

Local

Norfolk targets 4 areas for future downtown redevelopment

By Associated Press May 2

NORFOLK, Va. — While much of downtown Norfolk is changing, officials recognize there's still more that could be improved. Norfolk Mayor Paul Fraim said the city has identified "four frontiers" in the downtown area that could also be redeveloped. Here's a look at those areas.

HARBOR PARK: Harbor Park is home to a light rail station, an Amtrak station and the city's Triple A baseball team, the Norfolk Tides. The stadium is a modern one with the Elizabeth River on one side of the stadium and Interstate 264 on the other. Although only blocks away from the action in the city center, the stadium is largely cut off from the rest of downtown by roads, a bridge and large swaths of undeveloped waterfront property that's primarily used for parking. City plans envision a narrow park along the riverfront, pedestrian level retail and mixed use development outside the stadium with an office and residential complex near the train station. Parking garages would be built to buffer the stadium area from interstate noise.

ARTS DISTRICT: Just north of the federal courthouse on Granby Street in downtown is a long neglected commercial corridor that's home to a Greyhound bus station, a gun shop and a pawn shop that are intermixed with numerous empty storefronts. The area is also home to an adult probation services office and the Norfolk Department of Human Services, which serves as a central pickup site for the homeless each winter. A group of artists is trying to turn the area into an arts district, and has already had some successes attracting an improvisational comedy theater, a large arts exhibition space and restaurant and bar that host musical and other performances. In place where a large building was razed is now a community gathering space known as The Plot. Developing the arts district is seen as a way to link downtown with the nearby historic Ghent neighborhood, which has its own nightlife.

FORT NORFOLK: Fort Norfolk is a former industrial area just west of the center city along the Elizabeth River that sits just south of the Ghent neighborhood. It is separated from Ghent by a wide road and downtown by water. The area is best known as the home of several medical office buildings and PETA's headquarters. Much of the land along the waterfront is still vacant, and planners want it developed to make the water more accessible to residents in Ghent. A planning document encourages future medical buildings to have mixed-use development that could attract creative companies.

ST. PAUL'S: Across the street from expensive condos, apartments and a successful downtown shopping mall sits an area referred to as St. Paul's Quadrant, which is just north of Harbor Park and Interstate 264. The area is home to low-income housing, several churches and a lot of vacant land. Plans for the area have included a mixed income residential component and mixed use, pedestrian friendly development.

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