

CHAPTER 12: FOSTERING RESPONSIBLE REGIONAL COOPERATION



Norfolk is located at the center of the Hampton Roads region of southeastern Virginia, which is home to approximately 1.7 million people, making it the largest metropolitan area between Washington, DC and Atlanta. As detailed in Map RC-1, the region covers over 2,600 square miles across ten cities and six counties, and is divided into two areas – the Peninsula and Southside – by the world’s largest natural harbor, located where the confluence of the Elizabeth, James and Nansemond Rivers flows into the Chesapeake Bay. Given this asset, much of the region’s history and wealth is linked to the sea with tourism, port operations and the military all continuing to be significant parts of the regional economy.

Vibrant metropolitan regions are expected to be key to growth and development in the future. The full array of amenities, resources, and facilities across an entire region will be compared to other metropolitan areas when attempting to attract or retain business investment. The quality of transportation facilities, cultural amenities, and educational and workforce development programs in a region, including university facilities and programs, are of particular importance in the evaluation of potential business locations.

MAP RC-1. HAMPTON ROADS REGION



Accordingly, continuing to work together as a region on these and other related issues will be more important than concentrating on internal boundaries when working to attract business investment, as well as the next generation of residents and workers. The idea that all benefit when one part of the region benefits needs to be advanced.

There are significant structural challenges in Virginia that must be overcome to further greater regional cooperation. Both the Dillon Rule, which limits the powers of local governments while also enforcing a heavy reliance on property taxes for local revenues, and the Independent City Statute, which removes a unifying governmental structure over multiple jurisdictions, have negatively impacted regional cooperation in the Commonwealth for decades. However, these hurdles are not insurmountable. The federally mandated regional transportation planning process in Hampton Roads has recently been strengthened to increase its effectiveness. Similar initiatives to improve other key areas related to regional competitiveness will need to be supported so that Hampton Roads can thrive in the global economy. Making regional cooperation proactive should ensure that it becomes an everyday practice rather than an issue that arises out of crisis.

Certain services and issues affecting all jurisdictions such as wastewater treatment and mass transit services can be more efficiently addressed on a region-wide basis. There are agencies providing many of these services that should be supported and strengthened. Other issues, such as affordable housing, may represent an opportunity to improve service effectiveness through a regional approach.



New challenges that have not previously been a major part of the regional dialogue, such as the impacts of sea level rise, are beginning to be identified. Hampton Roads will be tested to develop effective institutions to respond to these challenges as well.



The City of Norfolk should play a significant leadership role in addressing these regional issues.

KEY ISSUES

Based upon existing conditions and trends, the following are the key issues for Norfolk related to regional cooperation:

1. Improving economic competitiveness through the enhancement of regional amenities and services, especially related to education and transportation.
2. Ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services best addressed on a region-wide basis.
3. Supporting regional approaches to emerging issues which cross jurisdictional boundaries.

IMPORTANT LINKAGES

The goals, outcomes, and actions outlined in this chapter are linked to goals, outcomes, and actions found in the following chapters:

- Providing Transportation Options
- Enhancing Economic Vitality
- Promoting Environmental Sustainability
- Supporting Lifelong Learning
- Ensuring Housing Choices for All
- Delivering Quality Community Services
- Enjoying Daily Life

Regional Cooperation Goal 1. Enhance regional economic competitiveness.

Outcome RC1.1. A vibrant and growing metropolitan region with the capacity to compete successfully with similarly-sized regions in the eastern United States.

Metrics:

- *Percent change in employment compared to other regions.*
- *Change in Hampton Roads average household income compared to other regions.*

Action RC1.1.1. Support development of a regional economic development strategy to coordinate and guide business development efforts.

Action RC1.1.2. Improve marketing, both collectively and individually, of regional assets to attract new business and investment to the region.

Action RC1.1.3. Explore opportunities for collaborations across jurisdictional boundaries in order to reduce competition.

Comments: Effective programs could serve to reduce the duplication in the development and maintenance of arts/entertainment venues and meeting space facilities across Hampton Roads. Such opportunities may take the form of new revenue sharing agreements that may require Commonwealth of Virginia approval.

Action RC1.1.4. Support the development of an efficient, multi-modal transportation network, including high quality connections to other metropolitan regions, to support new business investment and activity.

Action RC1.1.5. Support educational institutions, programs, and other related workforce development efforts to help create and maintain a well trained and qualified workforce.

Action RC1.1.6. Continue to work with all jurisdictions in Hampton Roads to strengthen major regional assets, including the military, ports, medical institutions, colleges and universities, and tourist destinations.



Action RC1.1.7. Encourage Norfolk’s water supply surplus to be marketed and utilized as a major regional asset to attract development.

Action RC1.1.8. Partner with Norfolk’s General Assembly members to develop consensus positions to enhance regional competitiveness.

Regional Cooperation Goal 2. Ensure efficient regional service delivery.

Outcome RC2.1. Efficient coordination of regional services.

Action RC2.1.1. Support continued development of regional approaches to addressing new federal and State requirements for both wastewater and stormwater management.

Action RC2.1.2. Study and adopt a new regional waste management structure for post-2018, when existing arrangements are due to expire.

Action RC2.1.3. Encourage a coordinated approach to the development of affordable housing, involving all affected agencies.

Action RC2.1.4. Work with agencies throughout the region to develop and implement policies and programs addressing special needs populations.

Action RC2.1.5. Continue to work in partnership with various levels of government and public agencies to address homelessness on a regional basis.

Action RC2.1.6. Explore possible efficiencies to be gained by coordinating the purchase of municipal goods and services.

Action RC2.1.7. Continue to improve regional mitigation strategies, emergency preparedness, responsiveness, and evacuation planning.

Comments: The region has recently completed an update to the Southside Hampton Roads Hazard Mitigation Plan to address potential hazards on a regional basis.

Regional Cooperation Goal 3. Support a regional approach to emerging issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

Outcome RC3.1. More effective regional approaches to emerging issues of concern.

Metrics:

- *Percent change in regional air quality.*
- *Percent change in linear feet of unbuffered lower intensity residential land and more intensive land uses along Norfolk's borders.*

Action RC3.1.1. Coordinate land use planning at jurisdictional boundaries to reduce land use conflicts.

Action RC3.1.2. Support the development of a regional greenhouse gas emissions inventory and emission reduction targets.

Action RC3.1.3. Coordinate with regional partners and programs working on issues related to sea level rise.

Action RC3.1.4. Continue to explore regional approaches, including partnerships with universities and other organizations, to address new and emerging region-wide issues and topics.