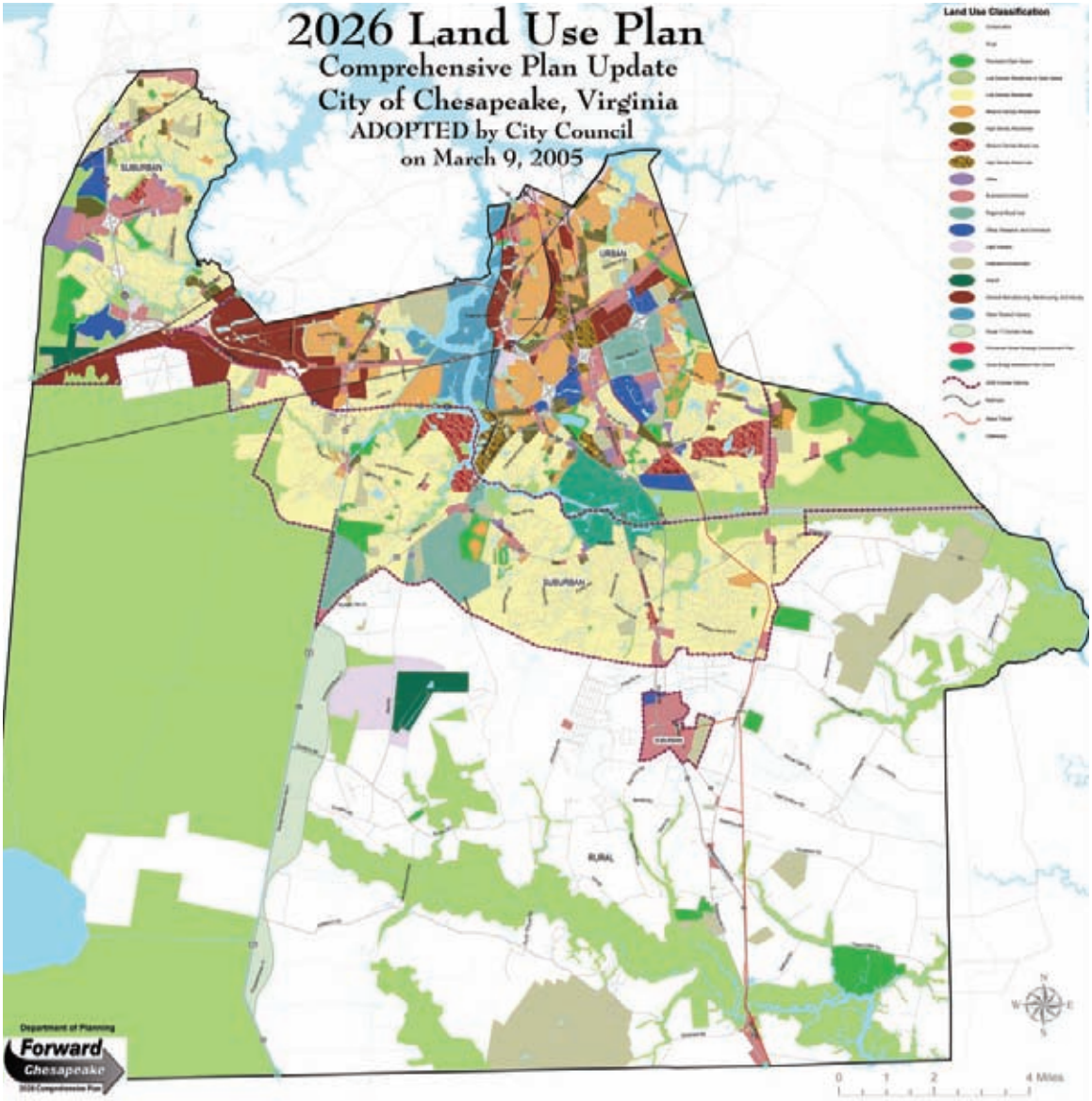

Overview

As identified in the 2026 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Chesapeake is a diverse and rapidly growing community. It is a city composed of villages, neighborhoods and districts that are often distinct and separate in their design character.

The City of Chesapeake was formed in 1963 through the consolidation of two distinct communities – the City of South Norfolk, and Norfolk County. South Norfolk, which originated as a suburb of Norfolk in the early 1800s and became an independent town in 1919, is urban in character. Norfolk County consisted of agricultural land and villages, and was mostly rural in character.

Since its establishment, the City has grown exponentially, with most of the increase occurring since the mid-1980s. Development has predominantly occurred in the northern and central areas of the city. Formerly rural areas were subdivided The predominant development pattern has been suburban in character, consisting primarily of single-family neighborhoods, shopping centers, and business parks divided by collector roads. The southern area of the City remains largely agricultural land and preserves of natural areas, with limited encroachment by suburban style development.

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan emphasizes that the built environment should enhance and create a cohesive look for the City. In recognition of the City's diverse development patterns, the Comprehensive Plan establishes three overlay districts – Urban, Suburban, and Rural. Given the unique characters of these districts, the Comprehensive Plan calls for the City to develop distinct design guidelines for each district.

This manual provides guidelines for mixed use and infill development within the Urban and Suburban Overlay Districts. For the Rural Overlay District, this manual provides guidelines for limited residential development, such as clusters. The manual also provides guidelines for the design of the City's gateways.