

Downtown Norfolk

2015 Strategic Plan

Innovation Hub

Pedestrians First

Always Active



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown Norfolk Council’s Market-Based Strategic Plan identifies priorities for downtown improvements, policies and actions to guide the DNC for the next five to seven year investment cycle. The DNC will use the plan to advance community goals for downtown using its role as Downtown’s champion and the voice of the Downtown business community. This summary provides a brief overview of the key plan elements and priorities.

CORE VALUES

DNC leadership identified core values that describe DNC’s aspirations for Downtown. Priority actions identified in the plan for DNC to lead reflect these core values.

CORE VALUES	
VIBRANT	A vital 24/7 downtown
ENTREPRENEURIAL	Regional hub for jobs, innovation & unique businesses
FRIENDLY	Safe, walkable, bikeable & connected neighborhood
ACTIVE	Activated waterfront, public spaces and districts
DIVERSE	Confident, inclusive and resilient downtown

TOP PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING DOWNTOWN

Through extensive community engagement that included participation from more than 750 downtown and community stakeholders, shared priorities emerged. These are the changes that participants believe are the most important for enhancing Downtown.

- **Activate the waterfront/marina**
- **Activate Granby Street with more unique, local businesses**
- **Attract neighborhood service retail (e.g., grocery), services & amenities**
- **Develop a critical mass of attractions to make a destination**
- **Extend the Tide Light Rail system**
- **Make downtown more walkable & bikeable**
- **Promote a fresh image/brand for downtown**
- **Improve the parking experience for customers & visitors**



KEY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

A market based approach identifies trends and opportunities within the current market cycle, and looks for ways to extend and enhance these to achieve the vision for downtown. By comparing market opportunities with priorities, action steps reflect a balance of what is desired and what is realistic. Key market opportunities for Downtown are summarized below:

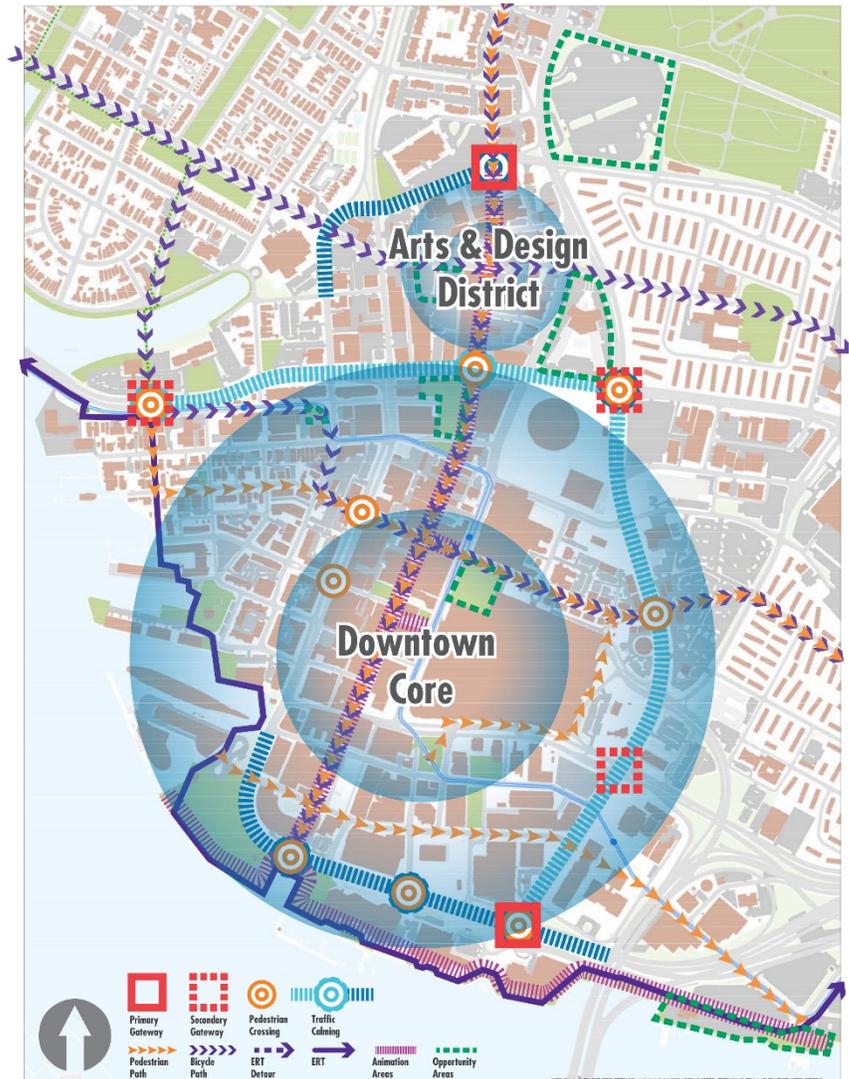
- The downtown residential market is strong and is driving significant investment.
- Retail is robust with three complementary niches in Granby, MacArthur, and a redeveloped Waterside.
- Downtown must appeal to young, skilled workers in order to fill office vacancy.
- Affordable, creative office space is in demand and can help fill street-level vacancy.
- Visitor market can be enhanced with boutique hotels.
- Public realm investments can strengthen the residential, retail, visitor, and office markets.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The plan includes a planning framework that maps physical elements of Downtown, seeking to enhance connections both within Downtown and to adjacent neighborhoods. Elements such as activity centers, gateways, opportunity sites are mapped. Then these elements are linked through key placemaking and mobility improvements. Suggested physical framework enhancements strongly influence the Pedestrians First component of the Action Plan.

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan identifies and prioritizes strategies for DNC’s work in advancing Downtown. The Action plan is organized in three key action areas that envision downtown as an Innovation Hub designed for Pedestrians First that is Always Active.



DNC: DOWNTOWN'S CHAMPION

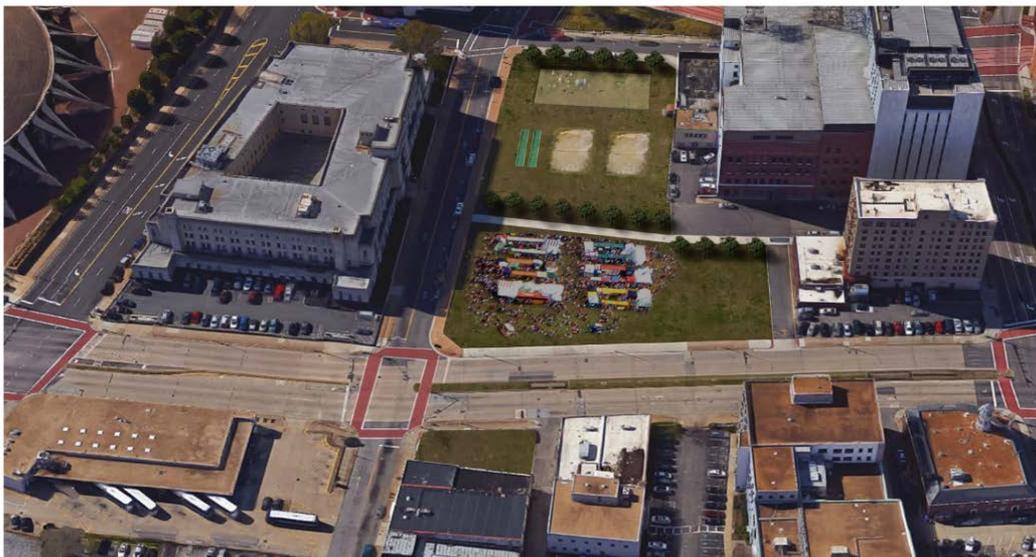
INNOVATION HUB	PEDESTRIANS FIRST	ALWAYS ACTIVE
1. Granby Retail & Jobs	1. Place-Making in the Downtown Core	1. Clean & Safe
2. Resident Services & Linkages	2. Waterfront Community	2. Marketing & Events
3. Linkages with Eds & Meds	3. Neighborhood Connections	3. Lifestyle Amenities

IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING – POTENTIAL SOURCES

In the final section, the plan identifies existing and potential new funding sources from DNC and the Downtown Improvement District, as well as possible options to partner on funding for aligned priorities.

ACTION TYPE	DNC/DID	POSSIBLE PARTNERING
Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DID current assessment capture of 15 cents DNC member dues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private donors/sponsors
Capital Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DID "capital boost": of 2 cents (return to pre-recession level) Establish a DNC Chairman's Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1-cent DID assessment at City City of Norfolk funding sources Foundation & corporate grants & sponsorships Crowd-sourcing

The below rendering depicts changes on Brambleton Avenue near Granby Street envisioned in the plan that would better connect Downtown to adjacent neighborhoods and the Arts District.



BACKGROUND

PROJECT INITIATION & PURPOSE

In late 2014, the Downtown Norfolk Council (DNC) initiated a Strategic Plan for Downtown Norfolk, which was completed in summer of 2015. The purposes of this plan are to:

- Building on prior planning efforts, engage DNC's leadership, neighborhood and civic partners and other downtown stakeholders in a participatory process to develop the downtown market-based strategic plan.
- Develop a strategic vision and investment plan to help guide downtown Norfolk's evolution toward shared goals through the next five to seven-year investment cycle.
- Align DNC's resources, programs and structure with the priorities of the strategic plan to advance implementation.

Downtown Norfolk has a rich trove of prior planning and design efforts that have been conducted. There are numerous ideas that have been floated in the community -- many of which have been conceptualized into architectural drawings -- that await the opportunity and resources for implementation. DNC receives numerous requests each month to support investments, events, and other efforts to advance downtown. A primary purpose of this Downtown Strategic Plan is to prioritize how DNC uses its resources to advance downtown. Some of the considerations include:

- Understanding of the shared community values and vision for downtown
- Types of projects, events, and activities that best advance that vision
- The role of DNC as a convener of the downtown business community and a champion of downtown
- Resources that DNC and aligned organizations may be able to bring to implementation

To complete the plan, the DNC contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), a Denver-based consulting firm specializing in downtown organizational and strategic planning. Additionally, Work Program Associates, a Norfolk-based architecture and urban design firm joined the team to provide design skills, mapping and graphical work, and connections to local planning efforts.

PROCESS

P.U.M.A. and DNC staff worked collaboratively to chart and complete a strategic planning process with the following major components:

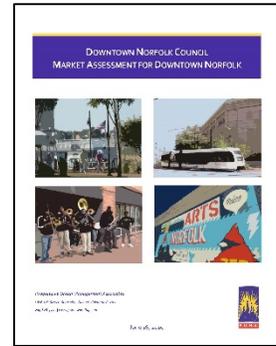
Review Prior Plans

The consultants reviewed all prior and evolving planning efforts made available to DNC in order to ensure that this process would build upon such efforts. A brief summary of prior plans and implanted planning projects is included below, starting on page 6.



Market Assessment

P.U.M.A. conducted a broad-reaching market assessment with a wide range of data inputs. Conditions and trends in Norfolk were compared to global trends research. Key findings of the market assessment determined the direction and order-of-magnitude opportunity, as well as niche opportunities, within various market sectors. A summary of the Market assessment is included in this plan starting on page 11, while the full document is an appendix to the plan.



Community Engagement



DNC engaged the community to ensure understanding of shared values and aspirations related to downtown. Efforts, which attracted more than 750 business, resident and community voices, included establishing a steering committee of downtown stakeholders, meeting with focus groups convened by interest area, an online survey, and community open houses. A summary of the community engagement, including key themes that emerged, is included in this document starting on page 14.

Develop Planning Framework

Drawing on the above inputs, DNC staff and the consultant team developed a physical planning framework for investments in the public realm that support and enhance market opportunities in downtown and deliver a downtown environment that is in sync with community values. The development framework maps are a key component of this plan. A summary is presented starting on page 20, while the full document is an appendix to the plan. Suggested physical framework enhancements in the Planning Framework are closely tied to the Pedestrians First component of the Action Plan.



Action Plan

P.U.M.A. prepared an action plan for DNC that synthesizes all of the above, and is the heart of this plan. The action plan includes many projects identified in other planning efforts, as well as some new ideas, prioritizing those with the most potential to advance community values and DNC's mission. It is an action list for DNC in both the near and longer term. It includes actions the DNC will lead, as well as actions where the DNC can and should play an important advocacy and support role to a partner organization. The Action Plan begins on page 23 of this document.

Implementation

Finally, P.U.M.A. worked with the DNC to consider the organizational implications for the DNC, such as how to align staffing, resources and committees to fit with the plan priorities. Financing options, considerations for DID renewal and leadership priorities are also identified. Implementation is the final section of this plan, starting on page 29.



PAST DOWNTOWN PLANNING EFFORTS

As indicated above, this Strategic Plan is intended to build on past planning efforts. The DNC acknowledges and embraces the goals and values of many of the plans and projects that have come before this one. The previous strategic plan was completed in 2005 and established a vision for Downtown Norfolk. The prioritization of some previously envisioned projects above others within this plan is an effort to identify from among many worthy and beneficial projects for downtown those that best align with DNC’s mission, resources, and capacity.

The plan builds upon more than 16 years of careful planning and implementation by the DNC in the Downtown Improvement District (DID). The DNC has partnered with the City of Norfolk, the Greater Norfolk Corporation, business owners and developers to improve and strengthen Downtown Norfolk by promoting arts, culture, entertainment, and public safety, welcoming visitors, and keeping a clean downtown, in turn promoting job growth and economic development within the Downtown Improvement District (DID). In the past two years, there has been significant progress to increase the number of residents living downtown to a current count of 5,579, and to create an environment that supports the downtown workforce, residents, and visitors.

The Main Hotel and Convention Center broke ground in 2014 and is slated to be a 23-story Gold Key|PHR full-service hotel, sitting on the corner of Main and Granby Streets. It will have a state-of-the-art 50,000 square foot conference center, three unique restaurants, and will provide 250 new jobs for downtown.



Waterside Live is the renovation and rebranding of Norfolk’s iconic Waterside Festival Marketplace on the Elizabeth River. The Cordish Company will invest approximately \$40 million to transform this iconic complex into a premier dining, entertainment, and retail destination. The project will also include the renovation of the existing Waterside Marina. Live music and farmer’s markets will create an attraction for both visitors and locals.





Granby Street Lighting is a project that originated with a group of downtown business owners who wanted to help accelerate Granby Street’s brand by transforming its appearance, facilitating its evolution into a truly vibrant “Instagrammable” gathering space—the Living Room of downtown. The Granby Street Lighting Project will reinforce the idea of Granby Street as an after-dark gathering space, encouraging people to visit, and then keeping them excited. Just as with an interior space, multiple layers of light provide interest, definition, and comfort to those experiencing the space. Through the use of pedestrian post top luminaires, tree up-lighting, facade illumination, and the historically precedented grand gesture of illuminated arches, Granby Street will attract, and hold people’s interest.

Fort Norfolk was the focus of the 2015 ULI panel studying development opportunities for the area, focusing on exploring the best land use practices for urban coastal areas. Fort Norfolk is uniquely situated and ripe for redevelopment, once its challenges are understood. Its proximity to downtown, light rail, EVMS, CHKD, Sentara, and the historic Ghent neighborhood, make it a highly desirable location for a mixed-use development that incorporates best practices in planning for sea level rise and coastal resiliency.



NEON District is Norfolk’s first official arts district and is home to a new wave of passion and creativity in downtown. NEON, or New Energy Of Norfolk, draws from the neighborhood’s history with the automobile industry as it moves into a new and vibrant future. Long time cultural institutions like the Chrysler Museum of Art and Harrison Opera House anchor the District while new art venues like Glass Wheel Studio and Work|Release provide artists a place to make, create, and show. The NEON District offers a unique cultural experience for locals





and visitors. Within a few short blocks visitors can see a muralist at work, take in an improv comedy performance, watch a live glass-working demonstration, shop for unique home goods, get a tattoo, or dine out at an eclectic restaurant. The neighborhood is fast transforming into the place to be.

New Apartments have recently been built in Downtown Norfolk, including the examples listed below:

- The James
- Metro on Granby
- The Wainwright Downtown
- Rockefeller
- Savoy
- Law Building
- The Tazewell
- Fort Tar Lofts
- Work|Release Artist's Lofts



MacArthur Shopping Center Third Anchor offers an opportunity for Starwood to bring a fresh mixed-use concept to downtown that supports and complements the mall. Proposed uses are a mixture of small retail, mid-size boxes, a residential tower, and an office tower. Early concepts include an open-air pedestrian shopping spine, drawing visitors from Monticello Avenue into the heart of the shopping and entertainment center.

St. Paul's Quadrant may soon have an opportunity to begin the process of building new multifamily residential units that help to better knit the St. Paul's Quadrant to downtown. Attractive and affordable, these apartments could be a great place for young downtown employees and families to settle and actively participate in the growing downtown community.

Slover Library is Downtown Norfolk's new state-of-the-art main library with more than 160,000 books and other items to borrow. It features the Sargeant Memorial Collection, computer rooms, digital media labs and production suites, makerspace, kid and teen zones, genealogy classes, a café and rooftop terraces. The award-winning building bridges between the historical Seaboard Building with a three-story glass Forum, complete with beautiful sculptural ornamental foliage.



The new **Downtown Bus Transfer Center** is a dynamic new central bus terminal that is conveniently located and expressive in its architecture. A central lobby with rider amenities is surrounded by an organic leaf-like pedestrian canopy. It will provide capacity for approximately 50 busses per hour during peak times.



Chelsea is a new business district formed around a name resurrected from an old map of the area. Situated between Lambert's Point docks and West Ghent, this area is an up-and-coming neighborhood that boasts Smartmouth Brewing Company, The Birch Bar, Tortilla West, Chelsea Bakehouse, and Torch Bistro. It's a gritty and eclectic mix enjoyed by all ages and demographics. Though Chelsea is outside of the DID boundary, it is a great neighbor to downtown, just a short bike ride or walk away along the Elizabeth River Trail.

Parklets have been popping up in downtown as a result of the DNC-sponsored program, and **Food Trucks** have proven popular in downtown in recent years.



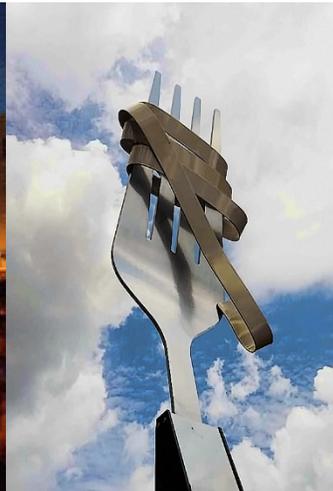
The PLOT is a temporary park located in the NEON District at the corner of Granby Street and Olney Road. This is the second location for this unique urban recreation area that repurposes reclaimed materials in innovative ways to best utilize previously unused spaces, turning them into attractive gathering spots. The park-like space includes shipping containers used as vertical gardens and public art, a life size chess game and an area dedicated



to performance art. The Plot can also be used for organized special events. The original location of The Plot was the corner of Granby Street and Main Street, and it was created with the help of hundreds of volunteers that installed donated cobblestones, planted flowers, and created signs to fashion the common space, complete with an amphitheater and seating areas.

Public Art is consistently being delivered to excite and activate Downtown Norfolk. In recent years, sculptural bike racks sponsored by the DNC have popped up along the waterfront and throughout downtown, Electroland's interactive sculpture, "Metalmatisse," delights passersby with sound, light, and movement, and Rhiza A+D's sculptures at the Amtrak station greet train passengers with sculptural interpretations of the history of industry and biology in Norfolk

Street Parties such as First Fridays have been increasingly successful in the past several years, as Festevents, the DNC, and others have hosted parties that feature live music, food, merchandise vendors, and beer and wine gardens.



MARKET ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

As part of the strategic planning process, a market assessment was prepared to help inform recommendations by pointing to tactics and public or private investments that strengthen underlying market trends. The assessment, which is an appendix to this plan, summarizes current market conditions in Downtown Norfolk in order to inform the goals and implementation tactics for the Downtown strategic plan. It is not a full-scale market analysis with quantified demand projections but rather an educated overview and qualitative assessment of trends and market opportunities.

The report was compiled using primary and secondary data sources such as ESRI's Business Analyst online, the U.S. Census Bureau, real estate market reports, City of Norfolk data and reports, regional reports and surveys, as well as past market analyses. Additionally, interviews were conducted to gain qualitative information from property and business owners, developers, entrepreneurs, young leaders, Arts District Committee, and City of Norfolk staff. A list of those interviewed is included as an Appendix to this document.

KEY MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding market opportunities informs the Action Plan by demonstrating what the market may be able to deliver and what actions the DNC may be able to take to support or enhance the market trends. Based on both quantitative data and qualitative inputs, P.U.M.A. identified the following as key market opportunities in Downtown Norfolk in the current five-to-seven year investment cycle.

- The downtown residential market is strong and is driving significant investment. Some Class B office space appears ripe for conversion to residential.
- Retail is robust. New offerings on Granby, a planned expansion at MacArthur, and redevelopment of Waterside demonstrate three enduring and complementary niches.
- Downtown must appeal to skilled workers in order to fill office vacancy. Affordable, creative office space is in demand and can fill street-level vacancy.
- Industrial opportunities are rare. Redevelopment to residential use would be beneficial to downtown to the extent that it adds more publically accessible waterfront access.
- In the visitor market there appears to be some opportunity in boutique hotels.
- Public realm investments can strengthen the residential, retail, visitor, and office markets.

MARKET ASSESSMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Global Trends in Effect in Norfolk

Since 2006, P.U.M.A. has been conducting award-winning research into trends global affecting downtowns and how to respond. These trends add insight that can be used to help predict the direction and magnitude of local market trends. Many of these trends are in evidence in Downtown Norfolk, and can be expected to become increasingly important to creating a thriving downtown.

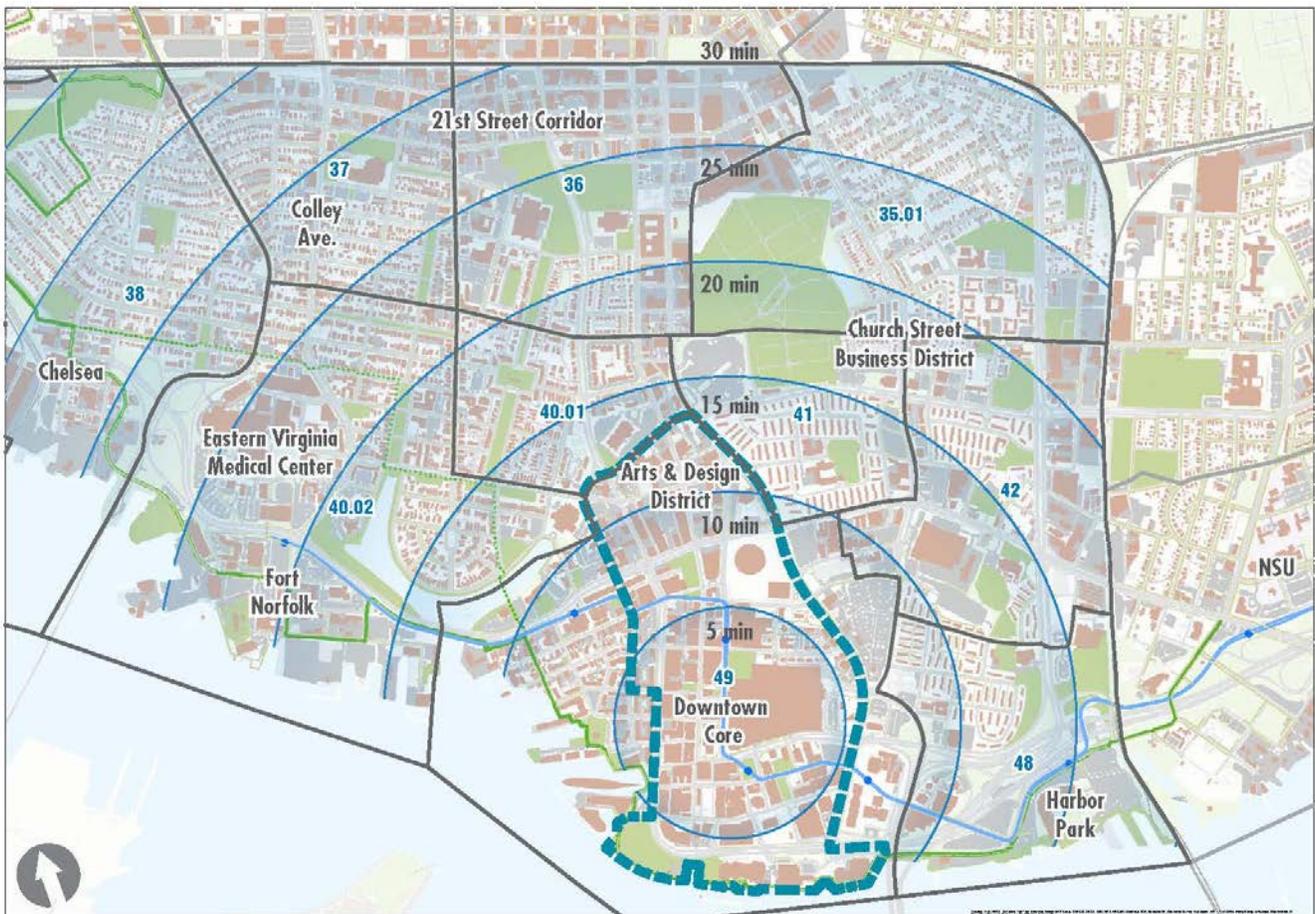
- Changing workforce demographics including the rise of Millennials and women.



- Millennials and empty nest Boomers are driving a resurgence in downtown living.
- Skilled talent is in high demand, driving businesses to locate in the compact urban centers they prefer.
- Demand for and use of alternative transportation modes (i.e. walking and biking) is increasing.
- Increasing demand for healthy lifestyles, including fresh food, and active living options.
- Rising awareness of social inequity, leading to demands for more affordable housing in and near downtowns.
- Growing consumer preference for local retail and experience shopping.

DOWNTOWN & ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET AREA

To better understand market opportunities in Downtown Norfolk, P.U.M.A. defined an in-place Downtown & Adjacent Neighborhood Market Area that includes adjacent neighborhoods to the west, north and east as well as the core of Downtown. The boundary was determined based on a number of factors, including drive times, bike and walk distances, political boundaries, infrastructure connectors and barriers, and demographics. The intent was to describe a population that is readily and regularly able to access downtown for dining, entertainment, shopping and employment.



Within the Downtown & Adjacent Neighborhood Market Area, there are four subareas:

- **Core:** Census tract 49 which encompasses the conventional understanding of downtown and is somewhat larger than the Downtown Improvement District (DID) boundary.
- **West:** Census tracts 40.01, 40.02 & 38 which includes the historic Ghent and Chelsea neighborhoods.
- **North:** Census tracts 35.01, 36, & 37 which includes residential neighborhoods north of downtown that are largely under private ownership as well as some public housing.
- **East:** Census tracts 41, 42 & 48 which includes St. Paul’s and other public housing areas, commercial areas near the bus station and train tracks, and the stadium.

While there are significant demographic and income differences among these subareas, together they comprise a desirable mix of customers and stakeholders that downtown serves, as shown in the following summary table of neighborhood market characteristics.

DOWNTOWN & ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET CHARACTERISTICS SUMMARY

(SOURCE: ESRI 2014 ESTIMATES)

POPULATION	22,173
HOUSEHOLDS/	10,519
FAMILIES	4,622
MEDIAN AGE	32.5
SEX	52.4% Female; 47.6% Male
RACE & ETHNICITY	White 55.7%; Black 35.5%; All other 8.7% / Hispanic origin 7.7%
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$68.8K - compared to \$56.5K Citywide
HOUSING	27% owner-occupied; 63% renter; 10% vacant
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.03
AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE	2.92
EMPLOYMENT	91.5%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	55% College or advanced degree; 33% High school/GED/some college
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY	65% Services; no other industry more than 7%
EMPLOYMENT BY OCCUPATION	73% White Collar; 19% Services; 8% Blue Collar

The consumer spending potential of residents in Downtown and Adjacent Neighborhoods on retail goods is more than \$230 million dollars in 2014. Based on ESRI’s Market Potential Index (MPI), consumers in the in-place market had spending behaviors as follows:

- Strong spending on technology including computers, cell phones, and Internet video devices
- Very strong spending for entertainment including live performances and bars/nightclubs
- Strong consumers of digital media at home including movie rentals/downloads, digital books and newspapers and online gaming
- Strong users of exercise clubs two or more times per week
- Are very strong consumers of organic foods and environmentally safe/green products
- Are comfortable using online banking services
- Are likely to travel internationally once per year or more
- Are likely to own just one car and just one television per household



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

As part of the strategic planning process, DNC undertook a significant community engagement effort. This section summarizes the main activities and outcomes of that process.

TOP PRIORITIES

This list is a compilation of the feedback from all community engagement as well as input from the DNC Board of Directors. Understanding community priorities can help the DNC align its efforts and select actions that fit both the community-wide values and the organization's capacity. The top priorities in order of importance for improving Downtown Norfolk are as follows:

- *Activate the waterfront/marina*
- *Activate Granby Street with more unique, local businesses*
- *Attract neighborhood service retail (including grocery), services & amenities*
- *Develop a critical mass of attractions to make a destination*
- *Extend the Tide Light Rail system*
- *Make downtown more walkable & bikeable*
- *Promote a fresh image/brand for downtown*
- *Improve the parking experience for customers & visitors*

DNC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

During a regularly scheduled meeting of the DNC board February 11, 2015, P.U.M.A. conducted a priority setting exercise with board members regarding improvements to Downtown over the next ten (10) years. Priority improvements included:

- More neighborhood serving amenities;
- Additional retail on Granby Street;
- Activating the waterfront; and
- Making Downtown more walkable/bikeable.

STEERING COMMITTEE

DNC assembled a Steering Committee to help drive and inform the Downtown Strategic Plan. The committee consists of a diverse group of stakeholders including: Downtown employees, DT100 members, residents, restaurants, retail, commercial property owners, hospitality, arts and City staff. P.U.M.A. initially engaged the steering committee during a visit to Norfolk in mid-February 2015 to collect input on their vision for Downtown as well as expectations for the Strategic Plan.

Key words used by the Steering Committee to describe their vision for the future of Downtown Norfolk were: Entrepreneurial, Active Waterfront, Bike Friendly, Destination, Confident, Authentic, Connected, and Diverse.



The Steering Committee's expectation of the Downtown Strategic Plan is that it will:

- Communicate Downtown's value proposition;
- Include all the building blocks of community (i.e. housing, education);
- Be inclusive and bring new stakeholders to the table; and
- Be informed by best practices from other cities.

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

In addition to meeting with the DNC Board and Steering Committee, P.U.M.A. held a series of stakeholder roundtable discussions February 10th-11th, 2015. More than 60 stakeholders participated representing the following Downtown affinity groups: 1) Businesses; 2) Faith-Based and Social Services; 3) Retail and Restaurants; 4) Re:Vision; 5) Hospitality 6) Arts and 7) Residents. Common themes for improving Downtown Norfolk expressed by the stakeholder roundtable groups included:

- Make Downtown Norfolk more walkable and bikeable;
- Activate the waterfront and marina;
- Attract additional investment and business such as neighborhood-serving amenities and unique, local businesses;
- Improve connections between neighborhoods adjoining Downtown, the Downtown core and the waterfront;
- Update Norfolk's image, particularly among communities outside of Downtown; and
- Improve the parking experience for customers and visitors.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Following the stakeholder roundtables, an online community survey was distributed to gather additional insight for the Strategic Plan. There were 588 respondents with the majority being Downtown employees, visitors, residents and those who live in the greater Norfolk area. Respondents' household incomes were fairly evenly divided between above and below \$100,000 per year. The majority of respondents were ages 25 to 64.

Respondents indicated that the most important factors for improving Downtown over the past five years were 1) clean and safe services; 2) new businesses and jobs; and 3) new retail and restaurants.

In an open response question, the survey asked respondents to list three words that describe their vision of a future Downtown Norfolk. The resulting word cloud represents the most common words; the larger the word, the more often the word was used. Respondents see a future Downtown Norfolk as:





When asked to choose the single most important action to achieve their vision for Downtown Norfolk, respondents’ top five choices were:

1. Activate the waterfront (18%)
2. Activate Granby Street with more unique, local businesses; fill vacancies (16%)
3. Attract neighborhood serving retail (e.g., grocery) and amenities (11%)
4. Develop a critical mass of attractions to make Downtown a regional destination (10%)
5. Extend the Tide Light Rail system (9%)

Respondents were given an open-ended question that asked them to list a specific improvement for Downtown. Many improvements were similar to the responses above. A few additional suggestions included:

- Make parking more affordable, safe and convenient
- Revitalize Waterside
- Have a greater variety of restaurants
- Increase the supply of attractive, affordable Downtown housing

Specific Improvements for Downtown Norfolk (Open-Ended):

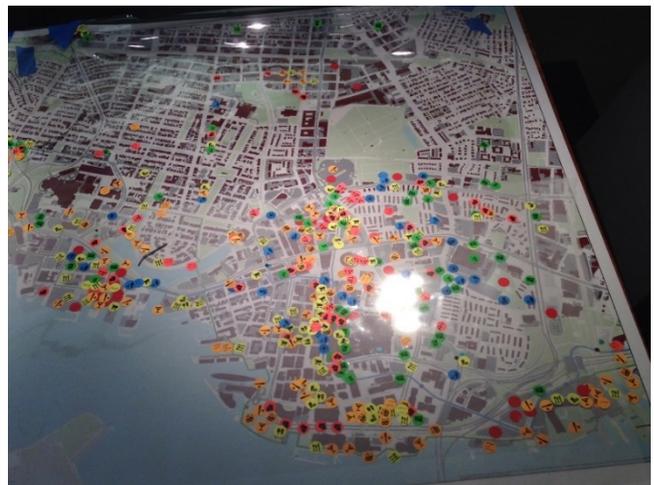


At the **Connectivity** station attendees were asked to identify routes they utilize to connect where they live, work, and have fun. Key findings included the need for the following actions: strengthening bike routes; more wayfinding to and along the Elizabeth River Trail, particularly in Freemason and at Harbor Park; improvements to crossings at St. Paul's Boulevard, Brambleton Avenue, Boush Street, and Waterside Drive; adjustment of traffic light timing to shorter durations to favor pedestrians over vehicle thru-traffic; and the encouragement of healthier lifestyles through increased support of walking, biking, and recreation.

The **Amenities** station asked attendees simply to identify as many things as possible that they would like to see Downtown, with a focus on the waterfront. The overwhelming majority of people identified a grocery store as being the number one desired amenity, followed by an urban-style discount retailer such as Target. For the waterfront, amenities such as boat and kayak launches, playground and fitness equipment, public restrooms, enhancements of the Elizabeth River Trail, and restaurants at the water's edge were requested. Dog parks, community gardens, pocket parks, parklets, "urban beach"-type recreation spaces were requested for public space within the urban core. Better access to education on all levels was mentioned, as was the need for child care facilities. Enhancements to the retail experience were discussed at length, with emphasis on specialty stores: pet supplies, stationery, wine shops, ice cream and candy, gifts, art/craft supplies, and kitchen items were all listed more than once. Authenticity was a core value for the attendees, with a desire for more distinctly "Norfolk" features: the proposed Granby Street Lighting, unique public art, historic tours, and waterfront tours.



The **Economic Opportunities** station focused on identifying where various types of businesses and features should be located. Attendees placed icon stickers on maps of the Downtown core and surrounding area. Locations that received the greatest number of stickers were: Granby Street with an emphasis on retail and dining; the Third Anchor site at MacArthur Center with grocery, hardware and supplies, and retail; Town Point Park with sports and recreation, arts and culture, and ice cream & desserts; the Harbor Park waterfront with boating, sports and recreation; and the Arts District with retail and dining.



CORE VALUES

Core values for Downtown Norfolk emerged from a synthesis of all community and stakeholder engagement activities. These core values are as follows:

CORE VALUES	
VIBRANT	A vital 24/7 downtown
ENTREPRENEURIAL	Regional hub for jobs, innovation & unique businesses
FRIENDLY	Safe, walkable, bikeable & connected neighborhood
ACTIVE	Activated waterfront, public spaces and districts
DIVERSE	Confident, inclusive and resilient downtown



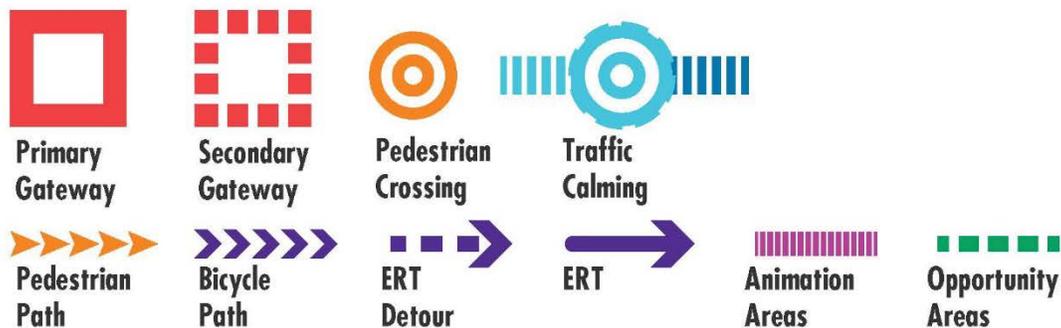
PLANNING FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

A physical planning framework identifies and prioritizes investments in the public realm that support and enhance market opportunities in downtown and deliver a downtown environment that is in sync with community values.

FRAMEWORK MAPS

Two sets of maps were developed: the Downtown Core maps which depict primarily the DID boundary and the immediate surrounding area; and the Downtown & Adjacent Neighborhoods maps which show how Downtown relates and connects to surrounding neighborhood areas. A number of key features of Downtown and the Downtown & Adjacent Neighborhoods were mapped individually. The icons below show features that were mapped in individual layers:

Mapped Features



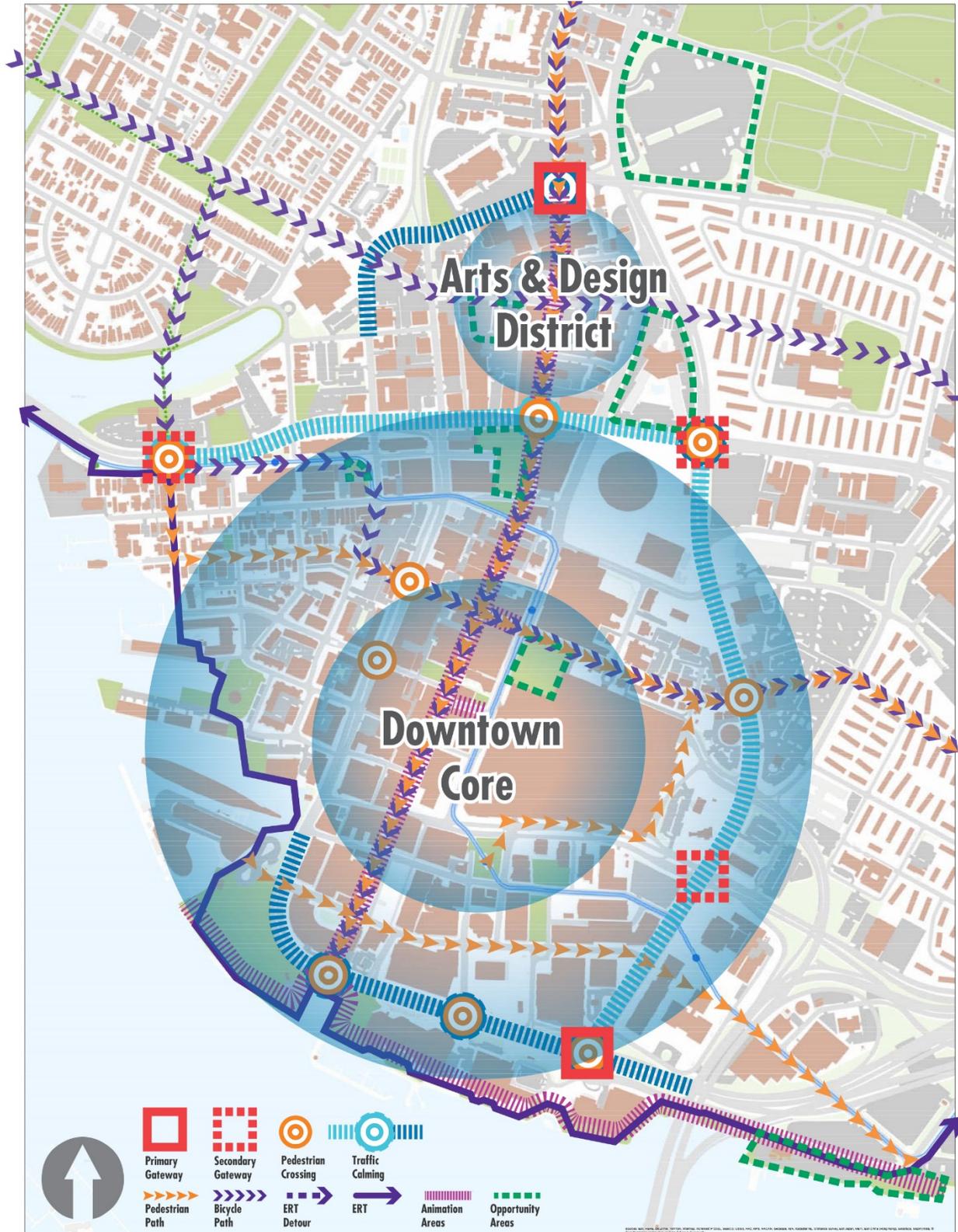
Composite Maps

After mapping and prioritizing the features, a final, composite map was developed to show how the layers build on and relate to one another. The Downtown maps show the focus area of the DNC, which is the where most of the activities and strategies of this plan would occur. The Downtown & Adjacent Neighborhoods maps show how the Downtown Core relates and connects to activity areas in the surrounding neighborhoods. This reflects a market-based view of downtown as sitting within and among a larger neighborhood, market, and physical context. The purpose is to show how Downtown relates to these areas and can better connect to and serve residents from adjacent neighborhoods.

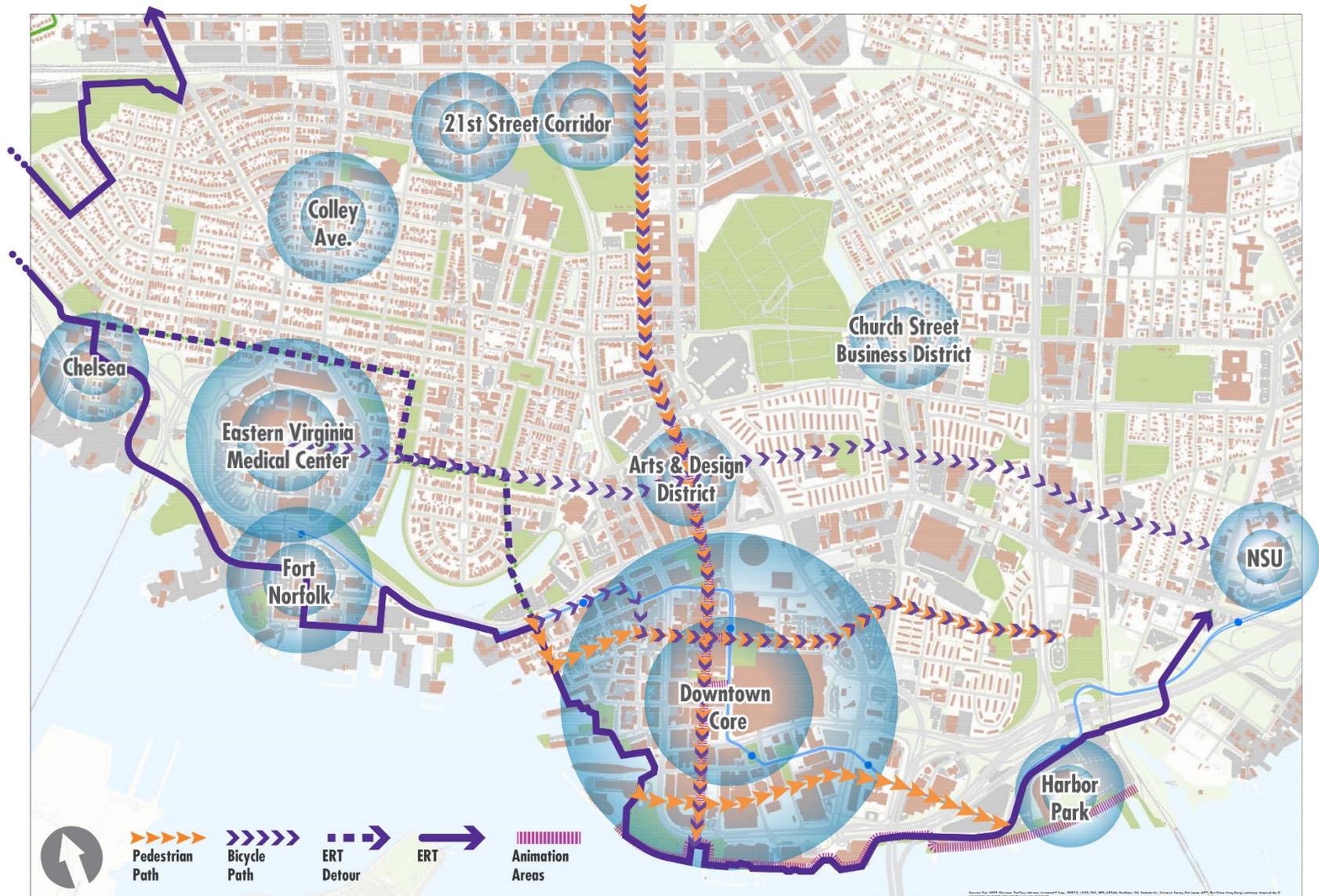
The following two pages show the two composite maps, one of the Downtown Core and the other with Downtown in the context of the Adjacent Neighborhoods. The full Framework Plan is appended to this document.



DOWNTOWN FRAMEWORK MAP



DOWNTOWN & ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS FRAMEWORK MAP



ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan is the heart of a strategic plan. The action plan includes many projects identified in other planning efforts, as well as some new ideas, prioritizing those with the most potential to advance community values and DNC’s mission. It is an action list for DNC in both the near and longer term. It includes actions the DNC will lead, as well as actions where the DNC can and should play an important advocacy and support role to a partner organization.

And while it does not eliminate the potential for DNC to reshuffle priorities in the future, it does suggest that DNC will need to decline involvement in some other efforts in order to remain diligently focused on the included actions, which are its priorities. The below graphic depicts the three major action areas for DNC, using words to describe desired results for Downtown Norfolk: Innovation Hub, Pedestrians First, and Always Active. Within each of the three major action areas are three numbered initiatives.

DNC: DOWNTOWN’S CHAMPION		
INNOVATION HUB	PEDESTRIANS FIRST	ALWAYS ACTIVE
1. Granby Retail & Jobs	1. Placemaking in the Downtown Core	1. Clean & Safe
2. Resident Services & Linkages	2. Waterfront Community	2. Marketing & Events
3. Linkages with Eds & Meds	3. Neighborhood Connections	3. Lifestyle Amenities

Each of the Action areas is described in greater detail on the following pages, with specific initiatives prioritized for near and longer term implementation.



LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES

Toward the end of the Downtown Norfolk Strategic Action Plan process, both the plan Steering Committee and the DNC Board of Directors were polled on priorities for implementation. The following initiatives were identified as having importance and urgency in moving forward. They are listed in order of priority in each activity center as determined by the Steering Committee.

QUICK WINS BY ACTIVITY CENTER		
INNOVATION HUB	PEDESTRIANS FIRST	ALWAYS ACTIVE
Vibrant Spaces Initiative current and future phases	Identify activation options for the Waterfront	Promote informal recreation in green spaces
Support GNC-initiated Innovation Corridor	Temporary activation of the GSA parcel at Brambleton	Continue to support the Ambassador program
Attract a grocery and other resident-serving retail	Change signal light timing to accommodate pedestrians	Grow downtown’s digital marketing presence
Showcase creativity in the Arts District	Develop a plan to enhance wayfinding	Support “pop-up” events, i.e. Random Acts of Kindness, Fun Spot
Create an “Eds & Meds” Task Force to explore linkages		

Capital Priorities (in order of priority as determined by both the Steering Committee and the DNC Board)

- *Implement historic gateway lighting along Granby*
- *Waterfront amenities: play areas, small boat access*
- *Resident amenities: dog park, playground, gathering places*
- *Pedestrian improvements at the intersection of Brambleton & Granby*

The priorities of the DNC leadership are reflected in the steps and timing indicated in the Action Plan as well as the Implementation section of this Plan.



INNOVATION HUB

	GRANBY RETAIL AND JOBS	RESIDENT SERVICES & LINKAGES	LINKAGES WITH EDS AND MEDS
CORE VALUES	Entrepreneurial, Active	Entrepreneurial, Friendly, Active, Diverse	Entrepreneurial
GOAL	Position Downtown and the Granby Street corridor as a regional center for innovation and entrepreneurship, building upon Downtown Norfolk’s role as the regional hub for commerce in Hampton Roads.	Continue to grow downtown’s residential base and improve economic and social linkages between the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods.	Strengthen economic linkages between Norfolk health and education institutions and the downtown to help increase opportunities for business development, residential and retail demand.
WHY IT’S IMPORTANT	Cities across the country are competing to attract young skilled workers to fuel economic development and regional prosperity. Downtown’s compact and walkable scale, coupled with its emerging livability, create an economic advantage for Norfolk and the region. Granby Street remains the barometer by which Downtown success is measured. This next investment cycle offers opportunities to solidify Granby Street as the spine of a vibrant 24/7 downtown.	Residential development is the strongest market opportunity for new development within the next five to ten year investment cycle. More residents downtown help support retail and entertainment businesses and strengthen the overall vitality of the downtown core. Improving economic and social linkages to surrounding neighborhoods can help redefine downtown’s neighborhood market area to more than 20,000 residents.	The downtown core is within close proximity to a number of health and education institutions that could support a variety of employment, business recruitment and investment opportunities. In addition to Tidewater Community College in the core, Norfolk State University and the Eastern Virginia Medical School are conveniently connected via light rail. Old Dominion University is also relatively close to downtown.
STRATEGIES: NEAR TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Implement the Vibrant Spaces Initiative to encourage exciting new businesses to locate along Granby Street and for existing businesses to re-invest in their spaces. B. Partner with Greater Norfolk Corporation, Re:Vision and other like-minded groups to create supportive events (i.e. start-up week) and business resources needed to attract more innovative business concepts and entrepreneurs. C. Convert the ground floor of the City of Norfolk’s Granby Municipal Building into an active retail, restaurant and/or entertainment use. D. Work with downtown property owners to identify and develop “co-working” and other work space concepts that appeal to innovative business concepts and entrepreneurs. E. Partner with artists and arts enterprises in the Arts District to develop creative interiors and exteriors that help showcase innovative and creative businesses and the district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Develop a strategy and companion incentive package to help attract a grocery store to the downtown core. The grocery could be a small independent (i.e. less than 10,000 sq.ft.) and/or include a non-traditional ownership format (i.e. cooperative). B. Identify a set of amenities and preferred locations for amenities that could support residential development in the downtown. (i.e. dog park, playground, pocket parks, gathering places, etc.). C. Implement one of the residential amenities and retail services within the next 18 months and explore resident participation in prioritization and funding support through crowdsourcing or a similar mechanism. D. Evaluate the feasibility of establishing a 24-hour child care facility in the downtown core to support working families and the hospitality and retail sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Create an “Eds and Meds” Task Force to identify opportunities for supporting business development in the downtown. Options include new businesses to support the health and education sectors, and procurement needs that could be serviced by downtown vendors. B. Evaluate marketing and promotional opportunities to showcase downtown restaurants and retail for institutional employees, students and visitors.
STRATEGIES: NEXT FIVE YEARS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Support the Greater Norfolk Corporation’s action plan to create an innovation district and corridor centered along Granby Street. G. Support implementation of the plan for historic arch lighting to illuminate the entire Granby Street corridor. H. Partner to establish a “culinary corridor” along Granby Street, building on its existing local unique and fine dining restaurants and the culinary curriculum at Tidewater Community College. I. If Class A vacancy decreases, work with the commercial real estate sector to explore the feasibility and development potential of a new Class A office building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Continue to identify and implement amenities and retail services (e.g., grocery) that support a growing residential community in the downtown. F. Explore the feasibility of establishing a downtown workforce training program that would aim to link residents from surrounding neighborhoods to downtown jobs, and utilize the resources of the Tidewater Community College. G. Support efforts to advance the St. Paul’s Quadrant Plan, including the creation of a diverse array of housing types while ensuring that existing public housing residents can remain in the neighborhood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. Investigate options for connecting employees from eds and meds institutions to housing in the downtown core and neighborhoods. D. Explore options to bring programming and/or classrooms from the area’s four-year universities (i.e. ODU and NSU) into the downtown core. E. Explore downtown business community partnerships with the Norfolk Public Schools to target resources and support for schools that serve the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods. F. Explore creating an entrepreneurial support program that matches training and support for start-ups from participating educational institutions to specific commercial locations within the downtown core.
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS	Developing linkages with Eds & Meds can help to develop a skilled workforce for innovative businesses and to foster a creative atmosphere. An active street with innovative businesses can help support a safe and comfortable downtown environment for residents, workers and visitors.	Supports overall economic development goals by helping to attract new investment to create more residential product. Could help reduce the vacancy rates and over-abundance of commercial property through conversion to residential. Creates a more influential downtown champion by bringing cohesion between residents, businesses and property owners.	Formal linkages with local health and education institutions can help support business development efforts throughout downtown. Improved public schools can help broaden and deepen the demand for downtown residential products. The Granby Street Innovation Corridor can be strengthened with participation from the city’s anchor institutions.
PARTNERS	City of Norfolk, Re:Vision, Greater Norfolk Corporation, Arts District Committee, Tidewater Community College	City of Norfolk, Downtown Norfolk Civic League, Civic Leagues from surrounding neighborhoods, Tidewater Community College, Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority	Universities: Tidewater Community College, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk Public Schools, Greater Norfolk Corporation



PEDESTRIANS FIRST

	PLACEMAKING IN THE CORE	WATERFRONT COMMUNITY	NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS
CORE VALUES	Friendly, Active	Friendly, Active	Friendly, Active, Diverse
GOAL	Create a sense of destination for Downtown through enhancements to the public realm that signal arrival and quality.	Enhance Norfolk’s brand as a waterfront community by making the waterfront a more accessible and daily use amenity.	Connect downtown to the surrounding neighborhoods through physical enhancements and matches between residents and downtown jobs.
WHY IT’S IMPORTANT	Placemaking that signals arrival at a special place and connects the components of downtown will enhance Downtown’s ability to attract residents and skilled talent. Downtown’s compact and walkable scale in an authentic setting is highly desired by skilled talent, shoppers, and residents. It offers an economic advantage for attracting people to and keeping them circulating among Downtown destinations.	The waterfront is an attractive asset for downtown Norfolk that residents and visitors want to access more easily and frequently. Adding a greater diversity of activities and access points helps attract residents and employees by providing desirable recreation and healthy lifestyle options. Connections to the waterfront also help extend visitors stays by making multiple destinations easy to get to.	Downtown is surrounded by diverse neighborhoods whose residents are an integral part of the downtown economy. These neighborhoods offer a range of housing including more affordable options for the workforce. Connecting adjoining neighborhoods to the Core will improve its ability to function as a fully integrated economic unit. Downtown is stronger when the surrounding neighborhood residents can easily access jobs and retail.
STRATEGIES: NEAR TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Support the City-led initiative for capital improvements to the pedestrian crossing of Granby at Brambleton. In the interim, implement low-cost, temporary enhancements such as painted crosswalks aligned to the existing pedestrian signal. B. Identify pockets of green and shaded outdoor space within the core to enhance with seating areas. C. Partner with Visit Norfolk, the City of Norfolk, and others to design a bike-pedestrian wayfinding system. D. Add walk and bike time information in online and hard copy DNC downtown and dining guides. E. Implement the lighting plan along Granby Street. If phasing, begin between Plume and Brambleton. F. Partner with employers and property owners in the DID to add more bike racks throughout the district with an iconic brand. G. Support and partner with businesses in the Arts District to create a high impact day and nighttime visual presence along Granby Street north of Brambleton. H. Partner with the City and GSA to install temporary activation for the grass lot at the southwest corner of Granby and Brambleton. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Partner with Festevents to develop activation strategies that enhance Town Point Park to better serve residents and workers without compromising its function as a festival park. (E.g., kite-flying, a play scape, lawn chess/checkers, dog training classes, or dingy dock facilities. B. Add signage on the seawall, at the Granby Street connector, to signal to southbound pedestrians on Granby that access continues across Waterside Drive. C. Support plans to redevelop Waterside as a signature activity center and waterfront access point. D. Advocate for free day/evening boat access (dingy dock or a validated berth parking program) to encourage Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), local, and regional boaters to visit Norfolk shops, restaurants, and attractions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Support the City-led initiative for capital improvements to the pedestrian crossing of Granby at Brambleton. In the interim, implement low-cost, temporary enhancements. B. Support the City to immediately activate the new crossing signal at St. Paul’s Boulevard and Freemason Street, which connects downtown to the bus transfer station and east neighborhoods. C. Add all-weather surface areas to existing medians along major multilane roadways such as Brambleton, St. Paul’s, and Boush where informal use demonstrates a need for pedestrian refuge. D. Advocate for the City to change timing of lights to make crossings of major multilane roadways within and into downtown more accommodating for pedestrians. E. Dialogue with downtown and adjacent Civic Leagues on development projects that are of mutual interest.
STRATEGIES: NEXT FIVE YEARS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Enhance the visual and pedestrian connections between Granby Street and MacArthur Center through enhancements and activation of Market and Freemason Streets. J. Create a gateway presence at key arrival points, beginning with Waterside Drive at St. Paul’s Blvd. and Granby at Virginia Beach Blvd. This may include signage, pedestrian crossing enhancements, road diet elements, public art, etc. K. Partner with the City to enhance the streetscape environment of key pedestrian connectors through downtown including Granby, Freemason, and Main streets using pedestrian scale lighting, sidewalk and amenity enhancements, landscaping, etc. L. Advocate for implementation of bike enhancements on Granby and in the City’s bike master plan. M. Partner with the City to fund and implement the revitalization strategy for the Arts District. N. Support efforts to activate Scope Plaza with seating and events. O. Partner with major employers, institutions, and attractions to implement a bike share program for Downtown Norfolk that serves visitors, workers, and residents. P. Support efforts to reconfigure the Scope Plaza to better connect it to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Implement the lighting plan along Granby Street, visually linking it to the waterfront day and night. F. Add bike and walk time information to Downtown attractions along the ERT. G. Add small boat public access facilities at multiple locations along the Norfolk waterfront such as the Hague, Wisconsin Square, Town Point Park/Waterside, and by Harbor Park. H. Develop a gateway and road diet plan for Waterside Drive that will influence drivers coming off the freeway to comply with the posted speed limits and make pedestrian crossings safer. I. Advocate for major redevelopment in Fort Norfolk to provide additional points of public waterfront access including small boat/recreational use. J. Partner with the City and property owners to implement road diet and gateway enhancements on Waterside Drive, including substantial pedestrian elements at St. Paul’s Blvd. and Atlantic St. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Develop a gateway and road diet plan for Waterside Drive and Brambleton Ave. that will influence drivers to comply with the posted speed limits to make crossing safer for pedestrians. G. Support the efforts of partners to develop a bike lane on Olney that connects west neighborhoods to downtown. H. Along with retail center managers, pursue a mix of retail options in downtown that appeal to and serve a wide variety of demographics and reflect the diversity of downtown neighborhood customers. I. Support redevelopment in east neighborhoods that adds more workforce housing and improves conditions in existing housing while allowing current residents to stay if they choose. J. Partner with the City to enhance key pedestrian connectors that link surrounding neighborhoods to downtown activity centers and destinations including MacArthur Center, Light Rail, Granby, City Hall, and Slover Library. Extend pedestrian and bicycle improvements across intersections with multilane roadways that currently act as barriers between the downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods. K. Support the development of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge between Ghent and Fort Norfolk that will help connect these neighborhoods to downtown.



	other downtown attractions and businesses.		
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS	Placemaking elements will help to brand downtown and support the development of a signature innovative business district. Better pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure through the core will be extended to connect to neighborhoods.	An active and accessible waterfront will enhance the appeal of downtown as a workplace that attracts skilled talent. Activating the waterfront at non-festival times will create an important lifestyle amenity for residents	Better physical connections to neighborhoods helps residents access amenities, fill jobs and buy products in downtown. A thriving downtown with a high volume of foot and bicycle traffic will increase real and perceived safety.
PARTNERS	City of Norfolk, Visit Norfolk, Arts District, SevenVenues, General Services Administration, U.S. Government	City of Norfolk, Festevents, Waterfront Attractions & Property Owners, Downtown Norfolk Civic League, Re:Vision	City of Norfolk, Greater Norfolk Corporation, Tidewater Community College Downtown Employers, Civic Leagues and Resident Councils, Norfolk Redevelopment & Housing Authority

ALWAYS ACTIVE

	CLEAN AND SAFE	MARKETING & EVENTS	LIFESTYLE AMENITIES
CORE VALUES	Friendly, Active	Active, Diverse, Friendly	Friendly, Active, Diverse
GOAL	Maintain a consistently clean and safe experience throughout the downtown core.	Strengthen downtown as a destination attraction for the Hampton Roads region through programming and special events that showcase downtown's unique experiences.	Strengthen the appeal of downtown as a neighborhood and workplace by enhancing lifestyle amenities in the public realm.
WHY IT'S IMPORTANT	A clean and safe environment is foundational to creating a desirable downtown where people want to live, work, visit and be entertained. The DNC, through the Downtown Improvement District and Ambassador program, has been critical to successfully stabilizing the downtown environment over the past 15 years. Effort must continue to ensure that downtown remains safe and clean.	Marketing downtown as a regional destination attraction will help strengthen its overall appeal and image, and complement efforts to position downtown as a choice location to live, work and be entertained.	Adding a greater diversity of activities and access points helps attract residents and employees by providing desirable recreation and healthy lifestyle options.
STRATEGIES: NEAR TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Continue to manage the highly visible and successful Ambassador program. B. Evaluate options, including fee-based, for expanding the popular FRED shuttle service to neighborhoods outside the boundaries of the DID. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Create and utilize an "events evaluation filter" for DNC to weigh the pros and cons of existing events and proposed new ones. Factors in the evaluation filter could include 1) revenue generation; 2) logistical feasibility; 3) compelling community benefit; 4) event characteristics & uniqueness; and 5) organizational capacity. B. Continue pop-up events and activities that add vibrancy to downtown. (i.e. Fun Spot, Random Acts of Kindness, Scavenger Hunts etc.) C. Support partner events that will have a positive ROI for downtown businesses and property owners. D. Update and broaden digital consumer marketing presence. E. Develop marketing material for property managers that demonstrates downtown's strengths and commitment to strategic investment that appeals to talent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Identify locations in downtown for pet relief areas and urban scale dog parks including any with safe water access for dogs. B. Identify additional locations for bike racks throughout downtown and partner with property owners to purchase and install them. C. Activate downtown greenspace with informal recreation and leisure opportunities such as kite flying, kickball, lawn chess, and similar. D. Continue to attract and retain local eateries at a variety of price points along Granby Street. E. Advocate to permanently repair or reroute the ERT so that it functions as a reliable recreation amenity. Add bike and walk distance and time markers using the ICW zero mile channel marker as a reference point.
STRATEGIES: NEXT FIVE YEARS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. Prepare for the renewal of the DID in 2019 ensuring that clean and safe services are continued. Evaluate options for boundary adjustments as downtown development and use patterns evolve. D. Commit to maintain priority public amenities identified in the plan as contributing to vibrancy on a case-by-case basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E. Continue to do consumer surveys to measure progress every three years. F. Promote Downtown Norfolk to a range of audiences including residents, talent, and visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Explore small boat and short-term boat access facilities at multiple locations along the Norfolk waterfront such as The Hague, Wisconsin Square, Town Point/ Waterside, and by Harbor Park. G. Develop a boating guide for Norfolk indicating the key access points and facilities of interest to local and visiting boaters. H. Partner with the City to add one or more children's playscapes to downtown including but not limited to locations on the waterfront. I. Attract additional child care facilities in downtown to serve residents. J. Advocate for partners' efforts to add additional quality school options to downtown that can help attract and retain resident families.
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS	Clean and safe is foundational to downtown's success and attracting jobs, residents and new investment. A clean and safe downtown is key to creating a desirable walking and biking environment that values "pedestrians first".	Events support placemaking initiatives by activating spaces and providing reasons for workers and residents to gather. Marketing that showcases what is new and exciting can help bring more visitors with greater frequency. Creating a buzz enhances downtown's appeal to talent and residents.	Lifestyle amenities can enhance placemaking efforts by activating sites. Amenities can help to attract skilled talent and fill jobs and office space.
PARTNERS	DNC, City of Norfolk, DID property and business owners	Virginia Arts Festival, Festevents, City of Norfolk	City of Norfolk, Festevents, Waterfront Attractions & Property Owners



IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the action steps in the section above will take dedicated effort and resources. This section of the strategic plan looks at how the DNC can align its resources and efforts to achieve the action steps.

SOURCES OF FUNDING

A variety of funding sources have been identified to advance the initiatives outlined in the Action Plan. Funding sources are divided into two primary bundles – funding that can be driven and/or initiated by the Downtown Norfolk Council and/or the Downtown Improvement District, and funding that will require resources and commitments from partners.

DNC/DID Funding Options

- *Downtown Improvement District "Capital Boost"*: The DID is currently funded by an assessment of 16 cents per \$100 of value on properties located within the boundaries of the DID. Prior to 2009, the assessment rate was 18 cents. The current 16 cent rate, which was reauthorized for five years in 2014, includes 15 cents for DID services such as clean and safe ambassadors, and marketing initiatives, plus one cent for public art. The public art fund, which also includes policy direction from the Mayor, raises about \$100,000 per year and is currently being held in a reserve fund to help fund the Granby lighting project.

Moving forward, we recommend that Downtown Norfolk stakeholders consider adding two cents to the existing DID assessment, bringing the rate to the pre-recession 18 cent assessment. The additional two cents would be matched with the existing one cent set-aside to create a three cent "capital boost" for improvements identified in the Action Plan. If authorized for a longer term (i.e. ten-plus years) part of the three cents could be bonded to help jumpstart a high priority project such as the Granby lighting project, and the remaining "capital boost" funding could be considered for a variety of improvements ranging from dog parks to wayfinding to pedestrian crossing enhancements.

- *Create a DNC Action Plan "Chairman's Fund"*: The Action Plan includes a variety of capital projects that might be particularly attractive for individuals and companies to sponsor specific improvements within the downtown. To help raise funds for these project specific opportunities, the creation of a DNC "Chairman's Fund" is recommended, utilizing the 501(c)3 non-profit status of the DNC.
- *Increase DNC Members and Membership Dues*: For non-capital programming and events, the DNC should consider broadening and perhaps deepening its existing membership dues base. Dues have not been adjusted in the past ten years and could benefit from the increased energy and momentum focused within the downtown. In addition to operational support to implement the Action Plan, membership revenue could be used for a variety of "community-building" activities that are suggested, including a new "start-up week" for entrepreneurs or to help support community-scaled special events aimed for residents from all of the adjacent neighborhoods. Suggested dues adjustments are provided below:



PROPOSED DUES ADJUSTMENT		
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY	EXISTING DUES	PROPOSED ADJUSTMENT
BUSINESS/COMMERCIAL	\$ 220 per year + \$5 per employee over 5	\$ 275 per year + \$5 per employee over 5
NON-PROFIT	\$ 150 per year	\$ 175 per year
INDIVIDUAL/RESIDENT	\$ 50 per year	\$ 75 per year

In addition to membership dues, periodic appeals (including end-of-year) will be made to members for optional contributions to the “Chairman’s Fund” that will be established to support capital improvements and amenities recommended in the Action Plan. Chairman’s Fund contributions can be made to the DNC’s 501(c)3 affiliate providing tax benefits for donors. There will also be opportunities for members to sponsor specific improvements or amenities.

Partner Funding Options

- *City of Norfolk:* The City currently has several funding sources that could be channeled and/or leveraged to help advance Action Plan priorities. These funds include the City’s Complete Streets initiative, funds earmarked to enhance downtown streetscapes and implementation of the citywide Bicycle Master Plan.
- *Crowd-Sourcing:* Crowd-sourcing platforms, where funds are secured through localized online appeals, could provide resources for low-cost capital and programming ideas that benefit downtown residents and workers. Recent examples include crowd-sourcing to create a new downtown dog park in Cleveland, or crowd-sourcing to secure funding for dedicated bicycle lanes in downtown Denver. In each case, downtown residents and businesses matched funds that were put forth by the DIDs.
- *Foundation/Corporate Grants and Sponsorships:* Many of the Action Plan capital and programming recommendations may be appropriate for securing foundation or corporate grants and sponsorships. Social equity initiatives such as 24-hour child care, workforce training or linkages to eds and meds may be particularly attractive to local foundations. Other improvements, including a bike share program or active amenities in parks may be well matched for foundation or corporate sponsorships. Special events will remain a top opportunity for sponsorship.

SUMMARY TABLE OF FUNDING BY STRATEGY TYPE

Within the Action areas, some implementation strategies focus on the provision of services (such as Clean & Safe), others on capital improvements (such as Lifestyle Amenities), while some action areas mix both strategy types. The below table summarizes potential sources of funding for different types of strategies indicated in the action plan. Partner sources noted indicate possibilities only, and does not imply any commitment by those agencies.



POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES BY STRATEGY TYPE		
STRATEGY TYPE	DNC/DID	PARTNERS
CLEAN & SAFE SERVICES (E.g., ambassadors, FRED, sidewalk/ landscaping maintenance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue existing City Public Safety services
PROMOTION SERVICES (E.g., downtown guides, Holidays in the City, First Fridays, park & plaza activation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding: staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsorships
BUSINESS & RESIDENT SERVICES (E.g., Vibrant Spaces initiative, business concierge, resident services attraction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding: plan implementation and staffing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private donors/sponsors • Property owners
ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP SERVICES (E.g., Innovation Corridor support, 24-hour child care task force, wayfinding design plan, Eds & Meds coalition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding: plan implementation and staffing • DNC membership dues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Norfolk Corporation • Hospitality & retail employers • Visit Norfolk • Institutional partners
PLACEMAKING IMPROVEMENTS (E.g., Granby lighting, seawall signs, connector street activation, park activation, bike racks, boat launch, bike share)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding: plan implementation • DID assessment boost • DNC Chairman’s Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-cent DID assessment at City • City streetscape and bike plan implementation funding • Private property owners
CONNECTIONS IMPROVEMENTS (E.g., traffic calming, pedestrian crossings, gateways, streetscape improvements)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding: plan implementation • DID assessment boost • DNC Chairman’s Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City streetscape and bike plan implementation funding • VDOT grant funding • Private developers
LIFESTYLE IMPROVEMENTS (E.g., outdoor seating, pet parks, boat launch, play scape)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DID services funding: plan implementation and staffing • DID assessment boost • DNC Chairman’s Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowd-sourcing • Neighborhood Civic Leagues • Property managers & owners

DNC COMMITTEES

The Action Plan allows for the reconfiguration of DNC committees to match up with the proposed new activity centers. A suggested new committee structure follows in table format on the next page.



PROPOSED DNC COMMITTEE STRUCTURE		
EXISTING	SUGGESTED	IMPLICATIONS
Street Level Vibrancy	INNOVATION HUB	Street Level Vibrancy will continue to lead this new initiative, but eventually can become the core group for a broader "Innovation Hub" committee that would work in tandem with Greater Norfolk Corporation.
Complete Streets	PEDESTRIANS FIRST	The work of the existing Complete Streets committee is consistent with the proposed Pedestrians First activity center.
Restaurant Coalition Property Manager Coalition	ALWAYS ACTIVE	The two special interest coalitions provide the basis for a new Always Active committee. Restaurants and property managers can continue to be updated periodically as needed.
Arts District	ARTS DISTRICT	This group remains focused on concerns specific to the Arts District.
DNC Executive, Finance & Nominating Committees	DNC EXECUTIVE, FINANCE & NOMINATING COMMITTEES	Core by-laws committees of the DNC do not change.

DID RENEWAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Downtown Improvement District (DID), a special assessment district that provides significant funding to DNC initiatives, was renewed for a new five year term in 2014. The following adjustments should be considered when planning for the next cycle of DID renewal:

- DID Rate Structure:** Consider a rate structure that differentiates between services and capital improvements. The Downtown Norfolk Strategic Action Plan recommends that the DID assessment be increased back to the pre-recession rate of 18 cents per \$100 of value (currently the rate is 16 cents per \$100 of value). 15 cents of the rate should be allocated to continue DID services, and the additional one to three cents should be considered for a "capital boost" that could help finance physical improvements and amenities identified in the Action Plan. The DNC should explore instituting the "capital boost" before the next renewal, plus consider a longer term (more than 10 years) that could allow for bonding and/or borrowing funds upfront. Project priorities for the capital boost should be evaluated annually, with a more thorough reevaluation conducted every five years.
- Boundary Adjustments:** Norfolk's central business district provides a compact and definable boundary for the DID. There are limited opportunities for expanding the DID that should be evaluated during the next renewal, including:

 - ✓ Include both sides of Boush Street from College Place south to City Hall Avenue.
 - ✓ Consider expansion along the Granby corridor to the north, including the Harrison Opera House and the downtown gateway at Virginia Beach Boulevard. A suggested expansion study area is



bounded by 11th and 9th Streets to the north, Monticello to the east, Llewellyn to the west and Virginia Beach Boulevard to the south.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Two complimentary approaches are suggested to measure progress in achieving the goals and strategies of the market-based Downtown Action Plan: quarterly implementation reports, and an annual key indicators assessment.

Quarterly Reports

Progress to implement the Downtown Norfolk Strategic Action Plan will be overseen by the DNC Board of Directors. To track progress in implementing the action steps of the plan, a quarterly progress report will be prepared by DNC staff and presented to the board indicating what activities have been taken within each of the 3 activity areas.

Annual Key Indicator Tracking

The activity centers and action steps have been identified to move Downtown Norfolk forward toward the community's larger vision and values for Downtown as described by the Core Values of the plan. In order to connect the specific activities to the larger vision, DNC can track measureable indicators that offer information about how closely downtown resembles the desired core values of Vibrant, Entrepreneurial, Friendly, Active, and Diverse. Suggested key indicators that can measure progress toward these values could include the following:

KEY INDICATORS BY CORE VALUE	
VIBRANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office and street level vacancy rates • Number of outdoor seats • Number of dining establishments
ENTREPRENEURIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of jobs • Number of residents employed in downtown • Number of new businesses
FRIENDLY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of downtown residents • Number of FRED transports • Count of pedestrians on Granby at 9:30 PM on weekday/weekend
ACTIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual attendees at Downtown events & attractions • Count of users per park at 3:00 PM on weekday/weekend
DIVERSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs diversity by industry and skill level • Racial mix of Granby pedestrian and park user counts • Median home price by downtown area neighborhood (East, West, North, Core)





APPENDICES

- Downtown Market Assessment
- Physical Framework Plan
- Opportunity Sites Best Practices
- Focus group results
- Online survey results

