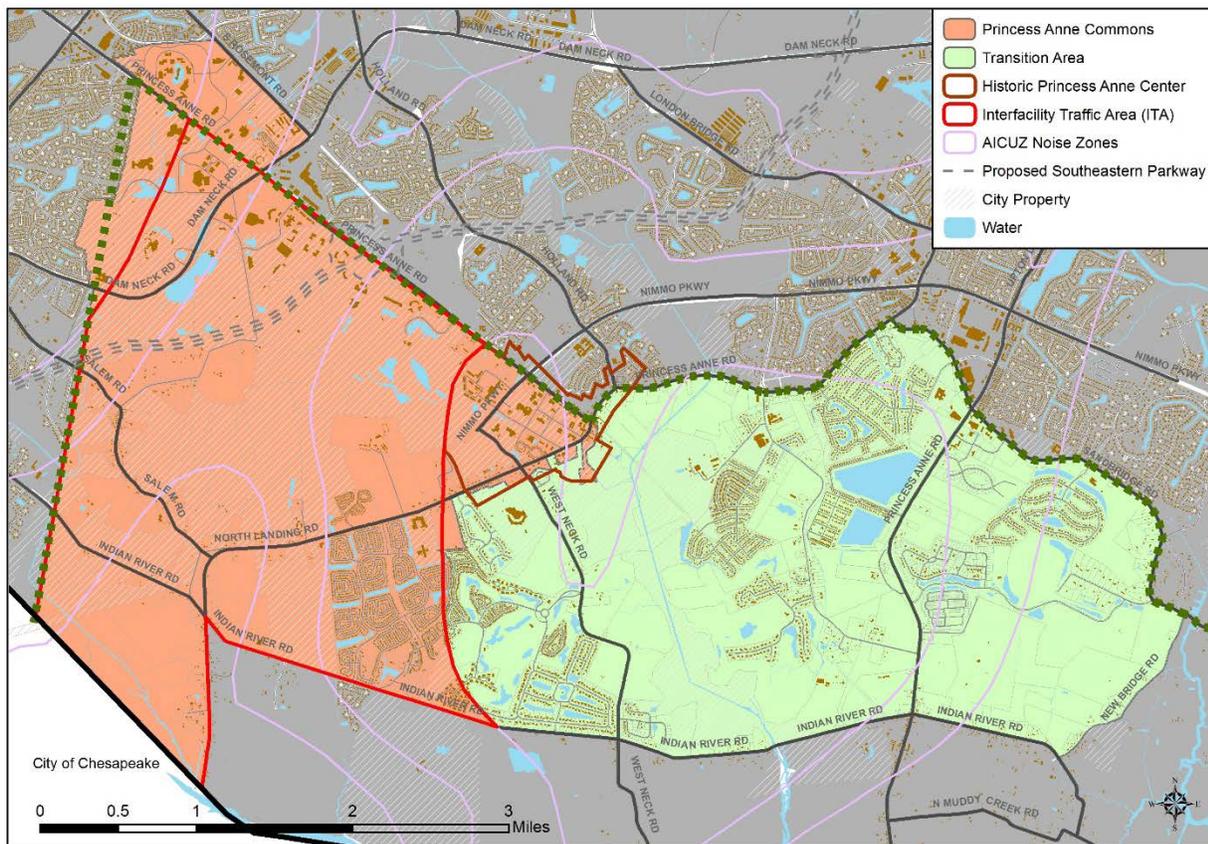


1.4 - PRINCESS ANNE COMMONS & TRANSITION AREA

INTRODUCTION

Princess Anne Commons and the Transition Area are strategically located below the “Green Line,” between the Suburban Area of the City to the north and the Rural Area to the south. This area is an important component of the City’s overall smart growth land use planning strategy. The “Green Line” is the boundary between the more densely populated and higher intensity urban and suburban land use areas of the City, which are intended to be served by a full range of public infrastructure and services, and the less-populated lower density, recreational, and rural areas, which are characterized by an abundance of natural resources, larger open spaces (including federal, state, and local parks), and the City’s prime agricultural lands.

It is not the intent of the Comprehensive Plan that Princess Anne Commons or the Transition Area become part of the urbanized area north of the Green Line. It is also not intended that Princess Anne Commons or the Transition Area be limited to the very low densities appropriate for Rural Area preservation.



PRINCESS ANNE COMMONS & TRANSITION AREA MAP

Natural Resources Planning and Protection

Princess Anne Commons and the Transition Area include natural resources and environmentally sensitive expanses that are designated as not only part of the Southern Watershed, but also are included in the *Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan*. The principal effects of this designation are presented below:

- *Southern Watershed Management Plan and Ordinance*

The *Southern Watershed Management Plan* was adopted as a part of this Comprehensive Plan in 2001 (www.vbgov.com/Planning) and is implemented by the Southern Rivers Watershed Management Ordinance. The ordinance is intended to protect, enhance, and restore the quality of waters within the Southern Watershed of the city. The ordinance applies to development of any lands within the Southern Watershed (North Landing River Watershed, Northwest River Watershed, the Small Coastal South Watershed, and the Back Bay Watershed) and any artificial alteration of the level or flow of any watercourse or impoundment of water, with exceptions as noted in Section 6 of the ordinance; and, agricultural lands/agricultural activities to the extent set forth in Section 10 of the ordinance. The ordinance establishes development performance standards. Furthermore, the developer of any land within the Southern Watershed shall, prior to undertaking any land-disturbing activity, submit a Southern Watershed Management Plan if such development is subject to the additional performance standards set forth in Section 7(e), which excludes single-family dwellings or duplexes separately built and not part of a subdivision.

- *Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan*

The *Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan* (www.vbgov.com/Planning), adopted in 2015, is a regional plan collaborated on by the City of Chesapeake and Currituck County, North Carolina. It is a conservation and management plan to protect the abundance of unique and diverse natural resources, open space lands, and potential recreational opportunities existing along three connected rivers – the North Landing River in Virginia Beach, the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal in Chesapeake, and the Currituck Sound in Currituck County, North Carolina. The purpose of the plan is to develop a long-term management strategy that protects, conserves, and manages a unique system of natural resources, open space areas, and carefully-selected recreational uses that are sustainable. The primary focus of the plan is on the waterway as a regional resource with unlimited opportunities for stewardship and enjoyment that can be shared for future generations. The *Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan* is important to the context of the Princess Anne Commons Area because of its alignment with the Comprehensive Plan policies and similar plans adopted by reference established to accomplish the following: preserve cultural heritage; sustain agricultural production; preserve, protect, and promote the area's unique natural resources in a sustainable manner; improve stormwater management and floodplain protection; protect undisturbed open space land; provide low-impact recreational uses where opportunities exist; identify and protect wildlife corridors; manage invasive plant and animal species; and encourage and promote reasonable uses and activities that are complimentary to the character and integrity of the rural area for the use and enjoyment of future generations. The plan advocates the importance of the Princess Anne Commons Area and the need to retain its distinction and attributes not found in the City's Urban and Suburban Areas.

Southern Watershed Subject to “Special Drainage Considerations”

The Southern Watershed portion of the Princess Anne Commons and the Transition Area is subject to “special drainage considerations” (see Southern Watershed map, Chapter 1, Section 1.5 - Rural Area). Drainage in the Southern Watershed is highly impacted by the presence of high ground water, poorly draining soils, and high water surface elevations in downstream receiving waters. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the developer of any property in the Southern Watersheds to understand and evaluate these factors prior to undertaking the project and to properly account for these factors in the project design. Receiving waters in the Southern Watersheds are subject to tidal influences which can be exacerbated by winds. High ground water elevations and poorly draining soils can result in increased runoff, can limit the capacity of the stormwater conveyance systems, and can counter indicate the use of certain Best Management Practices, such as infiltration.

All of these effects must be fully considered and evaluated in the analysis and design of drainage systems in the Southern Watersheds. Accordingly, it is recommended that the developer has a preliminary drainage study prepared by a qualified professional engineer in advance of any request to approve a discretionary (versus by right) development that involves land disturbance in the Southern Watershed. The drainage study should fully and accurately evaluate the effects of the foregoing factors on the planned development and on upstream and downstream areas. The proposed drainage system for the planned development would provide positive drainage that meets City standards and does not result in flooding within the planned development or to upstream or downstream areas.

Indian River Road State Scenic Byway Designation

Indian River Road, which forms the southern boundary of both Princess Anne Commons and the Transition Area, is designated as a Virginia Byway as a part of the Virginia Byways program. The Byways program is managed by Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Virginia Byways program recognizes roads that border areas of historical, natural, and recreational significance as a way to encourage exploration of interesting destinations in less traveled corridors.

The following subsections present general and specific-area policy recommendations for Princess Anne Commons and the Transition Area.

PRINCESS ANNE COMMONS

DESCRIPTION

Princess Anne Commons includes the Interfacility Traffic Area (ITA), as well as additional surrounding areas including the area north of the Green Line where Tidewater Community College, the Higher Education Center, and LifeNet are located, as well as most of the Princess Anne Historic and Cultural District to the east. Also part of Princess Anne Commons and the ITA is the property owned by the City south of Indian River Road, formerly owned by Rock Church.

VISION

The Princess Anne Commons area of the City offers unique education, entertainment, recreation, habitat preservation, and quality economic development opportunities. It is a true jewel within Virginia Beach. The policies of this Comprehensive Plan have been designed to ensure that Princess Anne Commons continues to be a well-planned area.



City Hall located in the Municipal Center portion of the Princess Anne Commons Area



Amphitheater in North Princess Anne Commons Area

The vast majority of Princess Anne Commons is included in the Interfacility Traffic Area (ITA). The ITA is a product of the *Hampton Roads Joint Land Use Study* and the City's Oceana Land Use Conformity program. The ITA was created in 2005 to address land use compatibility issues associated with frequent overflights of military jets in this part of the City. The boundary of the ITA generally overlaps the area of Princess Anne Commons impacted by noise zones at or greater than 65 dB DNL. The planning policies affecting the ITA have been carefully written to achieve compliance with the provisions of the City's adopted Oceana Land Use Conformity program.

The entire ITA is subject to certain development limitations due to jet noise restrictions; therefore, the area has been carefully planned to achieve a coherent and compatible land use pattern. Of the roughly 6000 acres within this special area, less than half are developable due to the presence of water, wetlands, existing development or other constraints. The alignment for the Southeastern Parkway & Greenbelt traverses the northern portion of the ITA in a northeast to southwest direction.

Due to the incompatibility of residential uses in these high noise zones as well as it being undesirable to have new residential dwellings within the ITA, one of the principal effects of this is a reduction in residential density to what could be achieved by right with Agricultural zoning (one unit per 15 acres). A second effect was an increase in the area owned by the City of Virginia Beach, as the City and U.S.

Navy began a program of purchasing property voluntarily offered to the City. This program has led to ownership by the City of Virginia Beach of approximately half of the area. The City Council adopted the *Interfacility Traffic Area (ITA) and Vicinity Plan* as a component of this Comprehensive Plan to establish a vision for the use of the ITA as well as to ensure the ITA develops only with those uses compatible with the purposes of the Interfacility Traffic Area.

Interfacility Traffic Area (ITA) & Vicinity Master Plan

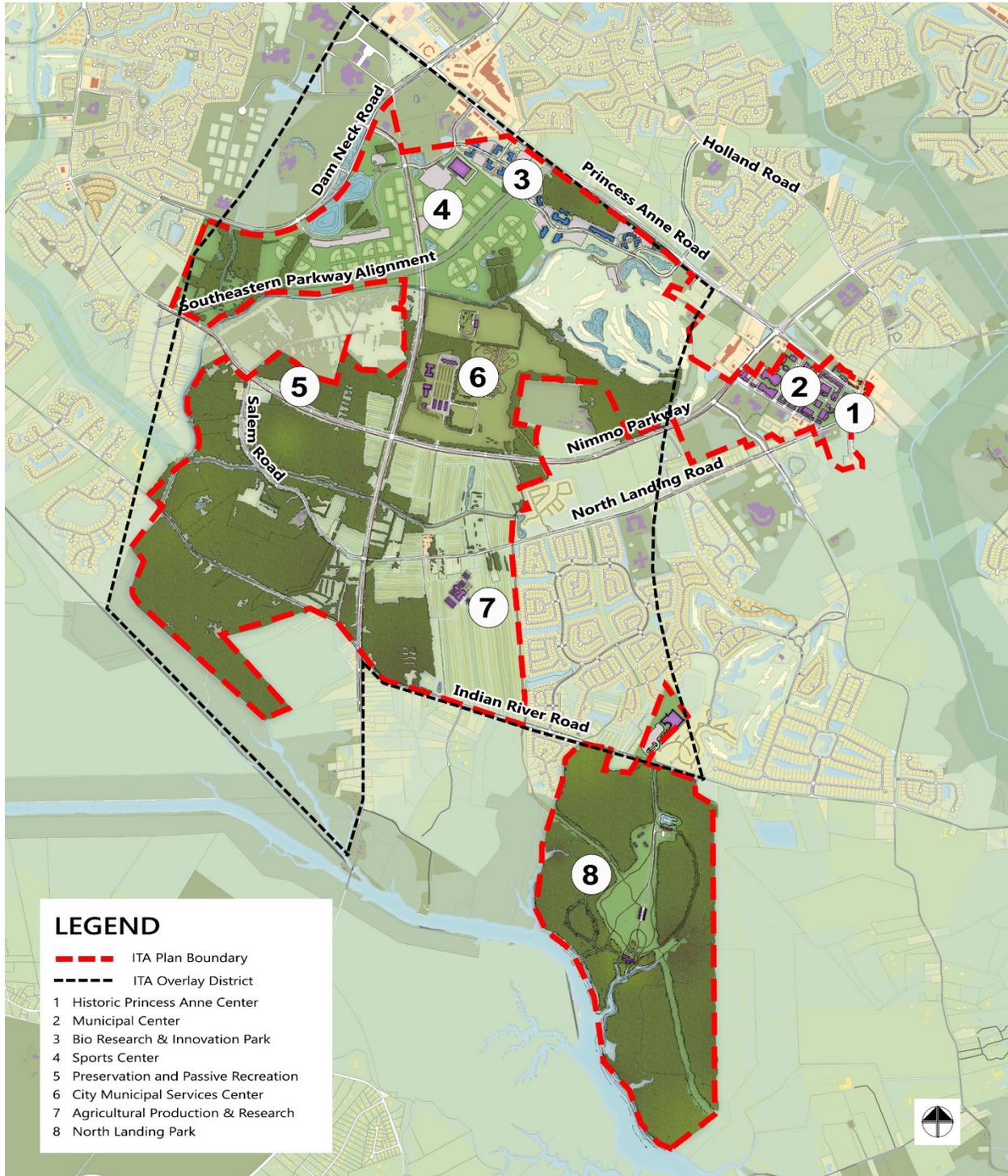
The vision for the ITA was established in 2011 with the adoption of the *ITA and Vicinity Master Plan*. The ITA Plan was prepared with effective community involvement to provide planning policy guidance in the areas of land use, transportation, environmental stewardship, infrastructure, public service delivery, economic vitality, AICUZ compatibility, and community design. During the five years after the adoption of the 2011 ITA Plan, there were changes in the area's characteristics that pointed to a need to update the plan to insure it continued to provide a realistic vision. In particular, the transition in the property ownership from private to public, with the resulting increase in the percentage of the ITA controlled by the City, offered opportunities that were not available in 2011. In 2016, work began to update the 2011 ITA Plan, and in 2017, the City Council adopted a revised version of the plan that sets out a vision based on realities and opportunities not available in 2011. Specific policies from this plan are provided later in this section.

The ITA Plan's vision framework continues to move the Princess Anne Commons area forward in a direction that reflects the area's history, is sensitive to the environment, and acknowledges existing assets already in place for those portions of this special area. Adopted land use patterns have now made this area more compatible with the operations of the airfields in the region.

The *Interfacility Traffic Area & Vicinity Master Plan* focuses on conservation and preservation of sensitive uses, amenities for residents, employment, municipal services, and recreation. Employment and research will be focused in the VBBio Innovation Park adjacent to the Virginia Beach National Golf Course. More dense development remains clustered along Princess Anne Road at the Municipal Center and North Princess Anne Commons. At the Municipal Center and Historic Princess Anne areas, as designated by the ITA Plan, residential uses outside of the AICUZ can be provided to create vibrant mixed-use districts where people can live, work, and recreate within walking distance to services and gathering spaces. The active recreation around Dam Neck Road can be expanded to include new types of recreation and sports not currently offered. Existing farmland provides opportunities for the conservation of valuable productive land in Virginia Beach, possibly evolving into a research farm. Special destinations could be developed that fit with the natural environment, including an agricultural research center, Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, environmental conservation center, and Municipal Services Facility. Enhancing natural features will allow improved stormwater management and flood controls. Throughout the area, trail and open space would connect the uses. Thoughtful implementation of this vision will position Princess Anne Commons and, thus, Virginia Beach as a leader in sustainable urban edge economic development.

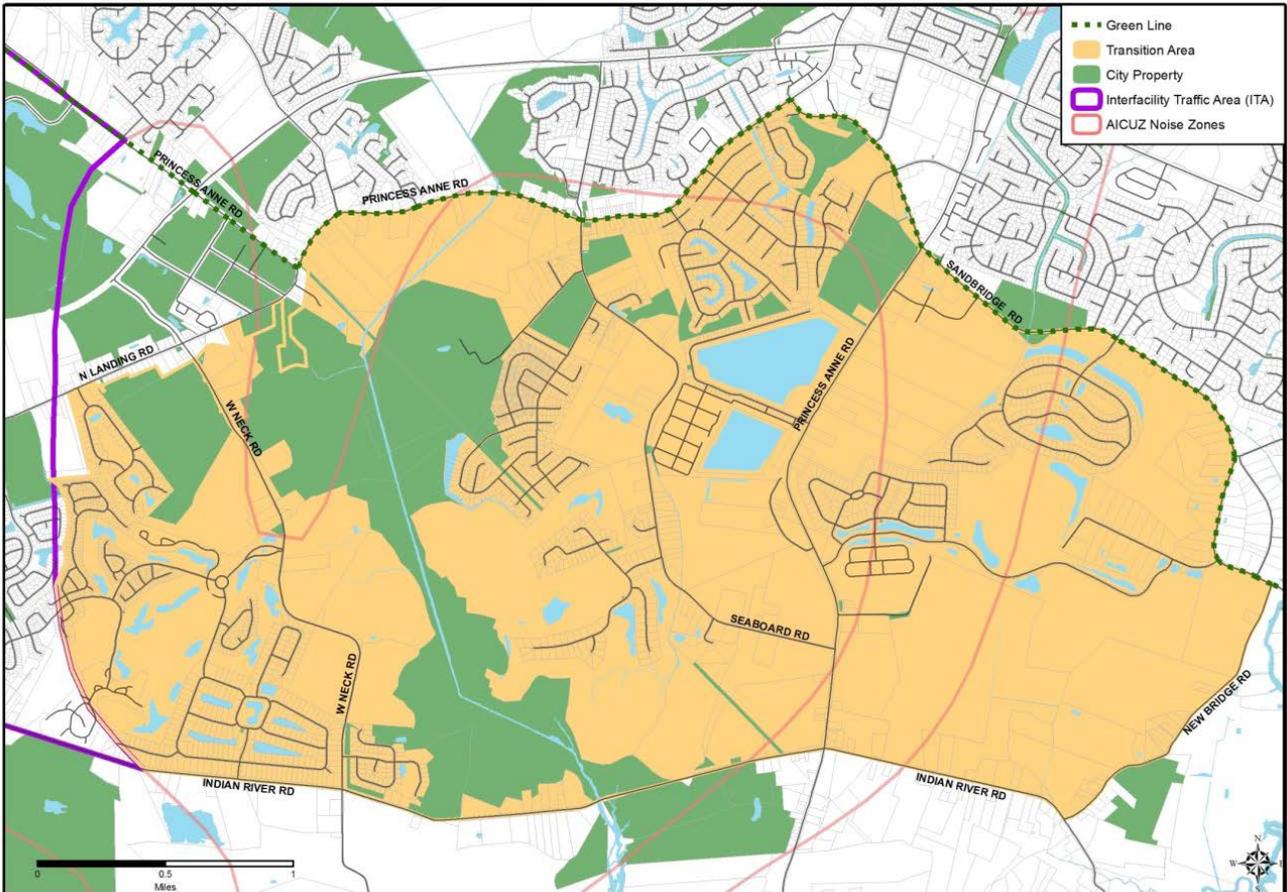
The northern portion of the area addressed in the *ITA and Vicinity Master Plan* has also been designated as "Special Economic Growth Area 4 (SEGA 4) - Princess Anne," recognizing the land development constraints and economic development opportunities associated with this area's location within a military aircraft overfly zone. Specific information and recommendations for SEGA 4 are provided in Chapter 2, Section 2.4 – Economic Vitality.

The recommendations of the *ITA and Vicinity Master Plan* are to be followed for the remaining portion of Princess Anne Commons south of SEGA 4. For those areas outside the boundary of the *ITA and Vicinity Master Plan* (see map below), land use will be as allowed by the existing zoning, as well as being consistent with the Interfacility Traffic Area (ITA) Overlay District regulations.



Interfacility Traffic Area & Vicinity Master Plan - Vision Concept (2017)

TRANSITION AREA



TRANSITION AREA LOCATOR MAP

DESCRIPTION

The Transition Area lies to the east of Princess Anne Commons. It consists of approximately 5,900 acres, bounded by Princess Anne and Sandbridge Roads along the 'Green Line' to the north, North Landing Road and the Princess Anne Commons area border to the west, Indian River Road to the south, and New Bridge Road to the east. The Transition Area is impacted by high noise AICUZ to a lesser extent than Princess Anne Commons and the ITA and, therefore, is more suitable for a limited amount of residential development. It is characterized by several high quality neighborhoods that include significant open space and recreational areas, including City park facilities, golf courses, public trails in roadside buffers, and equestrian centers. Commercial development is primarily located at major intersections. Some lands remain under cultivation or in minerals extraction. Approximately 30% of the Transition Area is City-owned parkland or contains soils that are defined by the City Zoning Ordinance as being undevelopable. The area is served primarily by rural roads, some of which are proposed to be improved over time, as indicated in the Master Transportation Plan. Indian River Road is designated as a "State Scenic Byway." Public utilities are intended to be extended through private development in a phased, orderly manner on a cost-participation basis. The western part of the Transition Area is bisected by the City-owned West Neck Creek Park corridor, a major natural corridor. The eastern part of the Transition Area, east of Princess Anne

Road, is prone to flooding from sheet flow, wind-driven tides, increasingly rising waters, and limited drainage infrastructure, according to farmers who cultivate the area. This is due, in part, to the existence of a topographic feature known as the “Pungo Ridge,” one of the City’s three primary north-south ridges of land suitable for cultivation that are separated by low-lying flats. The Pungo Ridge has elevations of 18-20 feet above mean sea level. In the Transition Area, the Pungo Ridge resembles a large “turtle back” with changes in elevations from 10-14 feet down to 2-4 feet. This change in elevation results in changes in soil types, including the presence of hydric soils, sometimes in just a very short distance. This natural landscape feature, coupled with the occurrence of a high water table, can severely limit development opportunities in this area. The eastern edge of the Transition Area is close to the headwaters of Back Bay and the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Both the West Neck Creek Park corridor and Back Bay help define the Transition Area and provide unparalleled amenities for those who reside in or visit the area for recreational purposes.

VISION

The vision framework for the Transition Area is as a distinct place with inherently unique environmental characteristics and constraints that must be carefully considered when designing for development. Development policies for the Transition Area are not intended to be a continuation of the higher density development patterns and form found in the Suburban and Urban Areas to the north. Rather, they enable a more limited type of development, with its own development standards suitable to the character of the Transition Area, where greater integration of natural resources and more open space is planned to respect and protect the unique natural character of the area and to enable a true transition into the Rural Area to the south.



Paddling along West Neck Creek Natural Area

Since the Transition Area is meant to serve as a buffer between the City’s Suburban and Rural Areas, it should provide an apparent visual shift from suburban development character and form to rural development character and form as one travels from north to south. Therefore, development in the Transition Area should reflect a noticeable transitional pattern with contiguous and unified open space throughout, also in keeping with the accompanying *Transition Area Design Guidelines*, which are adopted by reference as part of this Comprehensive Plan and are available in the online document library at www.vbgov.com/Planning. These guidelines articulate a high quality, ‘Rural Transitional’ design theme, unique to the Transition Area vision.

The Transition Area policies and *Transition Area Design Guidelines* also support the *Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan* by emphasizing trail connectivity and preservation of open space, waterways, and other natural resources. The policies for the Transition Area support the Urban and Suburban Areas growth pattern goals and redevelopment opportunities in the area to the north above the Green Line, and the Rural Area preservation goals affecting the area to the south, below Indian River Road.

The Transition Area policies also support the goals of the *Southern Watershed Area Management Plan*, and the City's AICUZ zoning regulations. Furthermore, the policies support an appropriate mix, intensity, and scale of high quality, residential and non-residential development, while sustaining our agricultural industry in this area and to the south. All open space areas should be connected by trails to provide for a continuous open space system throughout the Transition Area. All development in the Transition Area should be considered relative to its impact on current and planned infrastructure and to other discretionary development proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the vision framework and policies for the Transition Area, all new development and redevelopment in the Transition Area should adhere to the following general recommendations and the *Transition Area Design Guidelines*.

Development & Uses:

- Development should be creative and of high quality.
- Uses should be limited to low-impact, low-density residential, low-intensity non-residential, open space and recreational, and agricultural, including row-crop farming and equestrian uses.
- Uses should necessitate limited roadway improvements (e.g., turn lanes).
- For residential development, a maximum average calculated density of up to and no more than one unit per developable acre can be earned through demonstrated conformance with the *Transition Area Design Guidelines*.
- Minimum lot sizes of 15,000 square feet are preferred. Lot sizes less than 15,000 square feet are appropriate if additional active open space location recommendations as set forth in the *Transition Area Design Guidelines* are incorporated into the site design.
- Non-residential uses should be “neighborhood-serving.” These are uses that are scaled to support the needs of nearby residential neighborhoods, users of the Transition Area’s open space and recreational areas, and agricultural users.
- Non-residential uses should be located at major roadway intersections or, if as part of a mixed use plan of development, located at the entrance to the neighborhood or interior to the neighborhood around a central green or open space.
- Development within floodplains is strongly discouraged.
- Ensure all development proposals conform to the provisions of the Oceana Land Use Conformity Program and AICUZ provisions in the Zoning Ordinance, the Southern Watersheds Area Management Plan and Ordinance, and all other applicable development regulations.

Design Principles:

- Design with nature using low-impact development techniques and creative design to minimize impervious surfaces, protect natural resource areas and open spaces, address stormwater management requirements, and optimize site amenities.
- Open space should be deliberately included and designed as a site amenity in all development.
- Stormwater management techniques should be designed as site amenities and retention areas and should not be isolated behind buildings.
- Protect historic structures and sites and incorporate them into site design either through preservation or adaptive reuse. Such extant structures and sites are reminders of the rural heritage and character of this part of the City.
- Residential and non-residential use design should reflect a “Rural Transitional” architectural theme (refer to the *Transition Area Design Guidelines* for examples).
- When developing in proximity to a designated “Special Place” (e.g., Municipal Center, Historic Nimmo Church, Pungo Village, and the Ecological Awareness Center at Back Bay), incorporate design elements that are contextually relevant to that Place to ensure compatibility (refer to *Transition Area Design Guidelines* for “Special Place” locations and descriptions).
- For residential development, parcel consolidation is encouraged to enable larger development sites that can be designed creatively.
- Non-residential site design should focus on providing an attractive streetscape view into the site from the roadway.
- Parking areas should be situated behind or on the side of buildings and should incorporate landscaping throughout the parking areas to enable bio-retention of stormwater runoff.
- Signage should be complementary in scale and style to the use, constructed of high quality and long-lasting materials, and externally-illuminated.
- Fencing should be of an open style to create or maintain a sense of open space throughout the Transition Area.



Example of residential development in the Transition Area – Matthews Green Neighborhood



Context-sensitive neighborhood commercial use near Nimmo Church

Open Space and Recreation:

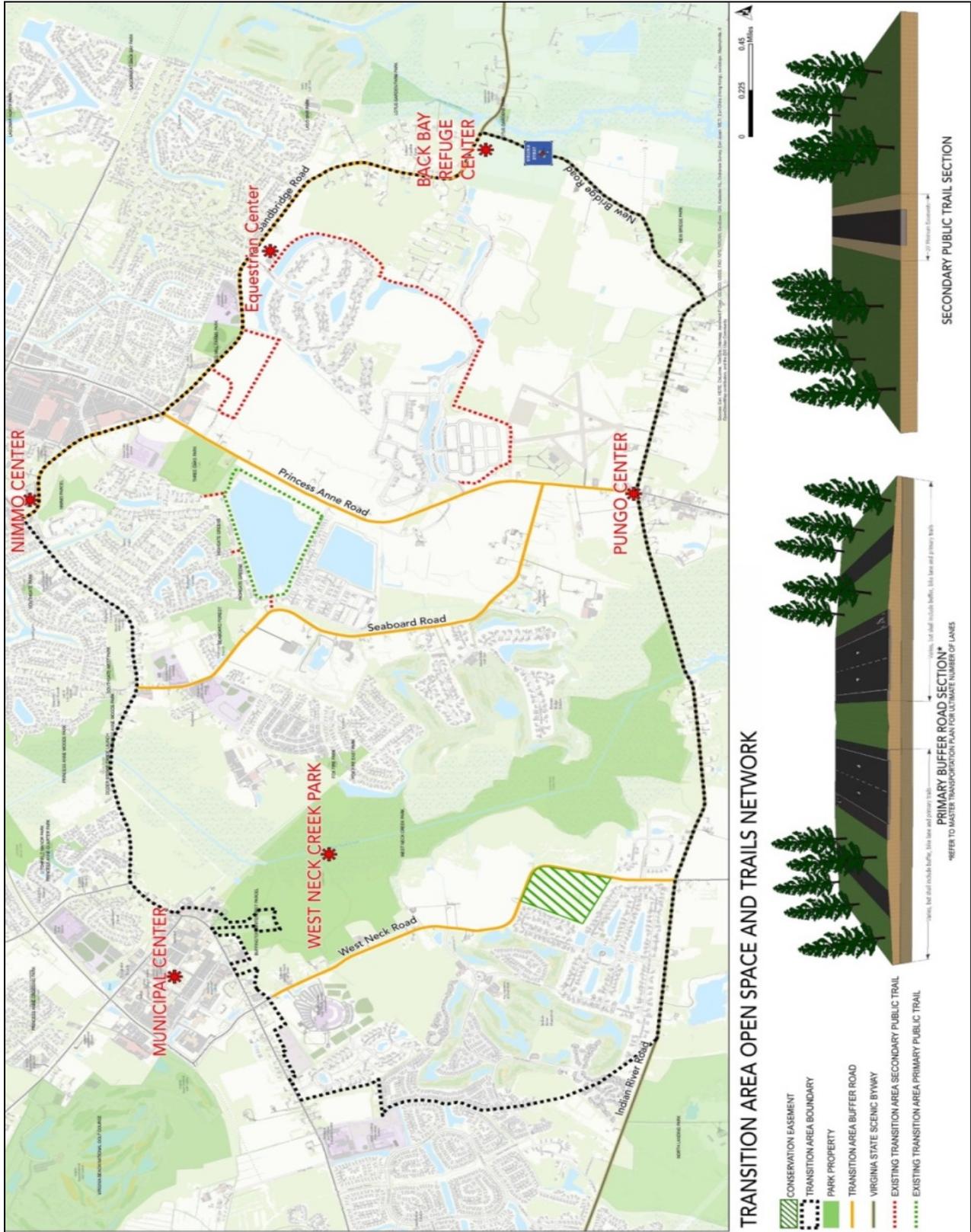
- For residential development, 50% of the developable area should be designed to provide a balance of both “active” and “passive” open space areas, which should be clearly designated, respectively, on the development plan.
- For non-residential development, 30% of the developable area of the subject property should be designed as open space and clearly designated on the development plan. Such open space should not be limited to stormwater management facilities.
- A well-planned system of multi-purpose public trails should be included in all development to provide non-vehicular mobility, recreational opportunities, and connectivity to the larger Transition Area Open Space and Trails Network. A balance of both “primary” and “secondary” trails should be provided and clearly designated on the development plan.
- Open space and recreational areas, trailway design, and connections should be designed to help implement the Transition Area Open Space and Trails Network and the goals of the *City of Virginia Beach Outdoors Plan*. Roadway buffers should be designated along selected roadways (as shown on the “Transition Area Open Space and Trails Network” plan/map below and in the *Transition Area Design Guidelines*), containing both landscaping and a primary public multi-purpose trail within a public access easement, to provide for screening of development and to promote trail connectivity throughout the Transition Area. These buffers may be used for open space and residential density calculations.



Open space in Heritage Park Neighborhood



Roadway buffer with primary trail along Seaboard Road



Infrastructure:

- All development in the Transition Area should be considered relative to its impact on current and planned public infrastructure. Connectivity to existing public facilities infrastructure, also known as “Public Infrastructure,” should be required for all discretionary development.
- Many roads in the Transition Area are presently 2-lane rural roads. Improvements are contingent on necessity and sufficient capital funding." Likewise, consideration should include roadway design safety and capacity for future relevant Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) projects.
- Connection to public sanitary sewer and water is preferred. However, if a parcel is proposed to be served by a private septic system or an alternative on-site sewage system (AOSS), ensure that the lot area is of sufficient size and soil suitability to install a replacement system in case of original system failure.
- Public utilities service extension should be incremental and in an orderly fashion.
- Development should respect the Master Transportation Plan by providing reservations or dedications for planned road improvements.
- Incorporate stormwater management into project design according to state stormwater management regulations. Use a systems approach to stormwater management, incorporating a range of stormwater management techniques. Wherever feasible, consider multi-site or regional stormwater management facilities and design them as site amenities.

AGENDA FOR FUTURE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS: Transition Area

- Explore the feasibility of expanding the Agricultural Reserve Program to include properties located in the Transition Area. This could better enable the desired “transition” along the border of the Transition Area immediately adjacent to the City’s Rural Area, as per the above vision statement for the Transition Area.