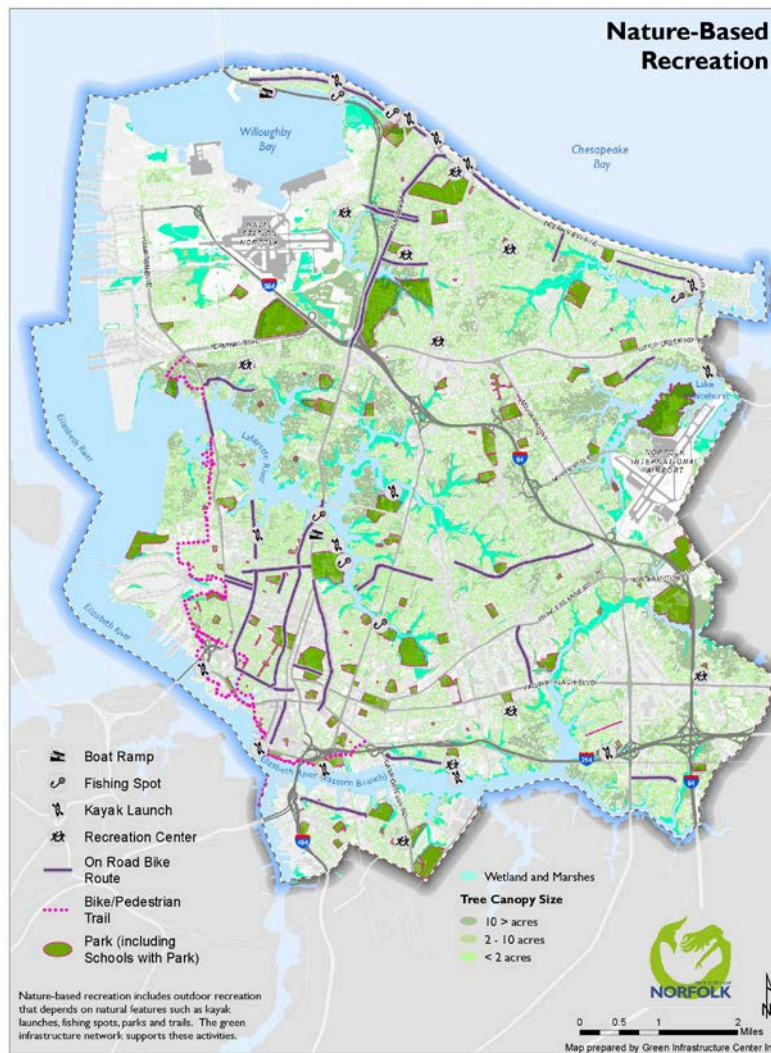




Situation Analysis Report



Norfolk Unit – 2018

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Introduction

The Norfolk Extension office conducted a situation analysis from approximately November of 2018 to March of 2019, which was led by the Norfolk Extension staff and select local partners of Virginia Cooperative Extension. The process involved weighing perspectives of volunteers, communities and local leaders in order to gauge the most significant problems that Norfolk faces moving forward. Data and information from these activities were analyzed by Extension staff and used to pinpoint specific priority areas.

The first step in the process was to distribute via email survey in which survey takers graded the importance of a number of city priorities. The results of the survey were analyzed, then key informant interviews were developed by contacting partnering organizations working in those top priority areas to schedule meetings with organization leadership. These key informants were selected based on their objective knowledge of city priorities and efforts to address them.

Additionally, a unit profile was developed. This was done via the situation analysis tools available on the VCE Intranet, specifically census data from 2017. Further, additional demographic information helpful for building a unit profile was compiled from key informants and from the following supplemental municipally-produced materials: A Green Infrastructure Plan for Norfolk: Building Resilient Communities (2018), the Norfolk Community Health Improvement Plan (2017), Norfolk Vision 2100 (2016), planNorfolk2030 (2016), and the Norfolk Plan to Reduce Poverty (2016). These materials were also useful in evaluating and investigating priority areas.

Key findings from the survey, key informant interviews and information compiled in the unit profile were evaluated, and the top priority issues for the city of Norfolk were identified, including those that are currently being addressed through current VCE programs and those that are outside the scope current VCE efforts and capabilities.

Unit Profile

Norfolk is located in south Hampton Roads west of Virginia Beach and North of Portsmouth across the Elizabeth River. Norfolk is nearly surrounded by water, with the Elizabeth River to the south and west, and the Chesapeake Bay to the north. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 44% of Norfolk square mileage consists of bodies of water.

As of the 2017 census, there were 244,703 citizens living in Norfolk. This is just a .8 % increase in population since the previous census in 2010, when the population was estimated to be 242,823. This modest increase stands in stark contrast with both state and national trends, which saw growth of 5.9% and 5.5% respectively since the 2010 census

The racial makeup of Norfolk consists of 47 % white, 42% African American, 7% Hispanic, .4% American Indian and Alaskan Native, 3% Asian, .1% Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and 3% mixed race. This contrasts most starkly with both state and national averages for white people and African Americans. Across the state those numbers are about 69% and 19% respectively, and nationally, per locality, those numbers are about 76% and 13% respectively. Approximately 52.2% of the population of Norfolk is male and 47.8% is female.

Population age numbers across the board have remained relatively stable in the last decade with the exception of the under-18 population. Since the 2010 census, the population of those under 18 has decreased from 24% to 20%, the population of those between 18 and 65 has remained stable at 69.7, and the population of those over 65 decreased slightly from 10.9% to 10.3%.

Norfolk's over-age-16, civilian workforce comprises only 56.6% of its population, while the state level is 64.4% and the national level is 63%. However the armed forces accounts for an additional estimated 12% of Norfolk's workforce, bringing the total estimated employed population of Norfolk to nearly 69%.

Of Norfolk's 87,249 households, 23,367 of them house children under 18. Of those 23,367 households, 11,546 (49.5%) are single parent homes. Norfolk has the fourth highest amount of single-parent households in the state, and nationally sits in the lower 3rd percentile in this metric according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey.

Exasperating this data are other measures of household instability that point to greater issues of poverty and are pervasive in Norfolk. The eviction rate of Norfolk is 27.6% according to the Eviction Lab of Princeton University. This is the 6th highest eviction rate in America. The state average eviction rate is 5.12%, and the national average rate is 6.12%. The median rent cost of a 1-bedroom unit in Norfolk is \$789, while the median rent cost of a 2-bedroom unit is \$950.

Median household income of Norfolk is approximately \$47,137, noticeably smaller than the state median of \$68,766 and the national median, \$57,652. Lastly, Norfolk's population percentage of those considered to be living in poverty is 21%, nearly double the state average of 10.6%, and higher than the national average of 12.3%. According to the Virginia Health Department, 31% of all of Norfolk's youth live in poverty, more than double the state average of 14%.

Mirroring both state and national data, the leading cause of death in the city of Norfolk is heart disease. Health professionals in Norfolk see this as fundamentally tied to long-term unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, drinking, poor diet and lack of exercise. The Virginia Health Department estimates that approximately 31% of Norfolk residents are obese, 21% use tobacco, and 19% regularly drink to excess. Additionally, an estimated 25% of Norfolk residents have not undertaken any physical activity within the last 30 days. Aiding these trends is pervasive food insecurity, which the Virginia Health Department estimates to have impacted

19% of Norfolk households this past year. The USDA estimates that Norfolk contains 20 “low-income, low-food access” areas.

The other notable health metric for Norfolk involves sexually transmitted disease. In 2018, statewide Norfolk had the second highest rates of gonorrhea and HIV, falling behind only Fairfax County, whose population is over 4.5 times greater than Norfolk. Additionally, Norfolk’s rates of chlamydia and syphilis were both third behind Fairfax and Virginia Beach. Virginia Beach’s population is nearly twice that of Norfolk. Lastly, teen pregnancy rates in Norfolk were third in the state behind Fairfax and Richmond. Explanation for these figures bears further investigation.

Community and Resident Perspectives

The community survey used for the Situation Analysis was created using Qualtrics Survey Software, and was emailed to all city departments, all non-profit and business partners of Virginia Cooperative Extension in Norfolk, and all Extension volunteers working in Norfolk. The general community priorities survey was modeled after that which was used for the Situation Analysis in Isle of Wight. We received 48 responses to our community survey. The following list of priority areas was aggregated using the results of the community survey: Environment/ Water Quality and Quantity/ Land Use, Health/Nutrition/Obesity, and Youth Development and Life Skills.

In order to dig deeper into these priority issues, partnering organizations working specifically in these priority areas were contacted to schedule interviews with knowledgeable local leaders. The City of Norfolk Office of Storm Water Management provided a key informant to speak on priority 1, Environment/ Water Quality and Quantity/ Land Use, with which two meetings took place. The Norfolk Office of the Virginia Health Department provided a key informant to speak on priority 2, Health/ Nutrition/ Obesity, with which two meetings took place. For both key informants for priority areas 1 and 2, the first meeting took place prior to receiving the results of the community survey, and the second meeting took place after receiving the results of the community survey. Norfolk Public Schools provided a key informant to speak on priority 3, Youth Development and Life Skills, with which one meeting took place after receiving the results of the community survey.

Priority Issues

Issue 1: Environment/Water Quality/Water Quantity/Land Use

The top priority area pinpointed in our community survey was later confirmed by our key informant interviews. Environmental/water quality/quantity issues are considered by all situation analysis information sources unequivocally to be the highest priority of the city, most notably flooding and sea level rise. Understandably, the most light on this issue was shed by the City of Norfolk Office of Storm Water Management. Sea level rise and increasingly routine flooding are literally shrinking the boundaries of the city forcing residents and businesses to elevate infrastructure, condense inward, or move out of the city entirely. Historically, much of the regions natural wetlands, or “soft” shoreline, was replaced by “hard” shorelines in the form of bulkheads and riprap, which do nothing to absorb and mitigate rising water the way marshland does. Additionally, substantial chunks of city infrastructure built decades ago to channel and mitigate flood water have fallen into disrepair, and moreover were never built to manage the amount of water that is now inundating it regularly, meaning that the problem is only getting worse. The city is now scrambling to get that infrastructure updated on top of its other priorities. Additionally, it has put in place incentives for developers to incorporate flood mitigation instruments into their projects in the form of green infrastructure. Up until this point, virtually no developer is taking advantage of the incentive. The flooding issue is putting strain on development in Norfolk. Foremost, it does little to attract new businesses and residents, who may be weary of settling in a flood-prone location. With only 3% of land in Norfolk undeveloped, it is forecasted that a population decrease must manifest itself over time absent considerably more strategic residential redevelopment at higher elevations throughout the city, and extensive repair and updating of existing storm water infrastructure and shoreline.

The residual effects of the city shrinking are innumerable, particularly on existing priority areas. This was confirmed by the other key informants. Contraction will not only exacerbate nearly all existing economic and social problems, it will cause many more. If water is making parts of the city uninhabitable, those that are not equipped to relocate (families living in poverty, small businesses) will suffer the effects of persistent flooding until they are forced to move inward, whether they have somewhere to go or not. The same effect will be had (and is being had) on wildlife and the environment, as marshland unfit for development is already moving inward and degrading urban infrastructure. Logically, this issue has become the backbone of all city planning and development initiatives moving forward, however it is still fraught with political debate both locally and nationally, meaning that despite ample scientific evidence that the city must take swift action to prepare, the necessary steps may be slowly forthcoming. The implications of this remain to be seen.

The Norfolk Office of Storm Water Management has prepared a resiliency plan for the city called, A Green Infrastructure Plan for Norfolk: Building Resilient Communities. This plan, adopted by Norfolk City Council in 2018, lists 82 land and water goals for the future in order to address flooding in Norfolk. The goals of this plan were created based on assessments of

Norfolk land cover (tree canopy, water, and impervious surfaces), connectivity of trails and parks, and locations of large patches of intact open spaces, marshes and shorelines.

These goals fall under the respective umbrellas of three action plans outlined in the document. First, increase the tree canopy percentage of Norfolk from its current 25.8% to 30% within 20 years. Second, of Norfolk's 211 total shoreline miles, naturalize (or re-vegetate with wetland plantings) 35 of the 61 total miles of "hard" shoreline. Third, plant more vegetation throughout Norfolk's available 378 acres of 50-foot coastal buffer within the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area. The Green Infrastructure Plan For Norfolk maps out how these three goals will happen: via municipal plantings wherever possible, tree giveaways events, volunteer planting days, educational campaigns for homeowners, incentives for businesses and homeowners, and city partnerships with local organizations that seek to amplify this effort.

Virginia Cooperative Extension, with its natural resources expertise/assets, volunteer base, and academic backing, is enormously well positioned as an integral city and community partner to help spearhead this effort. In addition to already having in place multiple partnerships between VCE and city departments to educate and encourage residents to adopt more environmentally friendly land-use practices, The Norfolk Master Gardeners already have ten established programs dedicated to the efforts outlined in the Green Infrastructure Plan.

Issue 2: Health/Nutrition/Obesity

Second on the priority list was Health/ Nutrition/ Obesity. The Virginia Health Department of Norfolk has determined that the city's greatest health priorities pertain to sexually transmitted diseases and heart disease. In both cases, health department leadership points directly to poor secondary education in personal health matters, coupled with the residual, reinforcing effects of poverty on unhealthy lifestyle choices.

These health priorities are directly tied to the development of healthy communities, which the Virginia Health Department is advocating for in holistic fashion. VHD is very concerned about the negative health effects of housing stress in the city. Norfolk has among the highest eviction rates in the country, and this coupled with housing costs here needs to be addressed to provide stable home environments in which to thrive. VHD is also advocating for sustainable development that preserves environmental resources and removes the danger of flooding from the everyday lives of Norfolk citizens, another serious health and wellness lynchpin in Norfolk communities. Additionally, VHD would like to see economic and residential development meshed sustainably with pedestrian-friendly communities that have easy access to healthy food and healthy lifestyle choices.

It is unclear what role Virginia Cooperative Extension can currently play in sexual health education to secondary students in Norfolk, but VCE is well positioned to address nutrition education concerns for both youth and adults. The Norfolk unit has four full-time program assistants teaching nutrition. Two are working with youth in the Norfolk Public School system

and two are working with adults and geriatrics. Given the prevalence of poverty-related health issues in Norfolk, it appears that a full time Family and Consumer Sciences Agent to assist and amplify the efforts of the program assistants via family health and financial education would be of great value for the city.

Virginia Cooperative Extension can also indirectly contribute to addressing nutrition/obesity related disease and community health by continuing to promote and educate on horticultural lifestyles, which not only encourage physical activity but also go hand in hand with building local healthy food systems and more resilient communities. VCE supports these efforts in Norfolk via the Norfolk Master Gardeners and existing partnerships with likeminded community organizations.

Issue 3: Youth Development and Life Skills

The third priority area pinpointed was youth development and life skills. The 4% decrease in the youth population speaks to the sentiment expressed in both the surveys, and via Norfolk Public Schools leadership: that Norfolk is severely lacking in developmental opportunities for youth beyond the school system. The extraordinarily high rate of single parent households is likely at the root of this issue, in that there is a much larger than average amount of youth in Norfolk homes that are likely overseen by a parent who works the majority of afternoons and evenings. After-school opportunities that occupy the time of Norfolk's youth while their parents are at work is widely considered throughout Norfolk Public Schools a critical (and lacking) concern, and speculated to be a substantial contributing factor to youth-perpetrated crime, violence, drug use and sexual activity.

Single parent households are also more likely to experience issues stemming from poverty. Norfolk Public Schools emphasized this. Among their top priority areas is the disproportionate number of youth in Norfolk who must rely on themselves to provide money for school supplies and personal health/hygiene items. Teens under the working age of 16 (excluding 15-year-olds with written permission from their parents) would hence automatically be excluded from seeing to these needs via legal employment opportunities. It's estimated that there are approximately 16,000 youths in Norfolk between 10 and 16 years old. If 31% of them live in poverty, as the Virginia Health Department estimates, then nearly 5,000 teens in Norfolk are too young to work legally and too poor to be able to afford basic necessities.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is well-situated and poised to address the need for youth development opportunities and entrepreneurship via 4-H programs in Norfolk. 4-H in Norfolk will deal directly with these issues by offering educational programs to Norfolk youth that teach them how to develop professional skills, how to market themselves as valuable members of the workforce, how to identify relevant market niches, and how to take advantage of the technological tools that allow for individual entrepreneurship.