



Executive Summary

The Design Guidelines Manual has been created to guide future development and redevelopment in Chesapeake, in accordance with the City’s 2026 Comprehensive Plan. The manual provides guidance on site planning, streetscape design, architecture, and landscape design associated with mixed-use development, infill development, and gateway design in the City of Chesapeake’s Urban and Suburban, overlay districts. A chapter on the Rural Overlay District is included to protect the character of the City’s rural areas.

The manual contains information for land owners, developers, architects, landscape architects, engineers, and

city staff builders on the physical forms that should contribute to making the City a vibrant and desirable place to live, work, and play consistent with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The manual provides a design framework and communicates the “ground rules” to facilitate discussions with the City about proposed development plans, provides a check list on conformance with the design guidelines during the plan review process, and is a road map to the plan approvals process.

Issues addressed in the manual include land use and building density, neighborhood framework design (grid or curvilinear), site planning (build to lines,

building siting, and parking accommodation), streetscape and open space design (landscape, street furniture, and public art), architecture (building height and massing, materials, facade design, and rooflines), and the location and design of signage and lighting.

The manual provides guidelines that are specific to mixed-use development, infill development, and the design of gateways.

A mixed-use development is a single unified development that incorporates two or more different uses within walking distance of one another and may include a variety of housing types.

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There are generally two types of mixed-use development: vertical mixed-use, the provision of multiple uses within a building, and horizontal mixed-use, the arrangement of multiple uses on a site in a complex of related buildings. Connectivity among uses should be achieved with an open space system of streetscapes and parks. As pedestrian-oriented communities, mixed-use and infill developments are intended to reduce sprawl and automobile trips.

Mixed-use development may be regionally or locally focused. A regional mixed-use development is highly accessible from major highways and includes a mix of uses, such as retail,

restaurants, entertainment, and hotels, to create a destination that attracts users from a broad area. Regional mixed-use development may be co-located with special attractions, such as a waterfront promenade, a marina, an historic site, or other natural and cultural resources. Local mixed-use development provides a mix of services for the convenience of the users and residents of the development and adjacent neighborhoods.

Infill development should contribute to the revitalization of the existing community and neighborhood where such development is proposed. Existing infrastructure, including roads and utilities, proximity to a variety of existing

uses, and the desirability of being part of an established neighborhood are incentives for the construction of new buildings or the expansion of existing buildings within older neighborhoods. Infill development within the Urban Overlay District should meet the standards for urban planned unit development (PUD-U).

Gateways provide a unique sense of identity, transition, and anticipation. They should relate to the region's natural resources, scenic views, and local cultural heritage. Gateways identify entrance points to the city and key destinations as well as its neighborhoods. Several opportunities for gate-

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ways exist in the City of Chesapeake. Gateways may have a variety of configurations and scales. From regional to community to the neighborhood scale, gateways can be created through a variety of styles, including architectural, monumental, or landscape.

Mixed use and infill developments and gateways are especially well suited in relation to transportation corridors, accessible waterfronts, transportation facilities and multi-modal transit hubs, town centers, and areas designated for revitalization. Critical factors associated with mixed use and infill developments are land use and density, careful plan-

ning, phasing, the economic climate, and construction costs.

Mixed use and infill development and gateways can help to “reduce the negatives,” such as under-utilized or abandoned buildings, unsafe areas, and dilapidated streetscapes. They should create appealing built environments in which to live, work, and play.

These guidelines differ based on whether the development or redevelopment would occur in the City’s Urban, Suburban, or Rural Overlay District.

The Urban Overlay District, containing generally the City’s older urbanized area

north of the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, has been designated for development at higher densities. The historical development pattern has resulted in this district’s current mixture of stable, older neighborhoods, waterfront industrial areas, and aging commercial corridors.

The Suburban Overlay District, largely consisting of more recent development that includes single-family neighborhoods, shopping centers, and business parks, is primarily comprised of Western Branch, Deep Creek, Great Bridge, Edinburgh, and the Etheridge Manor area.

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The Rural Overlay District lies south of the city's urban service boundary and has been historically agricultural in nature. This district also contains the Northwest River, a major drinking water supply for the city, as well as U. S. Naval Air Landing Field (NALF) Fentress. The 2026 Comprehensive Plan envisions this district as an area of preserved farmland, natural areas, and small-scale rural communities and compatible employment uses. These guidelines address appropriate development within the rural overlay district.

Features essential to preservation of the rural character of the City of Chesapeake include distant views of

the countryside, topography, natural drainage patterns, country roads, open space including agricultural fields and pastures, fences and hedgerows, barns and other farm buildings. Preservation of agriculture as a continual economic activity is different from the retention of the visual character of agriculture.

The purpose of the Rural Overlay District is to preserve Chesapeake's rural character and to provide a regulatory mechanism through which development can occur with minimal environmental impact. Toward this goal, the City of Chesapeake encourages creative development techniques and flexibility not generally found in conventional subdivision ordinances.

The manual includes guidelines for incorporation of artwork in public space. The intention of public art is to provide visitors and residents of the city of Chesapeake with a visual landmark, large or small, that inspires a sense of identity, pride and creativity.

Like gateways, public art may have a variety of configurations and scales, although it should be sensitive to the human scale. Public art can be placed in a variety of places, on a variety of surfaces, and composed of a variety of materials. It should be consistent and coordinated with surrounding architectural features, street furniture, and events.