



Presenter

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Building a Better Norfolk: Writing Resilience into Zoning

Norfolk, Virginia, is the focal point of the Hampton Roads region which includes over 1.5 million people and is the central city for an even larger service area including portions of Northeastern North Carolina and the Virginia Eastern Shore. Norfolk is the second-largest city in the Commonwealth of Virginia with a current population of nearly 250,000 and offers cultural, medical, educational, and economic resources found nowhere else in the region. Norfolk is a city of more than 120 neighborhoods; ranging from the urban grid of downtown, to suburban subdivisions built in the 1950's, to upscale water-oriented communities on the city's edge. Norfolk is the home of the world's largest naval base, the 3rd largest port on the east coast of the US and is the 2nd most at-risk population center from sea level rise. Norfolk is a member of the Rockefeller Foundation 100 Resilient Cities network and has been a leader in addressing resilience through planning. Norfolk's new zoning ordinance, Building a Better Norfolk, was unanimously adopted by City Council on January 23, 2018 and dramatically strengthens the City's commitment to vibrant neighborhoods, economic diversity, and coastal resilience. It is the most resilience-focused zoning ordinance in the USA.

The ordinance contains pioneering approaches to resilience in response to the long-term challenges posed by sea level rise, one of which requires all development within the City to meet a resilience quotient. The requirement is measured on a points system covering three separate resilience elements: risk reduction, stormwater management, and energy resilience. This innovative points system ensures that new development will be more resilient and environmentally-friendly while providing flexibility to builders by allowing them to choose which measures to include in the development. Additionally, new or expanding development must meet minimum requirements for first floor elevations 1.5 – 3 feet (or more) above ground level everywhere in the City, whether in the FEMA floodplain or not.

Norfolk's zoning ordinance creates policy through the lens of resilience. This ordinance helps shape our City now as well as prepare for future challenges, both natural and socio-economic. It addresses factors with an innovative approach, guaranteeing that development will be more resilient, while still providing builders options and flexibility to achieve this. The ordinance protects the unique character of Norfolk's

neighborhoods while still allowing freedom in design. Clearly defined procedures will increase the efficiency of the process. This resilience-focused zoning ordinance effectively positions Norfolk as the coastal community of the future.

The zoning ordinance is a direct implementation of Vision 2100, Norfolk's groundbreaking planning process and document addressing the challenges and opportunities of life at sea level in a rising water environment.

Norfolk's Planning Director, George M Homewood, FAICP CFM, will lead a presentation and follow-up discussion about both Vision 2100 and the new zoning ordinance.