

Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan provides a guiding vision for the physical development of a locality. All Virginia localities are required by the Code of Virginia to adopt a Comprehensive Plan and review it every five years to identify any necessary updates. For more about the project and update process, visit the project website at www.petersburgvanext.com.

Community Engagement

PetersburgNEXT will be based on research, data analysis, and, most importantly, community input. Throughout the process, this Comprehensive Plan update has taken intentional and extensive steps to ensure that all community members have an opportunity to help shape the visions and goals outlined in the Plan. Community feedback has been relied upon to inform draft Plan chapters, and each Plan chapter includes a spotlight on community input at the beginning of the chapter.

A summary of community engagement is as follows; the full community engagement summary can be reviewed on the PetersburgNEXT website (<https://www.petersburgvanext.com/document-library>).

- **Community Survey:** A survey consisting of 27 questions tailored to identify strengths, weaknesses, and future needs of Petersburg was made available for community members to complete online as well as in a paper format. A total of 374 community members completed the community survey. This response rate yields a 5% margin of error at a 95% confidence level, which is the industry standard, and translates to a 95% likelihood that the answers are reflective of Citywide opinions with a range of 10%.
- **Public Workshops:** During four public workshops – three in-person and one virtual – community members were introduced to the Comprehensive Plan process and invited to share their perspectives on Citywide strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. In-person attendees were also invited to work together in small groups to complete topic-focused, map-based exercises. 64 people participated in the Public Workshops in total.
- **Focus Groups:** Community members, organization representatives, business owners, City department heads, and other regional experts participated in eight roundtable discussion sessions. Each session focused on a separate theme relevant to the Comprehensive Plan update process. In total, 54 people representing 45 organizations participated in the focus groups.
- **City Council Interviews:** The Berkley Group facilitated individual interviews with City Council members in February 2023 to learn more about priorities and opportunities for the City over the next twenty years.
- **Website and Email Updates:** The PetersburgNEXT project website was regularly updated to inform community members of upcoming opportunities to provide input for the Comprehensive Plan. Email reminders regarding public engagement opportunities were sent to individuals who provided their email addresses at a public workshop, through the survey, or through the online subscription form. The project team has continued to update the website on a regular basis throughout the drafting process,

and email updates are being sent to inform the community of Planning Commission worksessions and new draft chapters.

Plan Development

To date, Planning Commission, City staff, and the Berkley Group have worked together to draft six of eleven chapters. Planning Commission has held worksessions every other month beginning in March to review and guide draft Comprehensive Plan content. The community has been invited to attend these worksessions and all worksessions have been well attended. The community has also been encouraged to provide comments through the Idea Wall and comment form on the PetersburgNEXT website.

Summaries of chapters drafted to date are provided below. Each chapter highlights existing conditions and opportunities for continued growth. Goals, objectives, and strategies are included at the end of each Plan chapter; these are the policy components of the Plan and provide Petersburg with a framework for addressing the issues and opportunities identified as part of each Plan element.

An Implementation chapter will be provided to help guide the City in effectively and efficiently implementing the strategies of the Plan (see *"Implementing the Plan"* on pg. 3 for additional information).

Chapter 1 - About the Plan

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the Comprehensive Plan and public input process. The chapter outlines the legal basis of the Comprehensive Plan, discusses the purpose and context of the Plan, and provides a summary of the feedback and perspectives collected through the initial community engagement phase of Plan development.

Chapter 2 - Identity

Chapter 2 provides a community overview of Petersburg's history, geography, and demographics. The demographics information serves an important role in informing the needs and policy recommendations that will follow in the remaining chapters of the Plan. This chapter also identifies key planning factors, key themes to inform chapter development, and a vision statement for the future: "Petersburg is a thriving, culturally diverse community where all residents enjoy safe and attractive neighborhoods, economic opportunity, quality education, and celebration of rich history."

- **Key Planning Factors:** Fort Gregg-Adams, Waterfront Investment, Virginia State University, Water and Sewer Infrastructure, Historic Preservation, Housing Rehabilitation & Blight Abatement, Rise of Remote Work, New Industries, Climate Resiliency and Green Energy, Broadband, Arts and Culture
- **Key Themes:** Equity, Public Safety, Public Health, Responsible Regionalism, and Environmental Stewardship

Chapter 3 - Economic Development

Chapter 3 highlights Petersburg's progress in rebuilding a strong and diverse economy, supported by the healthcare, retail trade, and manufacturing industries. The chapter also includes an analysis of existing economic conditions, highlights workforce development as a critical aspect of creating a talent pipeline for local industries and increasing access to living-wage jobs, and identifies additional economic drivers and opportunities such as tourism, television and film production, remote work, and Fort Gregg-Adams. Strategies for this chapter focus on continuing to diversify the economy, encouraging entrepreneurship and workforce development, creating new

opportunities for redevelopment and infill, promoting tourism, and streamlining business licensing and permitting requirements.

Chapter 4 – Housing and Neighborhoods

Chapter 4 focuses on the importance of housing as a fundamental human need and the importance of neighborhoods as powerful geographies that bring people together to celebrate a shared culture and history. The chapter highlights blight abatement and rehabilitation as a continued priority for Petersburg, along with supporting opportunities for homeownership. Other aspects of housing such as veterans' housing, aging in place, fair housing, and the impacts of redlining and gentrification are also discussed in the Chapter. The chapter also focuses on how to support neighborhood vitality through creative and community-driven solutions such as tactical urbanism, community land trusts, and housing rehabilitation zones.

Strategies for this chapter focus on identifying and eradicating residential blight around Petersburg, facilitating the provision of a safe and high-quality housing stock in all neighborhoods, promoting pathways to homeownership, and supporting neighborhood vitality.

Chapter 5 – Parks, Recreation, Arts, and Historic Preservation

Chapter 5 could also be referred to as the “quality of life” chapter as it highlights elements that emphasize community culture and support a strong quality of life: parks, recreation, arts and culture, and historic resources. The chapter focuses on these elements as key contributors to equity and public health and wellness. Strategies for this chapter highlight the need to provide safe and accessible parks and recreation spaces, capitalizing on existing assets to increase revenue streams, creating a parks and recreation master plan, continuing to develop and enhance opportunities for riverfront recreation, supporting a strong arts and culture economy, and promoting historic preservation as a means of enhancing quality of life.

Chapter 6 – Community Facilities and Infrastructure

Chapter 6 focuses on community facilities and infrastructure in Petersburg, including City facilities, water, sewer, stormwater, and solid waste. The chapter also highlights city administration and governance, as well as continuing to work towards a bright future through continued investments in broadband, healthcare, and the public school system. The relationship between quality of life and effective service delivery is also explored. Strategies address continuing a demonstrated commitment to efficiency and accountability in governance, offering City facilities that are effective and meet the needs of residents and businesses alike, maintaining functional water and sewer infrastructure, expanding educational opportunities for residents, and recognizing the relationship between high-quality facilities and infrastructure and community health and wellness.

It is important to note that public safety and transportation are important pieces of City infrastructure but will be discussed at length in standalone chapters.

Implementing the Plan

The Implementation chapter prioritizes and provides accountability for the strategies from each element of PetersburgNEXT. This chapter will provide specific guidance for decision-making and define the ongoing process that will be used to monitor Petersburg's progress towards its vision for the future.

The Implementation chapter will include a comprehensive matrix that will identify the following for every strategy in the Plan:

City of Petersburg
 Comprehensive Plan Update
Project Progress to Date
September 5, 2023



- **Implementation Type:** Categorizes the strategy as a Capital Project, Land Use Action, Ordinance Update, Partnership, Plan or Study, or Program or Service. Strategies can have multiple Implementation Types.
- **Responsible Party:** Identifies who is primarily responsible for administering, managing, and/or implementing the strategy (e.g., City staff, City Council, Local and Regional Partners)
- **Priority:** Identifies each strategy as a Low, Medium, or High Priority for completion
- **Timeframe:** Assigns an ideal timeframe for completion: Short-Term (0-2 years), Mid-Term (3-5 years), Long-Term (5-10 years), or Ongoing (annual review)
- **Resources:** Identifies examples of organizations, state agencies, and/or funding sources that may be necessary to support successful implementation

The Implementation chapter and matrix will be presented to the Planning Commission and City staff for review in fall 2023.

Looking Ahead

The following schedule is planned for the City of Petersburg Comprehensive Plan update. Topics and dates are subject to change.

Month	Date	Topics/Actions
September 2023	26	Worksession #4 – Public Safety; Environmental Stewardship; Mobility and Transportation
November 2023	28	Worksession #5 – Land Use (Joint Meeting between Planning Commission and City Council); Implementation
January 2024	TBD	Public Draft Review and Open House
February 2024	TBD	Final Review Work Session (Joint Meeting between Planning Commission and City Council)
April 2024	TBD	Planning Commission Public Hearing for Plan Adoption
May 2024	TBD	City Council Public Hearing for Plan Adoption

Provide Input

Please email Reginald Tabor, Planning Manager at rtabor@petersburg-va.gov with all questions and comments regarding the draft Comprehensive Plan.

All draft chapters to date have been shared by City staff and are also posted on the project website at <https://www.petersburgvanext.com/document-library>.