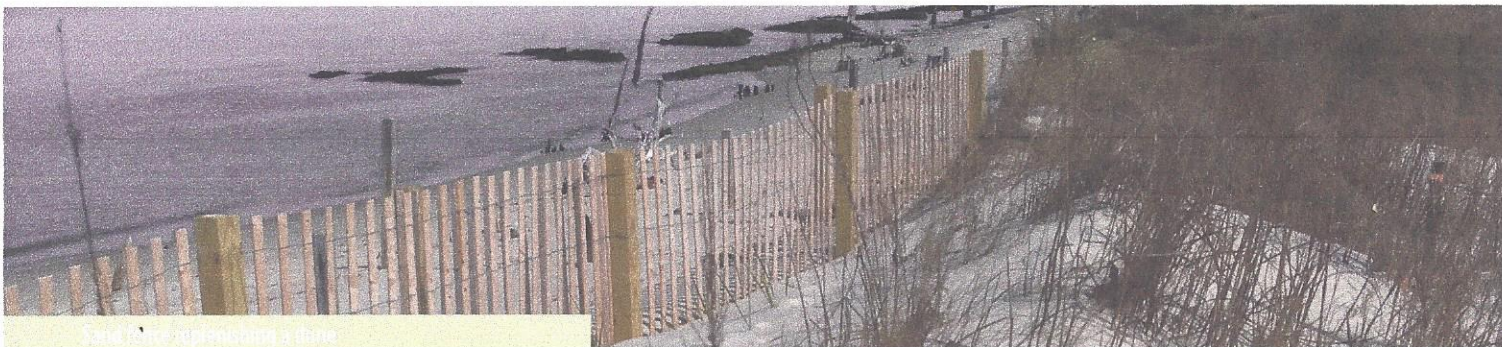




This is Your Northampton County

Your Northampton County Today

Achieving Northampton County's vision for 2040 requires understanding the successes and deficiencies of today. What is it getting right? Where is it falling short? By understanding the challenges and opportunities facing the community, Northampton County can decide what works and what it can do better. The Comprehensive Plan process allows the community to assess shortcomings and to identify strategies to address any critical gaps. The following summarizes the key challenges and opportunities faced in making the Northampton County of today Your Northampton County 2040.



Unparalleled Natural Resources

Northampton County contains unparalleled natural resources. As one of the last remaining stretches of undeveloped coastline on the East Coast, Northampton County's waterways, beaches, and wetlands provide critically important habitat for wildlife and migratory birds. Nearly 80 of Virginia's 883 Species of Greatest Conservation Need are found in the region, with nearly 70 of those species dependent on the habitat found here. The County's isolated geographic location makes the area an important and widely used stopover for birds during the annual fall and spring migrations. With globally significant habitat located at our back door, Northampton County has an imperative responsibility to protect and manage growth such that it does not negatively impact these resources. Conservation activities and land protection efforts have been a priority in the County. About 60 square miles in the County are owned and managed as conservation lands by federal, state, and nonprofit entities. An additional 20 square miles of private land are held as conservation easements.

The protection of land includes the protection of the traditional working landscapes and waterfronts of the County. The lands and waters of the County not only include important resources and habitat but also support the vibrant agriculture and seafood industry of the region. Collectively, wetlands and croplands make up two-thirds of the County's total land area, providing significant environmental and economic value to the County. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting is one of the largest industry sectors in the County, making up 18.9% of all jobs and surpassing national averages. In 2017, aquaculture commodity sales in Northampton County topped \$28 million. This makes Northampton County not only the leader in aquaculture sales in Virginia, but also along the entire East Coast. As a vital player in the local economy, agriculture and aquaculture resources must be responsibly managed and protected such that they continue to contribute to the economic resiliency of the region.



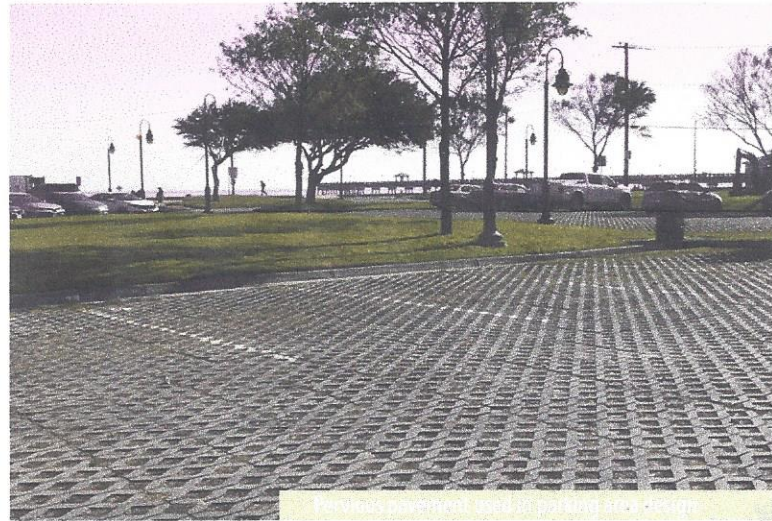
Land Use & Sustainable Development

Each land use in Northampton County has benefits and impacts that must be balanced to ensure a sustainable future. Commercial agriculture, though an important part of Northampton County's economy, can cause negative impacts to water quality due to fertilizers and pesticides, and improper land management practices. Likewise, urbanization causes increased stormwater runoff, groundwater withdrawal, and greenhouse gas emissions, among other issues. Sustainable land use and development practices help mitigate unintended environmental impacts and protect against habitat disruption, resource strain (including freshwater and energy consumption), and greenhouse gas emissions. Also, of critical importance is the need to concentrate development and community facilities and resources away from sensitive ecological areas, floodplains, and areas susceptible to sea level rise – a topic discussed in detail in the Land Use Chapter of this plan.



Strategies to Implement Sustainable Development & Operations Standards

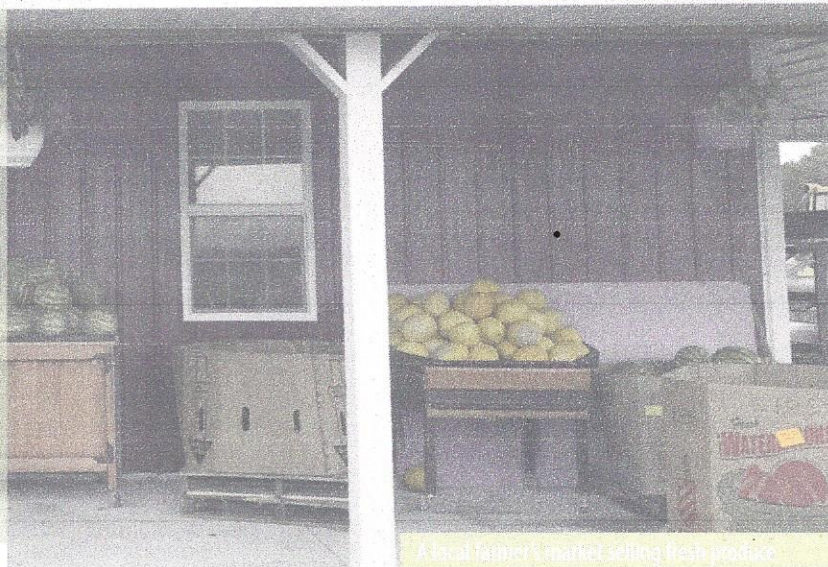
30. Promote sustainable agricultural practices, such as organic and regenerative organic agriculture, integrated pest management, reduced or no-till practices, and vegetated buffers.
31. Explore changes to zoning and development provisions to reduce parking requirements and encourage permeable paving and other materials that promote infiltration of stormwater.
32. Revise landscaping regulations to encourage the placement of shade trees in parking lots and use of native plants in all commercial and institutional landscaping.
33. Encourage the use of energy-efficient lighting and continue to support outdoor lighting standards that reduce the impacts of over-lighting, glare, and light pollution.
34. Continue partnerships to advance environmental sustainability and resilience practices, including the Northampton County Wetlands Board, the Eastern Shore of Virginia Ground Water Committee, and the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District.
35. Coordinate development review with the County Planning and Building Departments, State Water Control Board, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and state resource agencies when applicable.



6

Sustainable Economy

Northampton County will strive to be an economically thriving, business-friendly community that offers innovative jobs and businesses that are unique to the Shore and enhance the County as a place to live, work and visit.



Local farmer's market selling fresh produce

Historically, Northampton County developed as a self-sufficient seafood agriculture community with shipping, rail, and even a hospital on the peninsula which all provided an economic boost that sustained Northampton County for many years. Today, seafood and agriculture remain vital economic drivers, while new industries, such as tourism, recreation, and ecological research have grown significantly in the past few years. Also, with the Broadband Authority established in the last 10 years and the increasing infrastructure being created, telecommuting and home-based businesses are starting to flourish.

A strong workforce is vital to operate and grow county businesses. Employee development, attraction, and retention has a direct impact on the future economic health of Northampton County's local government, schools, infrastructure, housing, and public safety. Economic development should be viewed as synergistic and supportive of other comprehensive plan chapters.