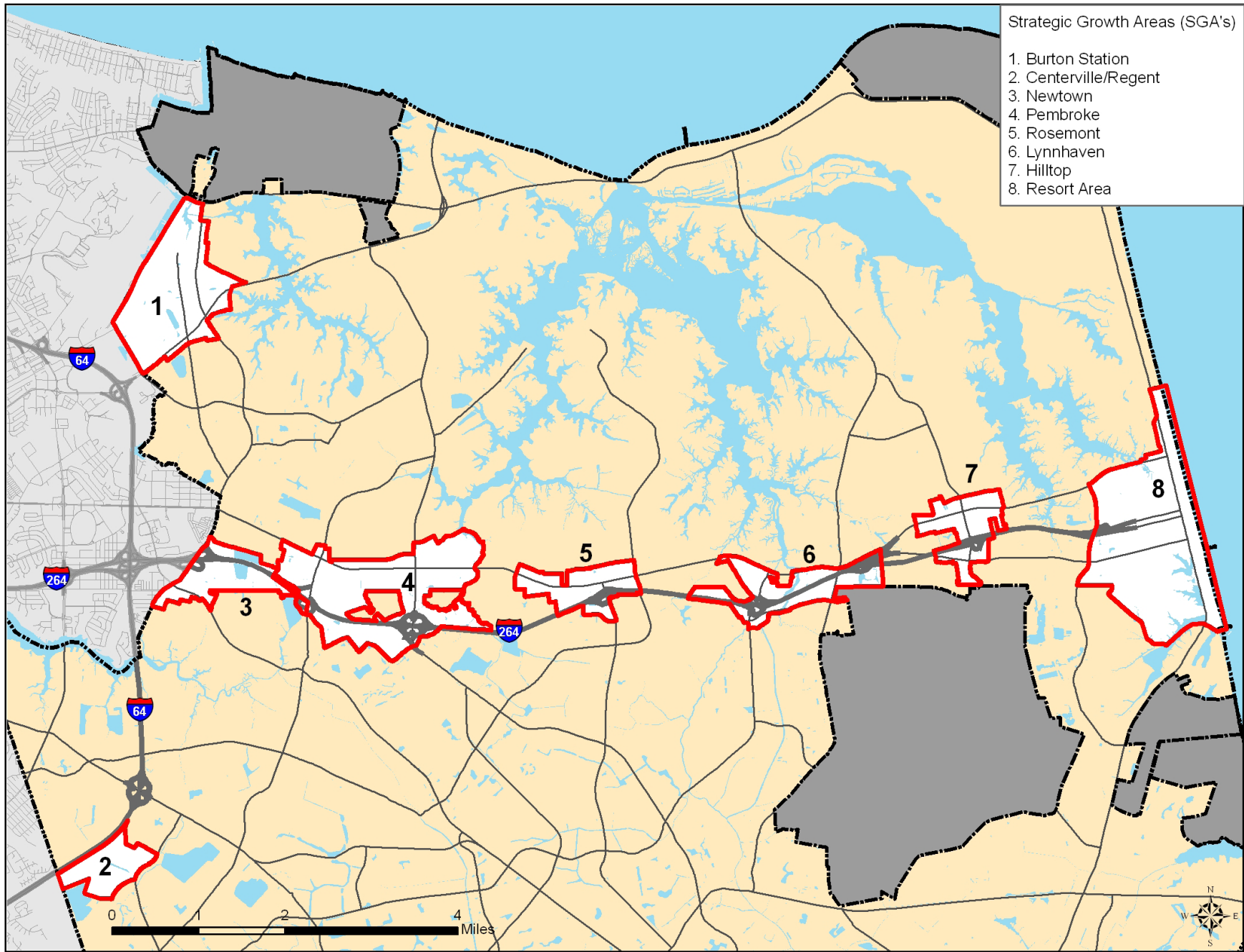
On October 1, 2009, the Navy's Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base and the Army's Fort Story merged to become a single entity, with a unified command and a new name: Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story. The newly merged base will be the biggest employer in Virginia Beach, with 17,211 personnel and an estimated payroll of \$850 million a year. It will be the primary East Coast base supporting overseas contingency operations. By 2012, the Joint Expeditionary Base is expected to have more than 18,000 personnel.

In addition, three predominantly non-residential areas, located adjacent to NAS Oceana, have been defined as 'Special Economic Growth Areas'. These areas are identified as East Oceana SEGA 1, West Oceana SEGA 2, and South Oceana SEGA 3 and are described in more detail on pages 3-27 through 3-33.

The relationship between the City and the military continues to be one of considerable mutual benefit. The presence of the military in Virginia Beach stabilizes our local economy, increases the diversity and background of the population, is a source of pride to the citizens of the City, and enhances the City's efforts to become a

"Community for a Lifetime." Virginia Beach provides excellent schools, good job opportunities for military spouses, ample and varied recreational, cultural and social activities, and an overall high quality of life for military personnel and their families. Virginia Beach endeavors, and will always endeavor, to be a welcome home for our military, including the personnel and families that serve in our nation's armed forces.

By adopting the December 20, 2005 amendments, and in so doing, protecting NAS Oceana from incompatible development that would compromise the mission of the base, the recommendation of the 2003 Plan to focus growth within designated Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs), became even more important as the means to ensure a successful future for Virginia Beach. The Green Line, now in place for nearly 25 years, ensures that growth remains in the northern area of the City where it can be supported. The western portion of the Transition Area, where limited residential growth was projected by the 2003 Plan, is now part of the Interfacility Traffic Area (ITA) between NAS Oceana and Naval Auxiliary Landing Field (NALF) Fentress. Residential growth in the ITA is limited to what is allowed by the Agricultural zoning district, and through a cooperative program with the Navy, land located in the ITA is being voluntarily purchased and protected from residential development by restrictive easements. Working in conjunction with the Navy and other stakeholders, development policies and regulations have been put in place to limit incompatible uses on properties located around NAS Oceana within Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) areas greater than 65 dB DNL. In sum, the overall affect is to focus future growth, particularly growth in the number of residential dwellings units, to the areas of the City west of Rosemont Road and north of Virginia Beach Boulevard. It is in these areas



Strategic Growth Areas (SGA's)

- 1. Burton Station
- 2. Centerville/Regent
- 3. Newtown
- 4. Pembroke
- 5. Rosemont
- 6. Lynnhaven
- 7. Hilltop
- 8. Resort Area

STRATEGIC GROWTH AREAS MAP

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that the majority of the SGAs and the Suburban Focus Areas (SFAs) are found (the SGAs and SFAs are described later in this Plan).

The BRAC decision and the revisions to the list of land uses compatible with the AICUZ demonstrate the impact on the Plan of changes flowing from legislative and policy actions at a different level of government. Beyond BRAC, for example, there are changes each year by the Virginia General Assembly pertaining to the laws that regulate land use. Sometimes, those changes force amendments to the Plan, as Virginia is a 'Dillon Rule' state and the City is allowed to regulate land use only as the General Assembly allows.

There are, however, also impacts on the Plan that flow from changes in fundamental systems that we have limited, if any, control over. These changes have been considered during the development of this Plan and the recommendations made by this Plan seek to position the City of Virginia Beach in a way that the changes provide opportunities for growth and enhancement of the City as a place to live, work, play, and learn.

There is, for example, evidence that the planet's overall climate is changing (though there remains some debate about the causes of that change). The planet may be warming and, as a result of that warming, the City may be impacted. For example, if the level of the ocean is rising, the result would be inundation of parts of the City in the future. This is discussed further in the "Environmental Stewardship" chapter of this Plan.



Offshore Wind Turbine



Light Rail Transportation

We are also faced with the need to develop new sources of energy, particularly those that are renewable. As traditional sources of energy become more scarce and difficult to extract and use, and their costs rise, those sources must be supplemented and eventually replaced. The City of Virginia Beach stands in the unique position of being able to develop renewable sources of energy due to the location of the City in an area where there are resources, such as wind, that are readily available.

"If we are going to solve these problems, we will need new tools, new infrastructure, new ways of thinking, and new ways of collaborating with others – the stuff of great new industries and scientific breakthroughs and the stuff that propels one nation forward and leaves another behind"

Thomas L. Friedman, Hot, Flat and Crowded (2008)

As an outgrowth of both the changes in our climate and the need to utilize renewable energy sources, we must change the way that we transport ourselves, as well as goods and services, inside and outside the City. We must find more efficient means of transportation by encouraging development patterns that rely less on a single-occupant automobile and more on multi-occupant transportation, bicycling, walking, and on new modes of travel that will no doubt arise in response to the need and to advance in transportation technologies. This Plan, therefore, stresses the

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importance of the Strategic Growth Areas (SGAs) as a means to concentrate growth in a strategic and sustainable way, developing centers of employment, living, commerce, shopping, and arts and culture. The SGAs, almost all of which are located along the City's primary transportation corridor, provide the City with an unparalleled opportunity to reshape portions of the City in a way that emphasizes a 'smarter' type of growth. This planning strategy also recognizes the importance of preserving and respecting existing neighborhoods, especially those located adjacent to or in the SGAs.

In addition to focusing on improvement and innovation within the transportation system, we must also ensure that Virginia Beach's information and communication infrastructure is tightly connected with the world and is of the highest efficiency and quality. The continued development of the City's broadband Internet infrastructure by the private sector, including the provision of greater capacity and enhanced connectivity, is critical to the future of the City of Virginia Beach. An enhanced

and more widely available system of broadband access will enhance Public Safety, strengthen the vitality of the City's technology infrastructure, support staff mobility for a more cost effective delivery of City services, promote a more sustainable Virginia Beach, maximize economic development opportunities, support strong, healthy families, and enhance the City's livability. In addition, such a system, particularly if it includes citywide wireless access capabilities, will also serve as a desirable community amenity, stimulating interest in Virginia Beach, and providing convenience for citizens, business owners, and visitors alike.

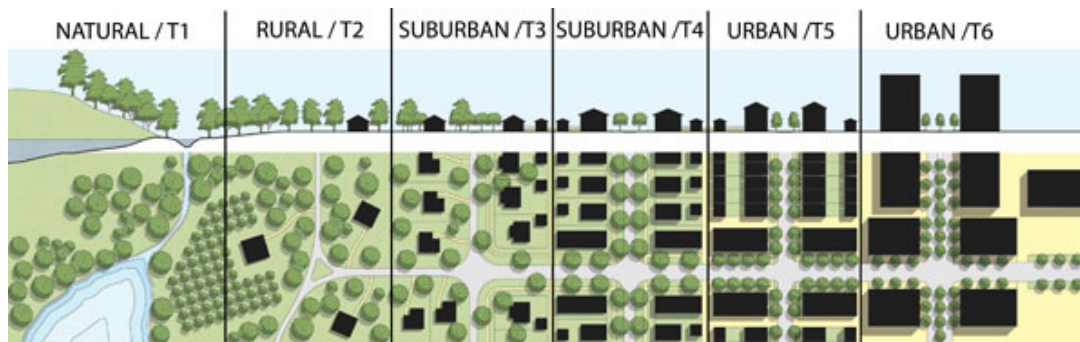


Cape Henry Lighthouses

THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGN

With changes in patterns of growth, the role of this Plan as a means of ensuring compatibility of uses, the quality of development, and the sustainability of the development is vital. While past Plans have always emphasized the importance of design, this Plan seeks to do more, providing a fundamental understanding of the principles of good land use and development that can be used to guide growth and reshape the City.

Fundamentally, there are four patterns or forms of land use in Virginia Beach: natural environment; rural; suburban; and urban. The suburban and the urban forms are further divided into a low-density/intensity



The Transect (from the SmartCode/Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company)

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and a high-density/intensity. This transition from the City's natural environment to the highly urbanized forms of the Oceanfront and Town Center is known as the Transect. Each division of the Transect has its own unique characteristics. Streets, drainage, lighting, relationship of building to street, and signage differ from one Transect Zone to another.

To ensure that the development that occurs in the City achieves the vision we seek, the design and development principles presented in this Plan, as well as the more specific ones provided in the plans and guidelines that have been developed for the SGAs, are critical. Of significant importance is how we address the transitions between the various Transect Zones (TZs) and between the various uses within the TZs, particularly those uses that are significantly incompatible with each other. Guidance for addressing these transitions is provided within this Plan.

Of equal importance will be how the SGAs develop in regard to the form that they take. The SGAs are intended to be urban in form with a mixture of uses commonly found in urban settings. The areas, however, that are designated as SGAs are largely either undeveloped or developed in the same suburban pattern found throughout the City. How we reshape these undeveloped and suburban areas will be critical if we are to create memorable urban places where people desire to live, work, play, and learn. As the various implementation plans are developed for the SGAs, we must develop design guidelines and new zoning tools, such as Form Based Codes, that provide specific direction to those who own property in the SGAs regarding what the form of those places will be. If the form of the SGAs does not match our vision for the SGAs, we will have lost much. This Plan, therefore, provides fundamental

guidance regarding the proper form of urban places and the principles of design that can be used as we move forward to create an active and vibrant urban corridor from Newtown to the Oceanfront.

USE OF THE PLAN

- › The Plan is divided into three parts: a Policy Document (which you are reading); a Technical Report (the research behind the Plan); and a Reference Handbook.
- › Throughout the Plan, you will find Web Page addresses (URLs) for sources of additional information on the Internet. Since this Plan is dynamic in nature, and there are other plans, guidelines, and strategies being developed as means of furthering the goals of the Plan, the Web addresses are provided to keep you current on the implementation and improvement of the Plan.
- › Always go to www.ourfuturevb.com for further information.
- › The Policy Document is organized to provide long range planning guidance within the following four major land use areas of Virginia Beach: the Urban Area; Suburban Area; The Princess Anne Commons and Transit on Area; and Rural Area. This guidance is presented both in a land use map format, as shown on the following page, and through a series of written policies and other related maps, as detailed later in this document.

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IT'S OUR FUTURE

A city such as Virginia Beach is, more than anything else, a reflection of those who live in the City, those who own property, those who provide goods and services, those who farm the soil or raise and care for animals, those who harvest what the ocean has to offer, those who have been placed here by chance or by choice as they serve our nation in military service, those who strive to provide tourists from far places a respite from their daily lives and a chance to recreate, and those who are here simply because they do not desire to be anywhere else. The City consists of these people, and the purpose of this Plan is to provide the vision and guidance necessary to ensure that those people, and those who will join us in the future, will possess a physical environment where they enjoy working, living, playing, and learning in an environment of unparalleled quality and opportunity.

Once the City Council adopts this Plan, the Plan is said to express the City Council's vision for the development of the City's physical environment. The truth, however, is that once adopted, the Plan will express the vision of the citizens of Virginia Beach for the development of the City's physical environment. The vision, the desired outcomes, the principles of design, and the recommendations contained in this Plan belong to all of us, and it is incumbent on all of us to do our part to ensure the success of this Plan.

The world is changing in significant ways and each of us must understand the effect of those changes on us, as well as how the changes affect how we live. The City is all of us, and whatever the future holds, we will have to determine how to respond to the problems and the opportunities. This Plan is our current, collective vision of how to respond, because, collectively, it's our future.

