

## **Comprehensive Plan Public Open House Public Comments**

### **Agriculture and Rural Area**

Sixty-six comments were received relating to Agriculture and Rural Area issues. The majority of the comments referred to preserving the agrarian livelihood and character of the rural area.

#### **Protect Farming and Rural Character**

Eighteen citizens pointed out that protecting farming, and the way of life in the rural area, is vital to the overall health of our city.

#### **Keep the Green Line in Place (also noted under Land Use comments)**

Fifteen citizens mentioned that keeping the green line in place by holding to the plan is the essential way to preserving and maintaining the rural area.

#### **Develop Pungo Village**

There were 9 citizen comments related to developing the Pungo Village area, following the ULI study recommendations.

#### **Support Agricultural Reserve Program**

Eight citizens commented on the proof that the ARP program is working and should continue to be a land use tool to preserve the open space in this area of the City.

#### **Do not Develop Pungo Village**

While the second most prevalent item, developing Pungo Village, was report above, there were 4 citizens that were opposed to the idea.

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### **Community Appearance and Historic Preservation**

Sixty nine comments were received relating to community appearance and historic preservation. Generally speaking, most citizens of Virginia Beach like their neighborhoods. They want to protect the sense of community that exists and adds to their quality of life. They are supportive of the mechanisms that serve to protect communities that they value, such as homeowner associations and city code enforcement. At the same time, they are aware of improvements that can be made to restore or enhance the appearance of their neighborhoods and the surrounding areas.

#### **Neighborhood Stability**

The comment most expressed by the attendees was the desire to keep the existing characteristics of their current neighborhood and sustain the neighborhood identity. They like the characteristics and feel of their neighborhoods. Continued support for the homeowner associations in the residential development areas was mentioned several times.

#### **Neighborhood Appearance**

The second most common theme was that we should keep and maintain the residential building styles and appearance of neighborhoods. The architectural style of homes should be consistent in neighborhoods, but not to the point that they all look the same. Several comments were made that tree protection and burying utilities was important to improve the appearance in and around neighborhoods.

A third often voiced concern was that the issue of abandoned or underused shopping centers should be addressed. It was felt that they should be removed and replaced with parks, trees and open space. Along those same sentiments was that ugly office buildings and other buildings should be updated and renovated. Old and broken down commercial and residential buildings, especially those that line main streets, i.e. Virginia Beach Boulevard should be refaced.

#### **Neighborhood Improvement**

Another popular comment was the need to restore or improve the integrity of some neighborhoods. It was felt that the quality of housing is decreasing in some areas. The Thalia area was mentioned as one area that needed improvement. Attendees considered part of the problem to be not enough City government enforcement of the zoning ordinances that affect the residential areas. It was felt also that the City needed to improve maintenance in right-of-way areas in subdivisions. Enforcement of the code coupled with maintenance is considered important so that neighborhoods are more aesthetically pleasing (mowing, maintenance of sidewalks, parking on sidewalks). This included keeping homes up to code, particularly along the Oceanfront.

#### **Historic Preservation**

Historic preservation was on people's minds as well. We should work to keep the historic character of the city intact and provide incentives to encourage their upkeep instead of destruction of building and landmark trees. We should save our historic sites including the preservation of more historic sites in the Kempsville Area.

# Comprehensive Plan Public Open House Public Comments

## Housing and Neighborhood Preservation

Seventy nine comments were received relating to Housing and Neighborhood Preservation. The majority of the comments referred to the need maintain and preserve our neighborhoods and to provide housing types that are affordable to the workforce. Several of the most often comments overlap relating preservation of older homes and neighborhoods to providing workforce housing due to the smaller size of the houses.

### Housing and Neighborhood Preservation

Overall, people who participated in the Open House discussions feel strongly about preserving and maintaining the quality their neighborhoods. The value of doing this was seen as contributing to the quality of life by keeping the character of the neighborhood intact while stabilizing property values and providing smaller homes that are more affordable.

### Workforce Housing

Tied with the number of comments on preservation of housing and neighborhoods was the need to provide housing for the workforce. Even though some comments objected to this need, most of the comments were in favor of housing for the workforce that they can own. The need to have diverse housing in convenient locations in the city where they work, shop and play was repeatedly expressed.

### Affordable Housing

Closely related to the subject of workforce housing and just a frequently mentioned; was the need to maintain, expand and provide housing that is affordable to lower income residents. The thoughts expressed included integrating affordable housing in all neighborhoods; be aesthetically-pleasing, and be diverse (such as condos, townhouses, multifamily) so that options would be available.

### Neighborhood Revitalization

The fourth most discussed topic was the importance of revitalizing or redeveloping older neighborhoods, including townhouse and apartment neighborhoods. Some of the benefits of this were mentioned as reducing crime; people don't have to drive a long way to work since many older neighborhoods are in convenient locations and as previously commented on; can provide workforce/affordable housing options.

### Density

When asked about housing and neighborhood preservation, respondents cited density as leading topic. The comments ranged from not wanting any high density housing to a desire to see higher density housing. One comment expressed concern about the "over building, size and cost of residential homes in the Transitional Area".

## **Comprehensive Plan Public Open House Public Comments**

### **Land Use, Infrastructure and Economic Vitality**

One hundred forty-four comments were received relating to land use, infrastructure and economic vitality issues. An overwhelming majority of citizens support the expansion of strategic growth area principles including transit oriented design and the prevention of continued urban sprawl.

#### **Support Strategic Growth Areas, New Urbanism, Transit-Oriented Development**

By the largest margin, 20 citizens support prioritizing development in strategic growth areas. This includes developing transit oriented development along on the backbone of the Virginia Beach Boulevard, I-264 and Norfolk Southern ROW.

#### **Hold the Green Line (also captured under Agriculture and Rural)**

Fifteen comments were captured encouraging the need to maintain the long standing land use policy of the Green Line at the Transition Area.

#### **Save NAS Oceana**

Six citizens stated that the City should continue to work with NAS Oceana to mitigate encroachment, while fostering growth within the military community.

#### **Prevent Additional Condos along Shore Drive**

Several citizens argued that building up the Shore Drive Bayfront area, specifically with additional condominium units, would detract from the character and existing land use prevalent there today.

#### **Additional Top comments**

Diversify our economy

Enforce zoning laws

Do not diverge from Comprehensive Plan policies

Problems occur when development precedes infrastructure

## **Comprehensive Plan Public Open House Public Comments**

### **Natural Resources, Parks and Open Space**

Two hundred forty citizen comments were received on the related topics of environment, natural resources, parks, and open space. The main consensus conveyed was that the City must continue to improve its Plan policies to provide greater protection to its environment and natural resources. More must be done to stem their decline, as a result of reduced maintenance attributed to reduced budgetary resources. The citizens also expressed that the City has done a wonderful job in providing neighborhood parks, recreational centers, acquiring open space, and providing a host of other recreational and open space amenities. However, they felt that more bike paths and other shared pedestrian access needed to be provided throughout the City. Greater pedestrian linkage is needed between the different desired designation points of interest.

#### **Environmental and Natural Resources Protection**

Greater protection of the city's waterways, beaches, wetlands, and fragile areas through better storm water management of runoff, litter control, and reduced development disturbances. Declined health quality of the bay, rivers, lakes and tributaries continue to affect the marine life and fishing industry, thereby translating into negative economic impact.

#### **Open Space Preservation**

Many comments were offered expressing the need to protect the city's dwindling open space areas. More needs to be done to leave those areas in their natural state. The City should acquire more open space when opportunities exist to do so.

#### **Tree Preservation**

More policies and regulations are needed to provide greater protection to the city's existing trees. Tree replacement is good, but is not an equal tradeoff of replacing mature trees with young saplings. Clear cutting reduces the existing established forest canopy. Reduced tree canopy leads to other air quality concerns.

#### **Bike Trails and Pedestrian Access**

The provision of more bike and pedestrian paths, some of which should be shared, was expressed at all of the public open houses. Citizens felt that there needs to be more linkages/connectivity between neighborhood and destination points of interest. Many felt that there needs to be greater safety measures that allow one to ride a bike from a particular neighborhood to an important city designation place. For example, some of those mentioned included riding from Kempsville to Town Center, from Hilltop to the Oceanfront, etc. Many are reluctant to do so because of traffic volume and few bike trails.

#### **Parks and Recreation Centers**

Many comments were offered expressing how proud the citizens were with the city's provision of different types of parks and community recreation centers. They felt that there are an adequate number of parks and facilities to accommodate all types of park users. However, they strongly expressed that the city needed to continue to add to its inventory when and where opportunities exist.

# **Comprehensive Plan Public Open House Public Comments**

## **Resort Area**

One hundred twenty one citizen comments were gathered. The citizens' number one priority is to establish a resort master plan with attainable goals. Additional topics highlighted relate to tourism and included parking, well maintained facilities and entertainment opportunities.

### **Establish a Resort Area Plan with Implementation Strategies**

Twenty One comments detailed the need to take on land use issues in a Resort Area Plan initiative. Such a project would have all-encompassing goals, time lines, tools and implementation schedules.

### **Oceanfront Parking and Access**

There were eleven citizen requests addressing parking in the resort area, especially in the north beach area and in other residential areas.

### **Oceanfront Maintenance and Cleanliness**

Eleven comments were cited sustaining attractiveness and cleanliness of the beach and resort area.

### **A Need for Bicycle and Pedestrian Access**

With eleven citizen comments, Incorporating additional bicycle activities and pedestrian access beyond the boardwalk was seen as a necessity, not a convenience.

### **Free Entertainment**

Eight citizens remarked that free entertainment is, and should remain, a cornerstone of tourism, and as a part of a quality beach atmosphere.

### **Transportation**

The resort area draws a lot of people, and with that comes traffic. As our number one concern throughout the Comprehensive Plan open houses, eight citizens touched on transportation issues related to the resort area.

# Comprehensive Plan Public Open House Public Comments

## Transportation

Transportation was clearly the most popular issue at the public open houses. Nearly 400 comments were received that related to transportation issues. In many cases, citizens identified specific projects in their area related to congestion, maintenance, or lack of pedestrian and bike facilities.

### Improve Bike and Pedestrian Facilities

Many citizens wanted connectivity between and within neighborhoods, or to their schools and shopping areas. There was also a lot of discussion about the increase of bike facilities. Some wanted on-road striped bike lanes, others would like to see more off-road paths, and some wanted both types of facilities.

### Support for Light Rail

There were approximately 40 respondents who directly identified Light Rail as something they wanted (with three citizens opposing light rail).

### Enhance Transit Opportunities

There was also a call for expanded bus service, including longer hours, more frequent service, and expanded routes to better serve the neighborhoods.

There was also a large consensus who generally wanted alternatives to driving a car, with a combination of bike, pedestrian, and transit options.

### A General Maintenance Concern

Several of these respondents noted that they were happy with the level of maintenance today, and want to make sure it stays that way in the future.

### Improve Rural and Transition Area Roads

On the south side of town, removal of the ditches along the rural roads was a frequent concern.

Areas of concern mentioned multiple times included Shore Drive (bike facilities), Indian River, and completing the SE Parkway, Nimmo Parkway, and Princess Anne projects. To this end, there was a general consensus to keep the rural feel to the roads, just move the ditch (and some wanted to add bike lanes).