

Summary Memo

Results, February-March Community Engagement

Prepared April 24, 2024

This document summarizes the preliminary results of the fourth round of public engagement for Suffolk 2045 that was conducted from late February through early April 2024.

The memo includes the following components:

1. Purpose
2. Approach
3. Results

1. Purpose

The first round of engagement for Suffolk 2045 was held in Summer and Fall 2022 and was designed to solicit big picture ideas from the public in an open-ended way. Based upon input gathered during that period, a number of topics emerged that the planning team believed warranted special attention in the plan. These ideas were explored further through a second round of engagement that was conducted in Winter 2023, which was based around set of critical questions to “dig deeper.” Drawing from the responses to these questions, and the technical analysis that has been conducted, the planning team developed preliminary ideas for the plan update.

The third round of engagement tested these ideas and the potential direction for the plan, which created the basis for the draft plan. The fourth round of engagement revealed the full draft plan to the public and was designed to gather feedback on the Future Land Use and Growth Areas map, as well as the plan’s draft objectives and actions. The results will inform updates that are made to the plan before it is finalized for adoption.



2. Approach

Input was gathered in the following ways:

Online Engagement

Online engagement opened on February 22 when the full draft plan was posted online on the project website. A survey was also posted at this time that gave participants the opportunity to share their feedback on the Draft Future Land Use and Growth Areas Map, as well as the draft actions and objectives. The map allowed parcel-level review of the draft future land use designations, so that people could provide comments on very specific areas as they saw fit. The actions and objectives were listed with an opportunity to express support or concern, and to provide comments. Community members were invited to provide their responses through April 8.

In-Person Events

Three broadly-promoted in-person open houses were held on three different dates at different locations throughout the City.

- March 13, 4:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M., Hilton Garden Inn
- March 14, 4:00 P.M. – 7:00 P.M., Hub 757
- March 16, 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M., City Hall



Each open house was conducted over several hours and designed to maximize convenience as a “drop-in” event so that people could come and participate at their own pace, viewing display boards and maps with key information and commenting using worksheets, post-its, and comment cards. The open houses also utilized computers to allow participants to view the online version of the map, zoom in on details, and get assistance and support from if needed. The open houses

also provided an important opportunity for direct communication with the planning team and City staff.

Paper Survey

Paper surveys with the same information and questions were also made available in the lobby of City Hall or upon request to anyone who could not attend an in-person open house or participate online. Surveys were also provided to several community groups for distribution to their members.

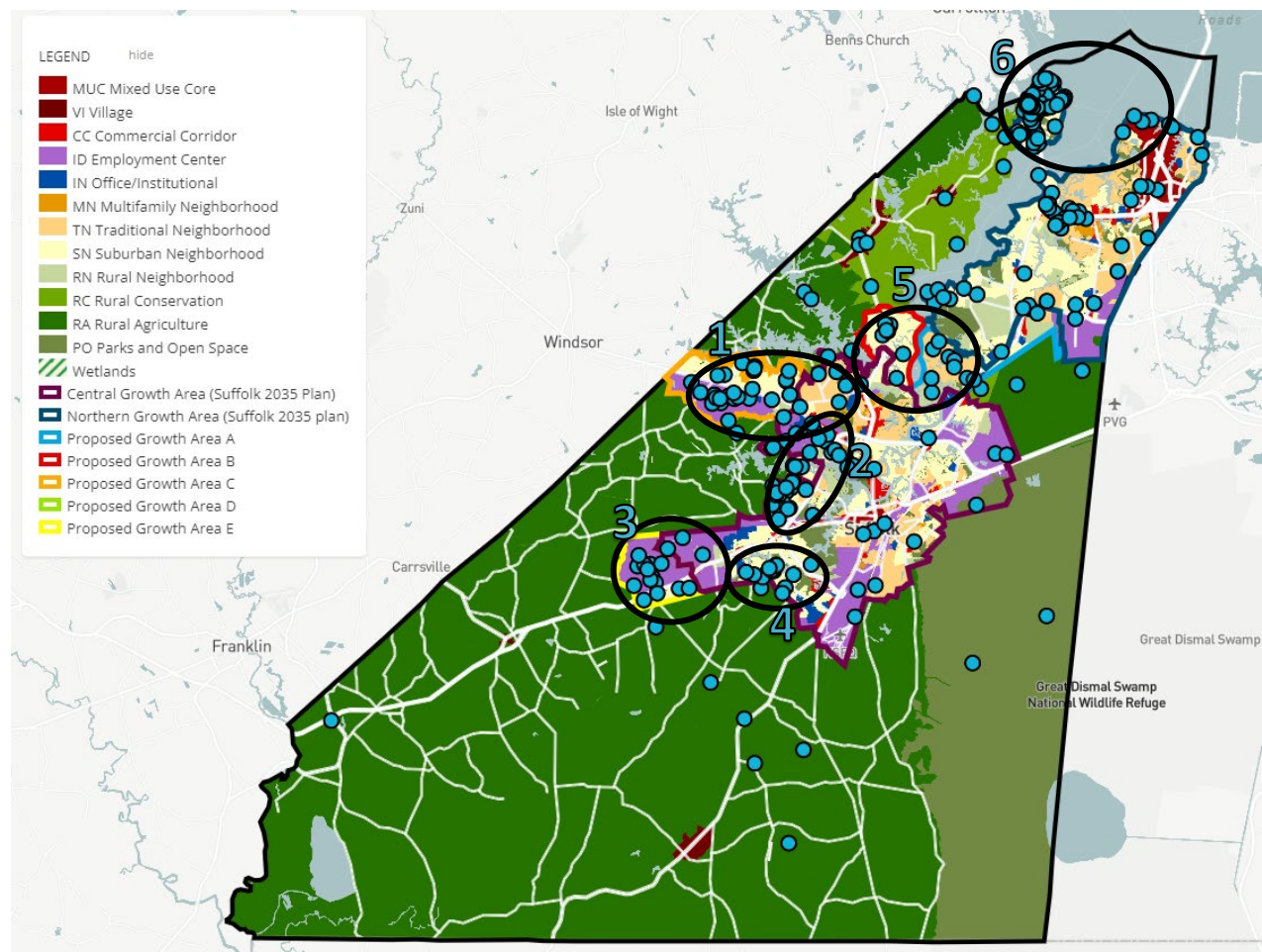
3. Results

Approximately 200 individuals attended the in-person open houses, and over 1,000 comments were collected during the course of the engagement. Responses are summarized below.

1. Future Land Use and Growth Areas Map

Participants online and at the open houses were asked to place dots in locations of their choosing on the map showing proposed future land use as well as existing growth area boundaries from Suffolk 2035 and proposed new growth areas (labeled A-E). They were able to provide comments in association with their dots. Combined dots from the online engagement and open houses are shown below, followed by key takeaways from the comments.

Draft Future Land Use and Growth Areas (blue dots represent a comment)



The highest concentrations of comments were located in five areas as presented above. Key themes from each area are shown below.

1. Proposed Growth Area C

- Support for economic expansion and investment, including concentrating industrial/manufacturing development along Route 460 as a major and convenient route for transportation/distribution with easy access to the Port of Virginia
- Concern about farmland preservation, especially the Lake Point Farm
- Concern about road safety and creating inviting gateways to the City

2. Existing Western Portion of the Central Growth Area (from Suffolk 2035) and proposed Growth Area D

- Support for higher densities close to the bypass to help prevent sprawl
- Concern about farmland preservation
- Concern about protecting waterways
- Concern about infrastructure (roadway) capacity for denser development, especially along Lake Cohoon Rd.

3. Proposed Growth Area E

- Support for the economic opportunity extending the industrial base would create
- Support for taking advantage of the Commonwealth's investment in dredging, port terminals, and transportation infrastructure
- Concern about farmland and rural preservations
- Concern about the amount of industrial land that is being recommended



4. Existing Southern Portion of the Central Growth Area (from Suffolk 2035)
 - Concern about road safety
 - Concern about farmland preservation
 - Concern about protection of waterways, especially given the area's proximity to the reservoir
5. Proposed Growth Areas A and B
 - Concern about agricultural preservation
 - Concern about park and open space conservation, and wetlands not being able to support suburban character
 - Concern about suburban development along Godwin Blvd., and its effect on traffic
6. Existing Northwestern Portion of the Northern Growth Area (from Suffolk 2035)
 - Support for TCC expansion
 - Support for concentrating resources in Hobson Village, especially focusing on its historic preservation
 - Concern about Eclipse not designated as a Village character type on map
 - Concern about park access along waterfront
 - Concern about incompatibility between residential and other uses in some locations

Additional comments included shared via the map included infrastructure capacity concerns as growth expands, a desire for more parks and green spaces, and a desire to maintain the identity of the City.



2. Actions

Comments on the plan's 58 draft actions are summarized below.

Land Use and Growth Management

- Limiting rapid overdevelopment in the City
- Creating stricter regulations on new developers/increase in landowner incentives
- Preserving farmland
- Maintaining cohesive, low density neighborhoods

Economic Development

- Reinvesting in vacant lots, especially in East Suffolk
- Exploring agritourism as an economic opportunity
- Diversifying the economic engine and limiting the number of new warehouses developed

Transportation

- Improving roadway infrastructure and capacity to mitigate traffic congestion
- Exploring active transportation options, including public transit, biking, walking, and rail
- Increasing accessibility services, especially for the older adults and people with disabilities

Municipal Facilities and Services

- Conducting a study on sustainable water and wastewater management
- Increasing parks and recreational opportunities, especially around waterways
- Refurbishing the libraries

Housing

- Increasing the amount of affordable housing
- Maintaining the character of the neighborhoods, especially by limiting cluster developments and apartment complexes

Natural and Cultural Resources

- Protecting waterways and water-related resources
- Utilizing existing resources to create more recreation/entertainment opportunities