

02 IDENTITY

Chapter 2 of PetersburgNEXT provides a data-driven foundation for the key issues and opportunities facing the City. Chapter 2 looks back at who we were, provides foundational information relevant to who we are today, and establishes the vision to help us reach who we aspire to be in our bright future.

“PETERSBURG PRIDE IS **ON THE RISE!**”

- *Community Survey Respondent*



02

WHO WE WERE

Originally known as Peter's Point, Petersburg was settled at the fall of the Appomattox River, a strategic location that lends the City a rich cultural, economic, and social history. When European settlers first arrived in the early 1600s, indigenous peoples in the area mounted fierce resistance before signing treaties that led to flourishing trade. The growth of the tobacco market in the early 1700s brought about the founding of Petersburg. Petersburg received its charter in 1748 and officially became a City in 1850.

Petersburg's free African-American population grew quickly after the Revolutionary War, with Pocahontas Island becoming one of the oldest free African-American settlements in the United States.

In the 1830s, Petersburg built its first railroads. The ability to connect both locally and regionally by rail led to the flourishing of agricultural and industrial uses, in turn leading to Petersburg's rise as Virginia's logistical and shipping center.

Petersburg was a significant location during the Civil War, with Petersburg National Battlefield remaining a nationally recognized and preserved site. In the spring of 1864, Union army General Ulysses S. Grant surrounded Petersburg for nearly ten months, which was the longest siege of an American city. After General Robert E. Lee and his Confederate forces abandoned Petersburg in April 1865, Lee surrendered, ending the Civil War.

By the early 20th century, the logistical and shipping center of Virginia had shifted north to Richmond. Petersburg then became the retail hub of Southside Virginia. Several new industries were established in Petersburg, including the Seward Luggage Company, which became one of the largest manufacturers of trunks and luggage in the country. Titmus Optical Company and Arnold Pen Company were also founded during the same era and contributed greatly to Petersburg's thriving economy at the turn of the 20th century. During this era, department stores, grocers, specialty



stores, and theatres lined Sycamore Street and adjoining streets in Old Towne and sprung up around the Halifax Street triangle, which was the center of a thriving African-American community. Petersburg's African-American history and significance during the American Civil Rights era is further explored in Chapter 5 of this Plan.

WHO WE ARE

Petersburg's history, geography, vibrant local businesses, and natural beauty are embraced today with renewed excitement. Petersburg continues as a transportation hub with immediate access to Interstates 85, 95, and 295, and U.S. Routes 1, 301, and 460, as well as an Amtrak station in nearby Ettrick and a CSX freight yard on its border with Dinwiddie County. This ease of access is one factor that has attracted the pharmaceutical industry as a promising addition to the City's economic base. The emerging logistics and distribution industries in adjacent localities, along with Fort Lee, a U.S. Army training installation, have also provided City residents with stable, well-paying job opportunities.

Petersburg's well-preserved historic buildings and historic districts evoke the

feeling of stepping back in time. This rich backdrop has not only been a draw for tourists from across the United States, but has garnered the attention of the entertainment industry, with internationally acclaimed television shows and films such as *Turn* and *Lincoln* filmed in the heart of Old Towne.

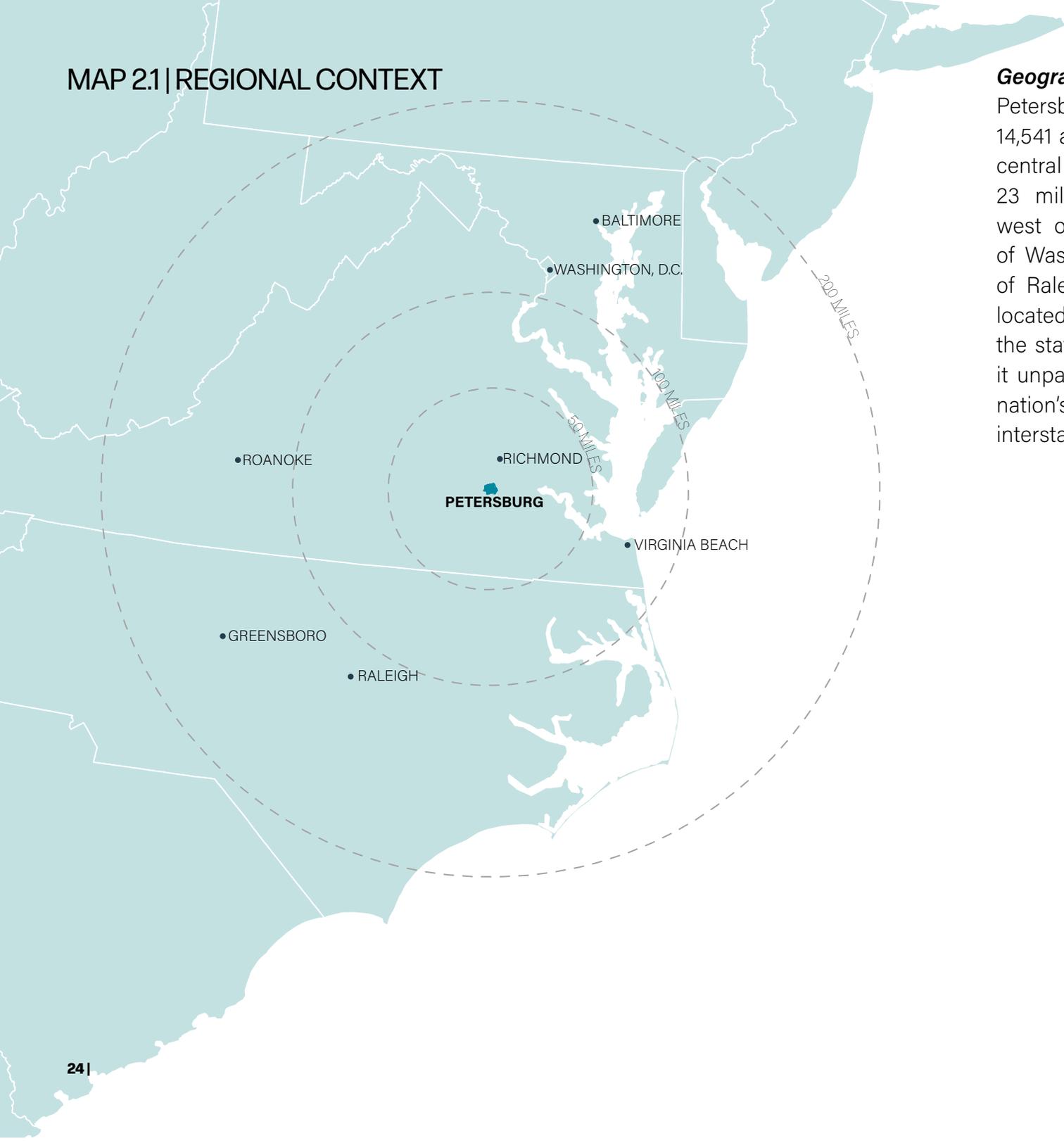
Eco-tourism and sports tourism are other emerging opportunities for Petersburg. The City has a considerable amount of green space, along with Petersburg Sports Complex, an outdoor recreational venue with various sports fields, ponds, and pavilions. The Appomattox River Trail, Fall Line Trail, and East Coast Greenway will also provide new opportunities to connect

Petersburg with the greater Richmond region and beyond.

To plan for the Petersburg of tomorrow, it is important to be knowledgeable about the Petersburg of today. Understanding the demographics of the City of Petersburg, how they have changed over time, and how they may continue to evolve in the future provides the City with the foundation required to establish effective and equitable policies and strategies to reach its long-term goals.



MAP 2.1 | REGIONAL CONTEXT



Geography and Location

Petersburg is 22.72 square miles – about 14,541 acres – in area and located in south central Virginia. The City is approximately 23 miles south of Richmond, 76 miles west of Virginia Beach, 130 miles south of Washington, D.C., and 148 miles north of Raleigh, North Carolina. Petersburg is located approximately halfway between the states of New York and Florida, giving it unparalleled access to a majority of the nation's population base through two major interstate highways and three U.S. routes.

Metropolitan Statistical Area

Petersburg is one of 17 jurisdictions that comprise the Richmond-Petersburg Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). As of 2020, the MSA population was 1,314,434. This reflects a 10% increase from the MSA's 2010 population of 1,188,246, which can reasonably be attributed to the region's relatively low cost of living, high number of job opportunities, and easily accessible location in the central part of the state.

MAP 2.2 | RICHMOND-PETERSBURG METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (MSA)

TOTAL POPULATION

CITY OF PETERSBURG

33,458

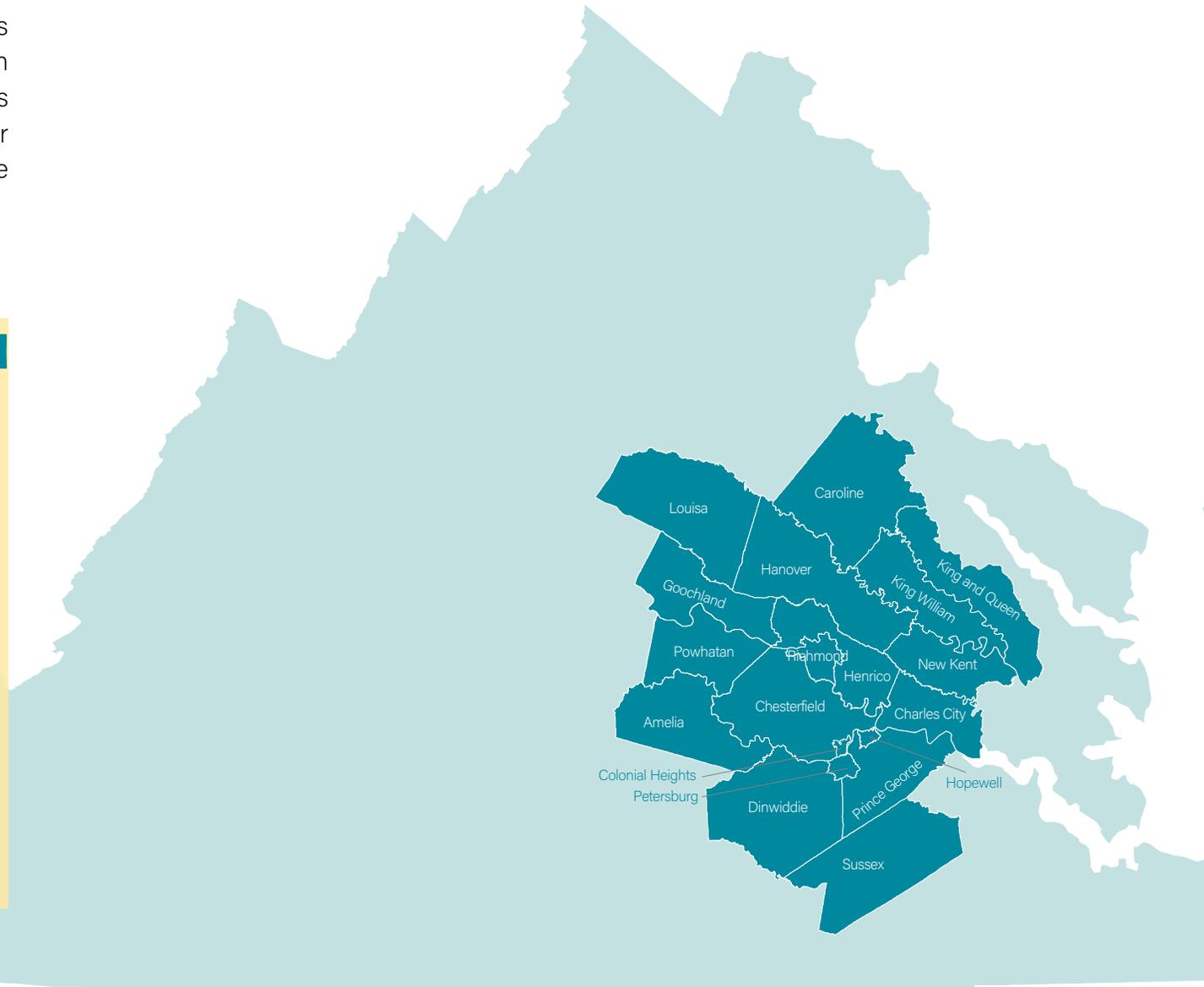
RICHMOND - PETERSBURG MSA

1,314,434

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

8,631,393

SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2020

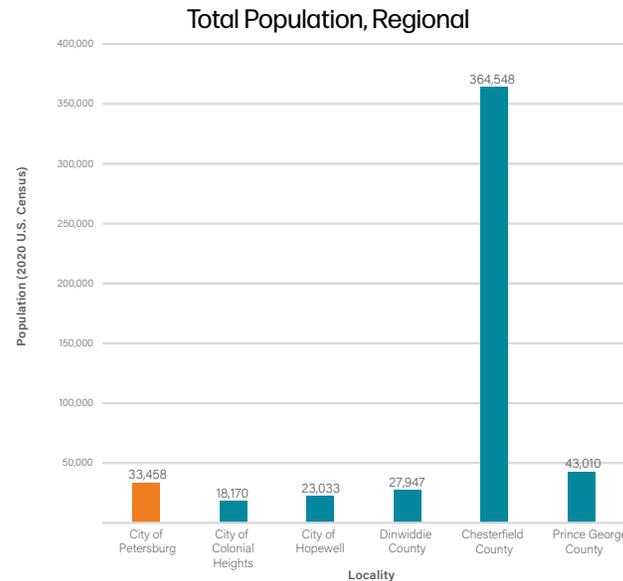


People and Population

Petersburg’s population as of the 2020 U.S. Census was 33,458. The City’s population has remained relatively stagnant since 2000, with a continuous slight decline since 1960. Petersburg is the largest city in the Tri-Cities region, and retains a larger population than most of its other neighbors, with the exception of Chesterfield County.

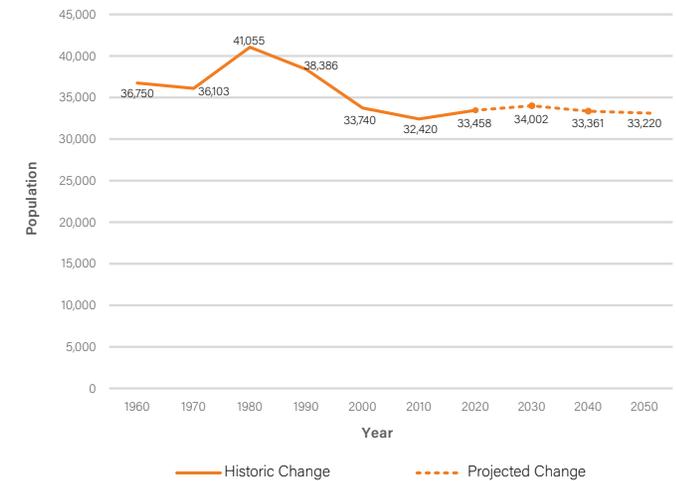
The City’s population is projected to increase slightly between 2020 and 2030, and then remain relatively stable through 2050. However, the City can be proactive with its land use policies and infrastructure planning to encourage new development, and that the level of service of water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure can support increased use. These policies, in turn, can spur future population growth and associated increases in revenue streams for the City.

in the greater Richmond area. Minimal migration occurred between the City of Petersburg and Virginia municipalities outside of this region, while even lower levels of migration occurred between Petersburg and places outside Virginia.



SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2020

Historic and Projected Population Growth in Petersburg



SOURCE: U.S. Census, 2020; Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

In-migration and out-migration are important to consider in understanding what may be contributing to population change over time. Between 2015 and 2019, Petersburg’s net migration was -1,523, indicating the out-migration has played a strong role in stagnating growth. Both in- and out-migration primarily occurred between Petersburg and municipalities

Top Origins (In-Migration)
1. City of Richmond
2. Prince George County
3. City of Colonial Heights
4. Chesterfield County
5. City of Portsmouth
6. City of Hopewell
7. Henrico County
8. Dinwiddie County
9. Clay County, FL
10. Prince William County

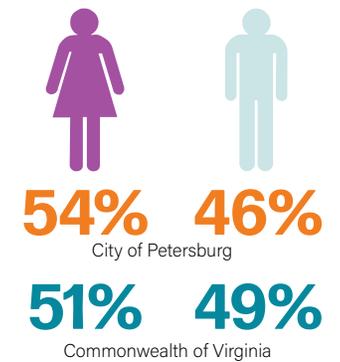
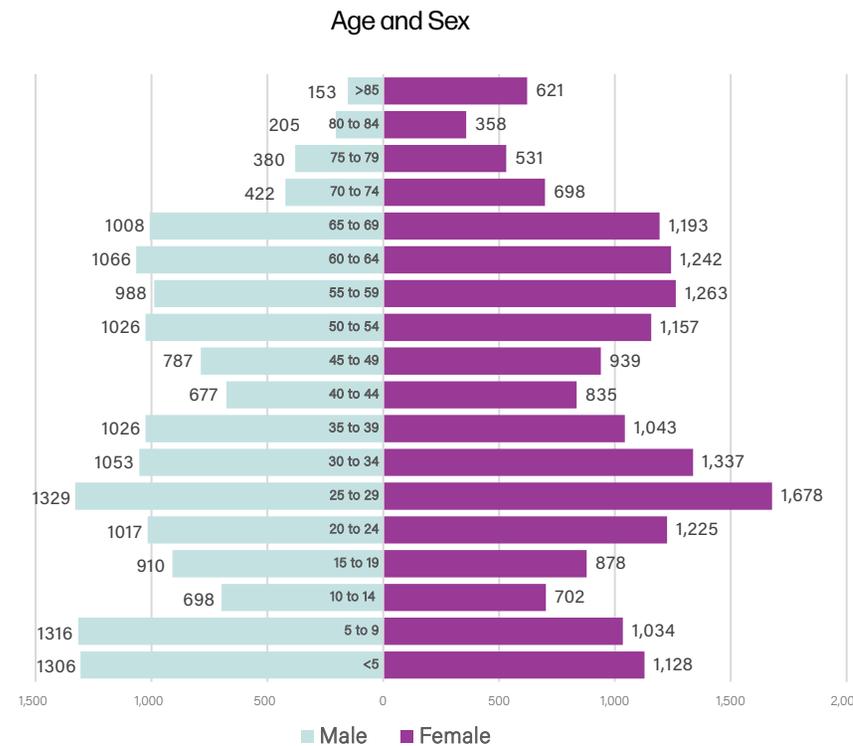
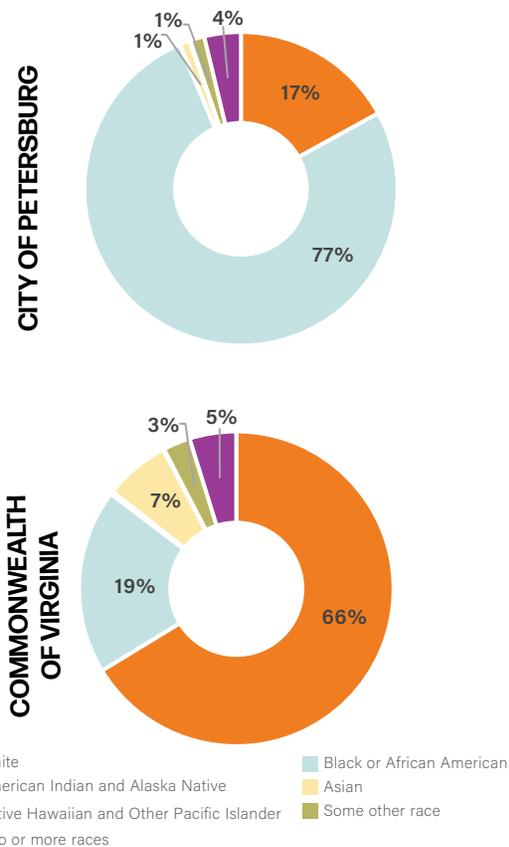
SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2015-2019

Top Destinations (Out-Migration)
1. City of Colonial Heights
2. Prince George County
3. City of Portsmouth
4. Chesterfield County
5. City of Richmond
6. Henrico County
7. Surry County
8. Augusta County
9. Escambia County, FL
10. City of Hopewell

To plan equitably, it is important that the City is mindful of who is in the community, and how this may change over the next twenty years. Petersburg is a racially diverse City. 76.6% of the City's residents identify as Black or African-American; 17.7% identify as white. Racial diversity has not significantly changed over time, and Petersburg has remained generally more diverse than its neighboring localities and Virginia overall.

Petersburg is generally a slightly younger locality than most of its neighbors and has a younger population than Virginia overall. The median age in Petersburg is 35.3. This has not changed significantly since 2000. The City's population as of 2020 reflects large concentrations of residents between the ages of 0 to 9, 25 to 39, and 60 to 69. Therefore, the ways in which Petersburg will seek to move forward in the future should

be intergenerational in nature, meaning that they should have positive benefits for a variety of ages and not solely a specific sub-group.



35.3

City of Petersburg
Median Age

38.4

Commonwealth of Virginia
Median Age

SOURCE (all infographics): 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Economy

Baseline economic metrics such as educational attainment, unemployment rate, poverty, and median household income are important in understanding the socioeconomic characteristics of the community. Educational attainment in Petersburg falls behind statewide educational attainment in regards to the percentage of adults over 18 who have higher education and college degrees.

The City of Petersburg has seen a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the country since at least 2008. Additionally, it appears that Petersburg's unemployment rate is more susceptible to rise during recessions than the nationwide unemployment rate. Overall, however, Petersburg's unemployment rate has been trending steadily downward since 2008, which serves as a bright indicator for the City's young population.

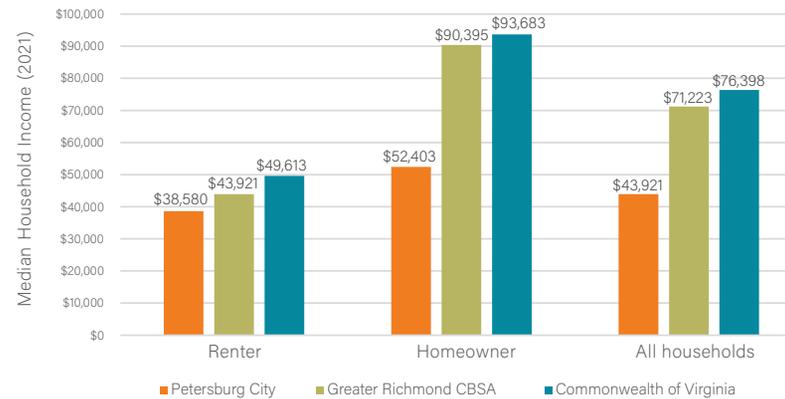
At \$43,029, Petersburg's median household income is significantly lower than the statewide average of \$76,398. The discrepancy increases when the data is isolated for homeownership households: \$52,403 for Petersburg, compared to \$93,683 for Virginia as a whole. The difference for median household income of renters is meaningful but less pronounced.

However, many positive economic developments in recent years signal a shift in what has been the norm over the last decade and a promising future for Petersburg's labor force. Chapter 3 of this Plan discusses economic development in greater detail.

Educational Attainment	City of Petersburg	Commonwealth of Virginia
Less than 9th grade	6%	3.5%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	9.1%	5.1%
High school graduate	34.2%	23.9%
Some college, no degree	21.1%	18%
Associate's degree	7.4%	7.7%
Bachelor's degree	13.7%	23.5%
Graduate or professional degree	8.3%	18.3%

SOURCE: 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Median Household Income Comparison



SOURCE: Virginia Housing Forward



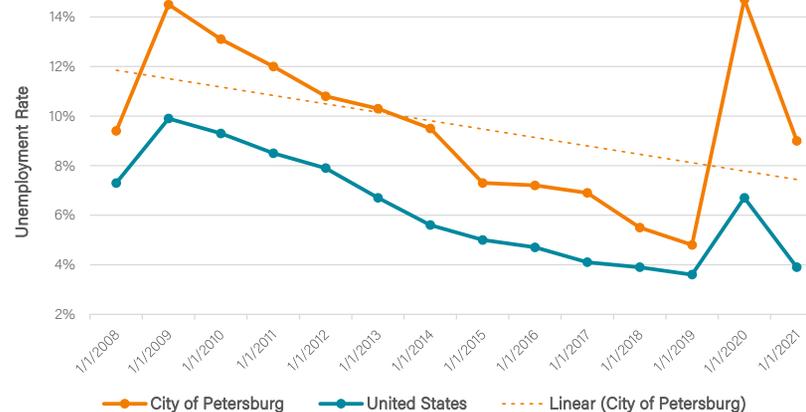
Top Employers

1. Bon Secours Health System
2. City of Petersburg
3. Petersburg City Public Schools



SOURCE: Virginia Employment Commission, Economic Information & Analytics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), 3rd Quarter (July, August, September) 2022

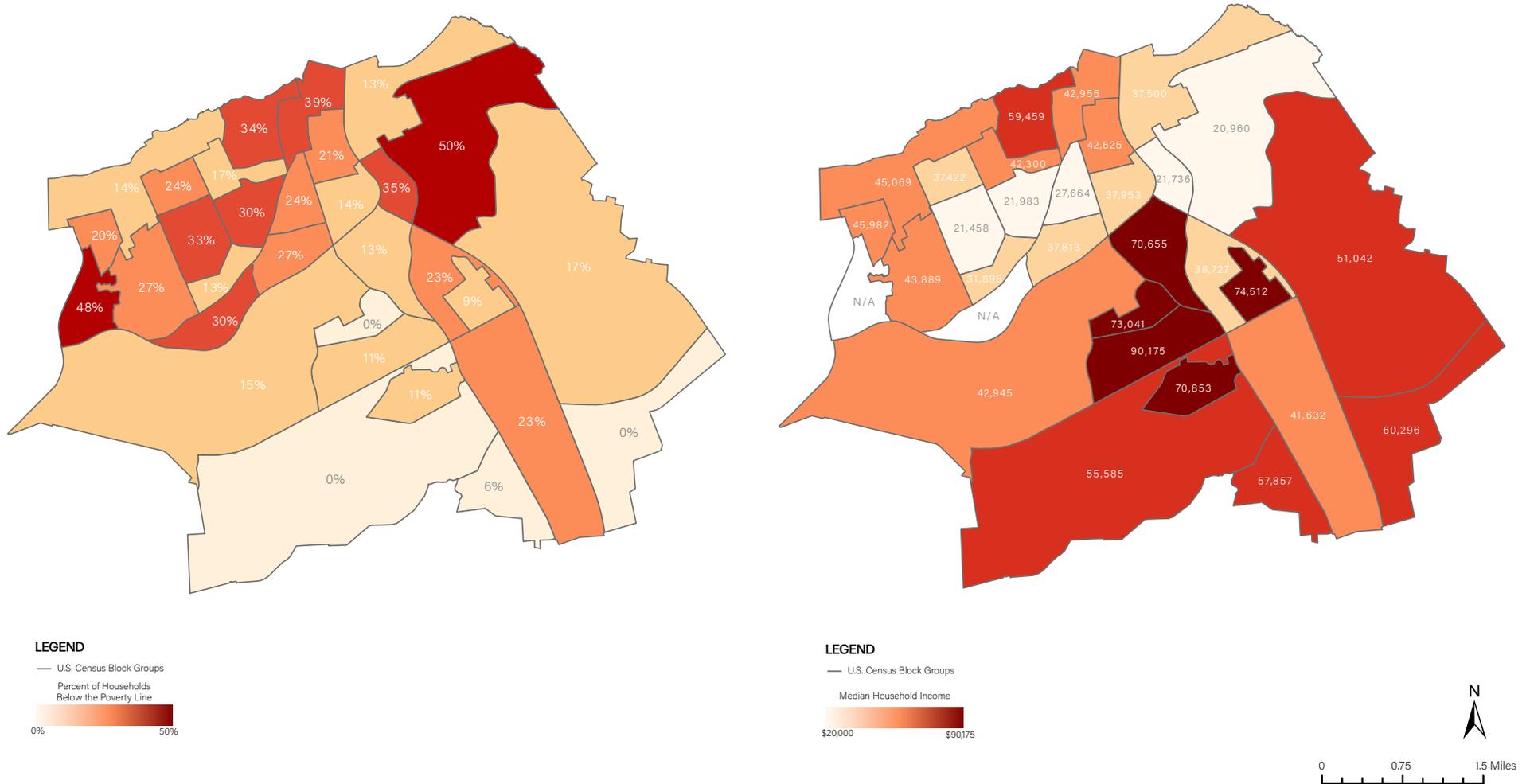
Unemployment Rate, 2008-2021



SOURCE: U.S. Federal Reserve Economic Data, 2022

High poverty levels have caused challenges for the City in recent years due to demand for the provision of health and human services. This poses an opportunity for the City to reevaluate the efficiency of its operations, determine potential options for public-private partnerships, and expand City facilities. Poverty and household income tend to be inversely correlated (Map 2.3), providing the City with the opportunity to locate facilities in areas of greatest need.

MAP 2.3 | POVERTY AND MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY BLOCK GROUP



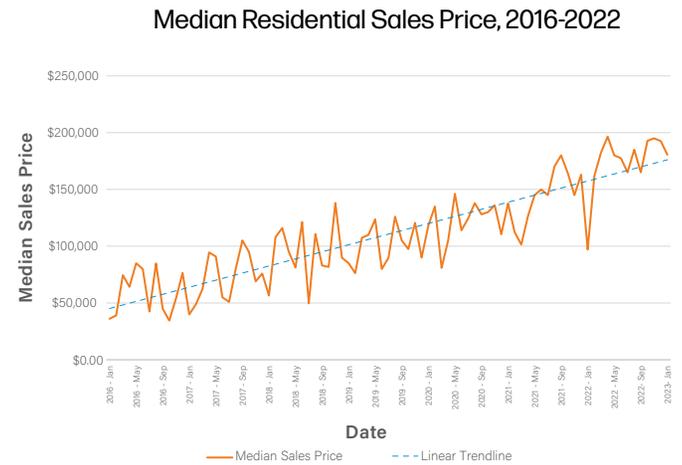
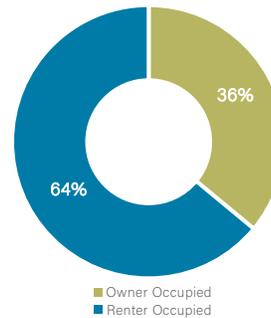
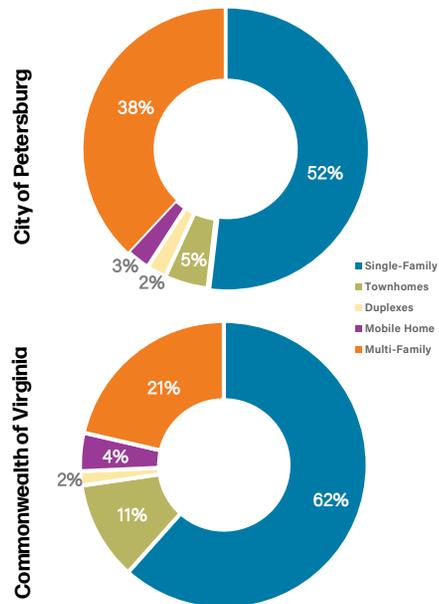
Housing and Neighborhoods

Housing is a major component of land use and development in the City of Petersburg. Feedback from the community engagement phase of the plan reflected a desire to improve the City’s existing housing stock through blight abatement and adaptive reuse, as well as to ensure that housing costs remain affordable within the context of the City’s median household income and poverty rate.

Petersburg’s housing stock is primarily composed of single-family dwellings, although the City’s housing stock is more diverse than that of Virginia overall due to a higher percentage of multi-family dwellings.

The majority of Petersburg’s occupied residences are renter-occupied.

The median home sales price as of January 2023 was \$180,500. The median home sales price across Virginia was \$300,104. While lower median home sales prices in Petersburg may indicate affordability, there are several other factors to consider, such as blight and a higher percentage of multi-family housing, which is typically lower cost than single-family housing. In addition, 29% of all households in the City are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their annual household income – the federal affordability threshold – on housing costs.



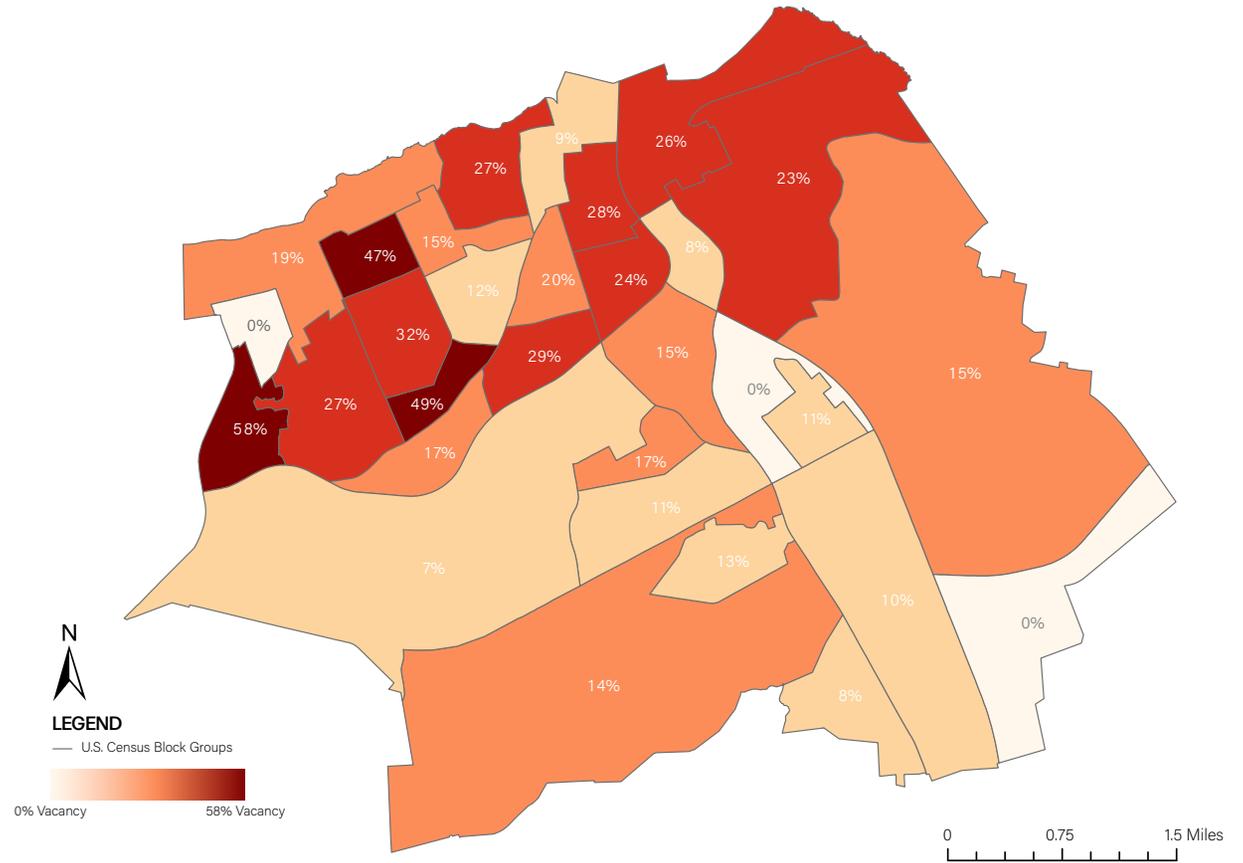
SOURCE (all infographics): 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates; Virginia Association of Realtors; Virginia Housing Forward

Petersburg’s residential vacancy rate is more than double the statewide average. The highest contributors to the City’s vacancy rate are the high percentage of blighted and abandoned homes (included in the Other Vacant category), and homes that are available for rent but not yet leased to a tenant. Monitoring the vacancy rate is important as it signals when the City’s housing market may be imbalanced. Chapter 4 of this Plan discusses vacancy and strategies for blight abatement and rental properties in greater detail.

	Number of Units	Percentage
Other vacant	2,171	64.0%
For rent	759	22.4%
For sale only	213	6.3%
Rented, not occupied	126	3.7%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	115	3.4%
Sold, not occupied	5	0.1%
For migrant workers	0	0%
Total Vacant:	3,389	100%

SOURCE: 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

MAP 2.3 | RESIDENTIAL VACANCY RATE BY BLOCK GROUP



SOURCE: 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Transportation

Transportation and land use are inextricably linked. As growth and development occur, investments in the City’s transportation network – including repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure – will be necessary to support the rise in user demand. Additionally, a transportation network that provides accessible walking, biking, and public transportation options allows residents who do not have a personal vehicle, or who cannot operate one due to age or physical health considerations, to access job opportunities and amenities such as grocery stores and parks.

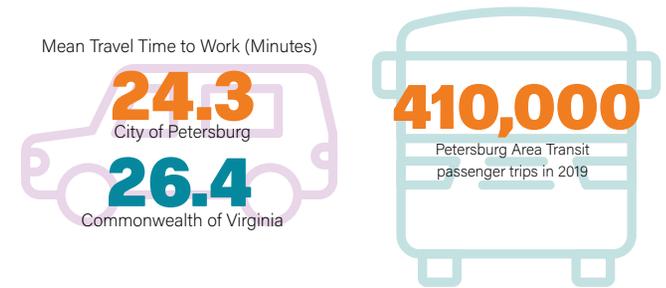
Most of Petersburg’s employees commute to work alone. However, 11% carpool to work and 3.4% rely on public transportation – both nearly twice as high as the statewide percentages. This can be explained by the fact that 16.5% of households do not have access to a personal vehicle). Investment in alternative transportation methods therefore becomes an important policy tool to provide equitable access to stable, well-paying employment opportunities.

The City’s commuters most often travel to Henrico and Chesterfield Counties, as well as the City of Richmond. The mean travel time to work is slightly lower than the statewide mean travel time and can be explained by the fact that the top employment destinations for City residents are nearby.

The Mobility and Transportation chapter provides considerations for transportation and provides projects that should be prioritized over the timeframe of this Plan.

Commuting to Work	City of Petersburg	Commonwealth of Virginia
Drove alone	75.2%	65.6%
Carpooled	11%	7%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	3.4%	1.5%
Walked	1.6%	2%
Other means	3.1%	1.6%
Worked from home	5.6%	22.3%

SOURCE: 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates



SOURCES: Petersburg Area Transit; 2016-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates



SOURCE: U.S. Census On the Map, 2019

Public Health

Land use policies can positively influence the overall quality of life and health outcomes for a community. Investing in alternative transportation options, encouraging housing opportunities that are safe and free of health hazards, providing and maintaining parks and recreational opportunities, and adopting Zoning Ordinance regulations that limit adverse development impacts on the natural environment are all examples of policies that will benefit public health outcomes for its residents. Additional information and strategies related to public health can be found throughout this Plan.

County Health Rankings, a nationally recognized organization that models the influence of health determinants on a community, ranks Petersburg as the lowest jurisdiction in Virginia for both

health outcomes and health factors. Health outcomes indicate how healthy City residents are both in terms of lifespan and quality of life. Health factors are shown in the table here and represent aspects that the City can help influence to improve long-term health outcomes. Petersburg has much to be optimistic about for several health factors, namely access to exercise opportunities, which can be attributed to the City's large inventory of green spaces. Social associations are another strength due to the City's many passionate and active community groups. Petersburg can draw on those in the community to be active advocates and partners for other healthy changes and initiatives.

Ultimately, Petersburg should view public health not as a liability but rather as an opportunity to promote resident wellbeing and enhance overall quality of life.

Health Factor	City of Petersburg	Commonwealth of Virginia
Health Behaviors		
Food Environment Index	5	8.8
Access to Exercise Opportunities	90%	78%
Adult Smoking	22%	14%
Adult Obesity	45%	32%
Sexually Transmitted Infections	1,761	564%
Teen Births	65%	15%
Clinical Care		
Primary Care Physicians	1,420:1	1,310:1
Dentists	1,270:1	1,390:1
Mental Health Providers	8.33	20.001
Socioeconomic Factors		
Social Associations	15.6	11.2
Violent Crime	714	207
Injury Deaths	176	68

SOURCE: County Health Rankings, 2022



County Health Rankings are updated annually. Each health factor has different considerations and data points that determine the ratio, percentage, or numerical value. Check out <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/virginia/petersburg-city> to learn more!

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to learn more!



PLANNING FACTORS

Planning factors are trends, recent changes, or circumstances that influence Petersburg's land use and development policies. They can be local, statewide, or even national in their scope. The City will remain aware of the following planning factors as it seeks to set goals, objectives, and strategies for the next twenty years:

Fort Lee

The close proximity of Fort Lee to Petersburg presents many challenges and opportunities. The City can evaluate zoning and development patterns on its east side to provide more housing opportunities for military families, as well as evaluate investment in its public school facilities to provide a more attractive incentive for families deciding where to relocate.

Waterfront Investment

Plans to extend the East Coast Greenway multi-modal trail, the Fall Line Trail, and the Appomattox River Trail through Petersburg will be transformative for the City's waterfront areas. Undeveloped parcels along the Appomattox River present opportunities for development that has benefits for both residents and visitors alike such as vertical mixed-use, recreational spaces that can also hold special events or festivals, and additional sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure to connect Old Towne with the waterfront. This, combined with trails investment and possibilities of dredging the river, has the potential to position Petersburg as Central Virginia's new destination for outdoor recreation and tourism.

Virginia State University

The presence of Virginia State University right across the Appomattox River presents opportunities for investment in multi-family housing, as well as amenities such as retail, restaurants, and entertainment that are desirable to college students.

Water and Sewer Infrastructure

Petersburg can accommodate future growth and economic investment by repairing and upgrading its water and sewer infrastructure. The City's utilities infrastructure is hundreds of years old, leading to inconsistent provision of quality service to the community. The short-term costs will be returned by the long-term benefits of increased capacity that will fuel economic growth.

Historic Preservation

Petersburg's rich history and well-preserved downtown and residential historic districts, along with Petersburg National Battlefield, have long been valued by residents and visitors alike. The City can continue to protect, preserve, and promote the assets as a tourism draw and opportunity to reinforce community pride.

Housing Rehabilitation and Blight Abatement

Across the nation, more and more private corporations and non-local landlords are beginning to control localities' affordable housing supply, as affordable housing is often perceived to be an easy investment opportunity. This is true of Petersburg, where many landlords are non-local. This makes it more difficult for local residents to achieve homeownership. Additionally, the lack of continuous property monitoring makes it easier for properties to fall into states of disrepair or blight, and more difficult for the City to enforce code violations and tax evasion. Petersburg can explore ways to communicate with and enforce requirements for non-local landlords, and partner with organizations that promote pathways to homeownership.

Rise of Remote Work

The rise of remote work has shifted traditional housing and transportation patterns. Across both Virginia and the nation, remote workers are moving to cities with lower costs of living due to their newfound mobility and flexibility. Remote workers are also drawn to cities with recreation and entertainment opportunities as they contribute to a healthy work-life balance. Many localities have adopted initiatives to attract remote workers as a means of increasing tax bases and opening doors for investment in new amenities that can have broad community benefits, such as co-working spaces, small businesses, and recreational opportunities. Petersburg will consider the degree to which it wants to promote itself as a remote work destination.

New Industries

Petersburg was recently announced as the new home of a pharmaceutical cluster. This new industry will have many ripple effects on the City, including a rise in the number of commuters, new families looking to relocate to the City, and new opportunities for specialized education through local community colleges and workforce development programs. Additionally, the emerging warehousing industry and arrival of associated distribution centers in neighboring localities connects local residents with new job opportunities and also warrants the need for a regional approach to investment in transportation infrastructure.



Photo Credit: Civica Inc.

WHO WE ASPIRE TO BE

Understanding who we are today helps us envision tomorrow. The City of Petersburg's collective vision – and the means required to achieve this vision – is a long-term goal. It will require active participation and engagement from a variety of people and organizations. This vision can be achieved by setting goals with specific objectives, strategies, and implementation tools, along with continuously monitoring progress after the Plan is adopted.

The distinct benefit of a Comprehensive Plan is that it provides the direction to transform a clear vision into a recognizable reality. PetersburgNEXT considers how the entire community's values, people, places, and prosperity are interrelated and interdependent. It identifies defining issues and opportunities for the next twenty years, and how our City can leverage strengths while mitigating weaknesses. PetersburgNEXT is our community's Plan for a bright future and lays the fundamental groundwork to keep moving forward over the next twenty years and beyond.

The City of Petersburg is a thriving community where all residents enjoy a high quality of life enhanced by safe and attractive neighborhoods, economic opportunity, and celebration of rich history and cultural diversity.

PETERSBURG**NEXT** VISION STATEMENT





KEY THEMES

To achieve our vision for 2044 and beyond, the City of Petersburg is committed to making decisions that are equitable, advance public health and safety, informed by collaboration with key partners, and wisely steward natural resources. These key themes are recognized and further discussed in each of the Plan chapters.

EQUITY

Interwoven through all of the planning efforts and decisions the City of Petersburg must make is the need to plan and provide equitably for all City residents. Housing, community facilities, and transportation infrastructure are three areas of immediate need for improving choice and access, but equitable access to economic opportunities, a healthy environment, and safe neighborhoods are fundamental to Petersburg's bright future.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Safe communities are healthy communities. Petersburg recognizes the impacts of land use decisions, infrastructure provision, and attractive and clean neighborhoods on public safety and is committed to making crime reduction an interwoven element of strategic decision-making.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The quality of the built environment has profound impacts on community health. Petersburg will strive to build upon elements that support a healthy community, including active transportation infrastructure, recreational opportunities, and access to fresh and healthy food options.

RESPONSIBLE REGIONALISM

Successful implementation of the strategies identified in this Plan will require collaboration with community-based organizations, neighboring localities, and state agencies. Petersburg will be a responsible partner and work actively with the community and with the region to achieve its vision for 2044.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The protection and preservation of Petersburg's land, water, and air, along with mitigating the impacts of climate change, are important considerations for the next twenty years. The City of Petersburg will consider resilience, sustainability, and resource protection in its land use and development policies so the natural beauty and environment can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Our Plan for a bright future.

PLAN CHAPTERS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOODS

PARKS, RECREATION, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SAFETY

MOBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

LAND USE

KEY THEMES

EQUITY

PUBLIC SAFETY

PUBLIC HEALTH

RESPONSIBLE REGIONALISM

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

PLAN VISION

The City of Petersburg is a thriving community where all residents enjoy a high quality of life enhanced by safe and attractive neighborhoods, economic opportunity, and celebration of rich history and cultural diversity.