



Introduction

This document provides a proposed overarching draft vision statement for the future of Northampton County as well as draft goal statements and a summary of key community outreach observations for each potential chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Recommendations from the existing plan are provided as additional background information for discussion. The draft vision and goals statements are the product of extensive community input received through surveys, public engagement workshops, and interviews with community members.

In preparation for discussion, Board and Commission members are encouraged to:

- Review the draft vision statement to confirm that it presents a positive, realistic, and accurate image of Northampton's future.
- Review the draft goal statements to verify that each proposed goal presents an appropriate aspirational statement outlining how the community will address the particular topic area over the next 20 years. The goal statements should set the overall direction based on community input.
- Review community outreach observations to identify additional key issues and opportunities that should be considered as the plan is developed. (Note: observations are numbered for discussion purposes only and have not been prioritized.)

Draft Vision Statement

The vision statement summarizes who you are as a community, and where you are going. A vision statement should be positive, realistic, and accurate. The vision should be broad, but also specific enough to explain why your community is unique and where your community is headed in the next 20 years.

Draft Vision Statement

Northampton County will create a thriving, resilient future that cultivates stewardship and protection of the natural environment; builds on its regional heritage while leveraging a twenty-first century economy; and provides for social equity and equality for all of its residents.



Community Character (Land Use)

Draft Community Character Goal Statement

Northampton County preserves and enhances its scenic small towns, working waterfronts, unique rural character, and connection to its coastal environment, accommodating and guiding growth to create a stronger, vibrant community.

Community Outreach Observations

1. Scenic small towns and rural character with unspoiled farms and forest are a defining community element that should be supported and protected through land use planning, policies, and regulations.
2. Northampton offers a rural lifestyle while still being accessible to urban areas.
3. Residents value Northampton's sense of community and cultural heritage. The community is hospitable and welcoming, and citizens are active and caring.
4. Northampton's pristine single-source freshwater aquifer and saltwater ecosystems and unique natural environment are highly valued.
5. Land use policies should address the growing need for affordable housing and quality jobs.
6. Development should be focused in and around existing towns.
7. The Towns of Nassawadox and Exmore are most ready to accept new development and growth. In particular, redevelopment in Nassawadox and revitalization and repurposing of buildings in Exmore were highlighted as a need.
8. Preservation of scenic views and working waterfronts is a priority, particularly along Seaside Road, and in Oyster, Willis Wharf, and Cherrystone Inlet.
9. Additional development along U.S. Route 13 may be appropriate, but must consider impacts development will have on traffic congestion along the highway. Particularly, entrances directly to U.S. Route 13 should be minimized along with installation of signalized intersections.
10. Development should be restricted in flood and erosion prone areas.
11. The County's land use regulations should be unified and simplified to promote economic development, enable creative housing choice, reduce unclear and inconsistent language, and celebrate each of the County's unique communities without creating undue burdens on their residents and businesses.



Economy

Draft Economy Goal Statement

Northampton County maintains a thriving and diverse local economy, pursuing innovative economic opportunities that are unique to the Shore and enhance the County as a place to live, work, and visit.

Community Outreach Observations

1. Northampton County should promote its strengths to attract new businesses, industries, and tourism.
2. Opportunities for high-paying jobs and improved career and technical education is a top priority to address poverty and encourage youth to stay in the County.
3. Incentives could be provided to small businesses to help them start-up or expand.
4. There is a "culture of enterprise" in Northampton. The community fosters small business development and entrepreneurs.
5. The County could be more accessible and business friendly.
6. Job and tax base should expand to include commercial businesses, light manufacturing, warehousing, and offices and high-tech services with an emphasis on light manufacturing and high-paying positions.
7. Aquaculture and agriculture may not provide enough high-paying jobs but continue to be a desirable industry for County residents.
8. Agriculture and aquaculture means and methods have evolved in the last few decades, making it difficult for small operations to be marketable and successful.
9. Accessible healthcare, including urgent care facilities, and general retail services are an identified need, particularly in the northern portion of the County.
10. Potential industries include aerospace support, aquaculture facilities, agricultural best practices, shipping, tourism, and other more traditional industries where suitable.
11. Employment hubs should be centered around education centers with more focus centered on career development skills for students.
12. Better access to reliable internet service is necessary to spur economic development along U.S. Route 13 and in existing towns.
13. Tourism is an important strength, although businesses centered around tourism are less profitable during the off season.
14. Find ways to capitalize on substantial pass-through traffic on U.S. Route 13.
15. A county-funded economic development office could help support these efforts.



Housing and Neighborhoods

Draft Housing and Neighborhoods Goal Statement

Northampton County provides high-quality neighborhoods and housing to meet the needs of all residents while preserving the character and environmental fabric of the community.

Community Outreach Observations

1. There is an apparent acceptance that additional residential development is desirable for the County.
2. Citizens strongly favor single family homes and housing for seniors or elderly.
3. A variety of housing types, including apartments/condos, duplexes/townhouses, and affordable housing, are also needed.
4. New housing should be concentrated in and around existing towns where public water/sewer and broadband is currently available or readily accessible.
5. Multifamily was specifically noted as a need in Nassawadox/Exmore.
6. Affordable housing and workforce housing stock does not meet the current needs of the community.
7. Current housing prices are a barrier to some medium-to-low wage professions, including teachers and first responders.



Environment and Resiliency

Draft Environment and Resiliency Goal Statement

Northampton County respects and embraces its unique environment and natural resources, emphasizing protection of its single source aquifer and coastal ecosystem as fundamental to the creation of a resilient future.

Community Outreach Observations

1. Protecting the pristine natural ecosystems and water quality is critical to Northampton's quality of life.
2. The county's natural beauty and bountiful natural resources are rated highly as one of the things residents like most about Northampton County and should be protected.
3. The environment and natural resources are a draw for tourism in the County.
4. The Bay supports unique wildlife and migratory flyway for birds and butterfly.
5. Coastal resiliency planning should be a focus to identify ways to adapt to rising sea levels.
6. Development should be limited along the aquifer recharge areas and in flood prone areas.
7. Economic development should be balanced with the protection of natural resources.
8. Renewable energy could be considered and offer an opportunity for green jobs.



Transportation

Draft Transportation Goal Statement

Northampton County provides a safe, efficient, multi-modal transportation system with well-connected bike and pedestrian infrastructure, accessible public transit, and limited impacts on existing communities.

Community Outreach Observations

1. Traffic congestion is a concern in Cape Charles, Exmore, and along U.S. Route 13, especially near towns and in the tourist season.
2. Coordinated signal timing and access management are needed along U.S. Route 13 to help mitigate and reduce congestion.
3. New development access to U.S. Route 13 should be considered carefully to minimize access points and the need for new traffic signals.
4. Improved road buffers may be needed to decrease impacts on communities in Cape Charles, Nassawadox, and Exmore.
5. The U.S. Route 13 and VA Route 184 corridors leading to the Town of Cape Charles should be more attractive and inviting.
6. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel is perceived as a financial burden to commuters.
7. Citizens support efforts to pursue multimodal transportation including the expansion of sidewalks and bicycle paths.
8. Expansion of greenways for pedestrian travel is a favorable option, especially into the northern stretches of the county.
9. Consider developing a Rails to Trails or a Rails with Trails bicycle/pedestrian corridor.
10. Install bus pull offs, shelters/benches and signage for public transit stops, particularly along U.S. Route 13.
11. Roadway maintenance needs further attention by VDOT to provide access to "neck" communities.
12. Channels and water routes require adequate dredging to ensure safety.
13. Public access to water routes and ways needs to be increased where appropriate and maintained where currently existing.



Community Facilities & Services

Draft Community Facilities & Services Goal Statement

Northampton County provides high-quality facilities, superior services, and a diversity of amenities that meet resident needs, support economic development, and attract recreational, heritage, and eco-tourism.

Community Outreach Observations

1. A long-term capital improvement program would help plan and target resources based on community priorities and needs. Solicitation of public-private partnerships and grants could help offset costs.
2. Improving public schools is a top priority for the community.
3. High quality education is key to the community's success - early childhood education, career and technical education, higher teacher salaries, and physical improvements to schools.
4. The community should look for opportunities to make community improvements to help aging residents "age in place" (e.g., healthcare, senior services, ADA accessibility).
5. Emergency response and healthcare services represent a concern for residents.
6. Improved access to the County's environmental assets including walking/hiking trails, greenways, and river/water access.
7. Minimal recreation centers limit youth activities and fitness.
8. Consider reuse for existing structures (e.g., old Middle School) for expanded uses like telework centers.
9. Broadband is not available at all homes and, where available, does not necessarily meet the daily needs of residents.
10. Water and sewer infrastructure improvements may be needed in Cape Charles/Cheriton and Nassawadox/Exmore.
11. Expanded sewer infrastructure is needed throughout the County.



Culture and Heritage

Draft Culture & Heritage Goal Statement

Northampton County values, protects, and promotes its rich cultural heritage and well-preserved history, leveraging the County's unique assets to enhance community character and foster economic growth.

Community Outreach Observations

1. Residents value the community's cultural heritage and well-preserved history.
2. Northampton is a friendly, welcoming community that values its diversity.
3. Heritage tourism is an opportunity for the community.
4. Scenic small towns and rural character with unspoiled farms and forest are a defining community element that should be supported and protected through land use planning, policies, and regulations.
5. Northampton has active caring citizens that participate in government.