

Comprehensive Plan Community Meeting – Western Branch
Focus Area Notes + Exceptional Future Meaning
September 11, 2023

Infrastructure and Connectivity

- Bowers Hill interchange
- When will 64 Bowers Hill to Battlefield be finished. Do not start Bowers Hill under 64 is finished.
- Signage for Amazon truck exit off 664
- Revitalize worn down buildings to add industry to instead of residential neighborhoods
- Visible business district signs on 664
- Trails/paths to destinations/transit
- Useable/comfortable sidewalks – scale
- How will people access going to Norfolk from Bowers Hill area (13, 14)
- Manage water runoff from development
- Buy Elizabeth Harbor Drive and finish paving the road
- Is it possible to make Chesapeake’s portion of Military Highway smooth and flood free?
- Don’t add 1500 tractor trailers a day through Bowers Hill (figures are on Inlight Realty’s website)

Placemaking and Design

- Move businesses inside mall to outside buildings and build a field house
- Seek a higher education facility for the mall
- Sense of place – authentic vs. commercial cookie cutter (+1)
- Adding quality architecture
- Lay out the full details of Chesapeake square mall, keep area for shopping
- Western Branch is a hidden gem, so prioritize keeping the good + preservation of green space (instead of just expansion and money)
- Restore South Norfolk and give Chesapeake a Historic district that’s real nice
- Aside from City Hall (the Taj), what makes Chesapeake stand out in South Hampton Roads is our parks, beautiful rural areas, and waterfront industry. As we grow, green space and industry must coexist.

Economic Prosperity

- Taxes from small and big business go towards growth
- Real estate taxes need to be stable for at least 5 years (+2)
- Redevelopment – Chesapeake Square Mall
 - More stores, restaurants
 - Mixed use use of residential and commercial
- Developers need to assist in funding overcrowded schools!
- Prosperity equal to Greenbrier/Great Bridge
- Do not rely on the developers concerning the future financial prosperities. They develop, get their cut, and they are done while the City and its citizens are stuck with the impact financially (+4)

- See Chesapeake Conference Center (~\$2 million/yr in the red)
- In another city – the VA Beach sports center (in the red also)
- Chesapeake Square Mall should be planned methodically. If just more living space and people, could lead to more crime. Mixed use – park/shopping/pet park area
- Put a cap on how many commercial businesses can be in the city. This will help small businesses prosper.
- We need to attract manufacturing businesses so Chesapeake can be a supplier of tangible products goods vs. a warehouse and cross-dock for somebody else's products
- Along with higher education (TCC, etc.), we need a strong trade and technical education offering to develop workforce and attract industry.
- How will new business impact our property value?

Growth Management and Rural Areas

- How can we integrate these together? Find land with good traffic patterns
 - Good example: Amazing in Western Branch
- Can we expand Military Hwy using Bowers Hill?
- Western Branch growing too fast. Need more long range plan.
 - What to do about mall? (+2)
- Light industry/business is not wanted or feasible near Peek Trail
- Tax breaks for active farmers
- Consider agritourism
- Connect new development to old/existing
- Avoid industrial lots near homes
- Encourage responsible growth in rural Chesapeake to avoid leap frog development between rural Chesapeake and NC (i.e. expansion on clusters)
- Smart growth use already developed areas instead of rezoning agro lands (+2)
- Infill should NOT be in flood prone areas
- Industrial growth should be met by common sense.
- Industry and agriculture need to be far apart. Environmental concerns.
- Stop developing Chesapeake and focus on supporting small business and tourism.
- Appropriate infrastructure should be a prerequisite to any development approval
- To protect rural areas, City Council should set a high bar for any rezoning of agricultural areas.

Quality of Life

- Crime reduction – esp. current turf war between Jolliff Landing and Holly Cove
 - More crowded housing = higher crime
- More walking and bike trails (+3)
- Traffic with all new housing developments going up
- More educational institutions (+1 for higher education)
- Improved parks, trails, and open space
- Increase teacher pay
- Covered areas at bus stops (+1)

- Currently people are stealing shopping carts and them to use as seating & because there are no trash cans, people throw garbage on the ground.
- Have regular meetings with neighborhoods concerning crime in their area and how everyone working together can help in prevention.
- Safety. Maintain sight lines to balance landscaping with vehicle visibility over hedges and under trees (+1)
- Having an intermodal 24/7 transfer facility next to a residential community would interfere with our health, safety, and quality of life!!! Instead, please consider residential (high end homes) or what is commensurate with surrounding businesses.

Environment and Resilience

- Bringing back the recycling program (+2)
- Civil war fort at Goose Creek and Jolliff
 - What is plan... we hear park
- Easy/equal access to green space/wooded areas
 - WB has two stands of trees left intact. I would like to see these preserved for citizens to enjoy the green space
- Maintain/keep as much green space and/or natural areas as opposed to building houses and/or buildings everywhere (+2)
- The City needs to be protected. Coastal resilience is not just for waterfront homes. The water is going to keep rising.
- Stop placing industrial use next to agriculture
- Have parks have plants native to Virginia

Housing and Equity

- AirBnB – regulations on rental or outlaw them. Have encountered two bad situations in 10 months (+1)
 - +1 for ADUs
- Quality and connected communities
- Identify homes that already exist
- Don't build industrial next to residential
- Re-establish, fund, and support neighborhood watch programs and donate City cars to them so people don't have to use their own (+1)
- Instead of forcing trailer parks to close through draconian ordinance measures, find ways to beautify and support this portion of low income housing
- Be vigilant that gentrifying doesn't add to homelessness

What Does Creating an Exceptional Future Mean to You?

- Keep real estate taxes reasonable.
- Urbanizing
- More shopping
- Sidewalks
- Open spaces
- New schools
- Quality infill development
- More restaurants (variety)
- Property value
- Reuse mall
- Increase in home values.
- Care for the elderly
- Safe places to walk (Peake Trail to Gum Rd)
- Safe place to walk.
- Education infrastructure – don't overpopulate schools.
- Safety between communities
- Citizen input first (someone wrote Agree!! on the sticky)
- Keep natural resources.
- Supporting small business
- Small business development.
- Chesapeake field house
- Take out red light cameras.
- Equal Economic access
- Maintaining the integrity of sites where homes are versus encroachment of industrial areas
- Sidewalks that are connected and appropriately scaled; useable.
- Maintain green space.
- Access to trails (safe)
- Smart zoning – using developed land before developing new areas.
- Agro-tourism
- Roads repaired.
- Properly assessed value of green spaces
- Access to trails
- Expansion that is slower than creation of infrastructure
- Keeping property value
- Clean roads/green space
- Safe, fun places for children, teens
- Job opportunities
- Quiet, peaceful, clean neighborhoods
- Consider changes already done to the map.
- Preserving agricultural land
- Maintaining rural areas
- Changes to zoning should beget changes to Comprehensive Plan
- City Council shouldn't receive staff recommendation on Planning Committee recommendations.
- Western Branch Façade Grant
- Has a small town feel to it
- Improving quality of life
- Parking, streetscape
- Quality development
- Faliz Communities