

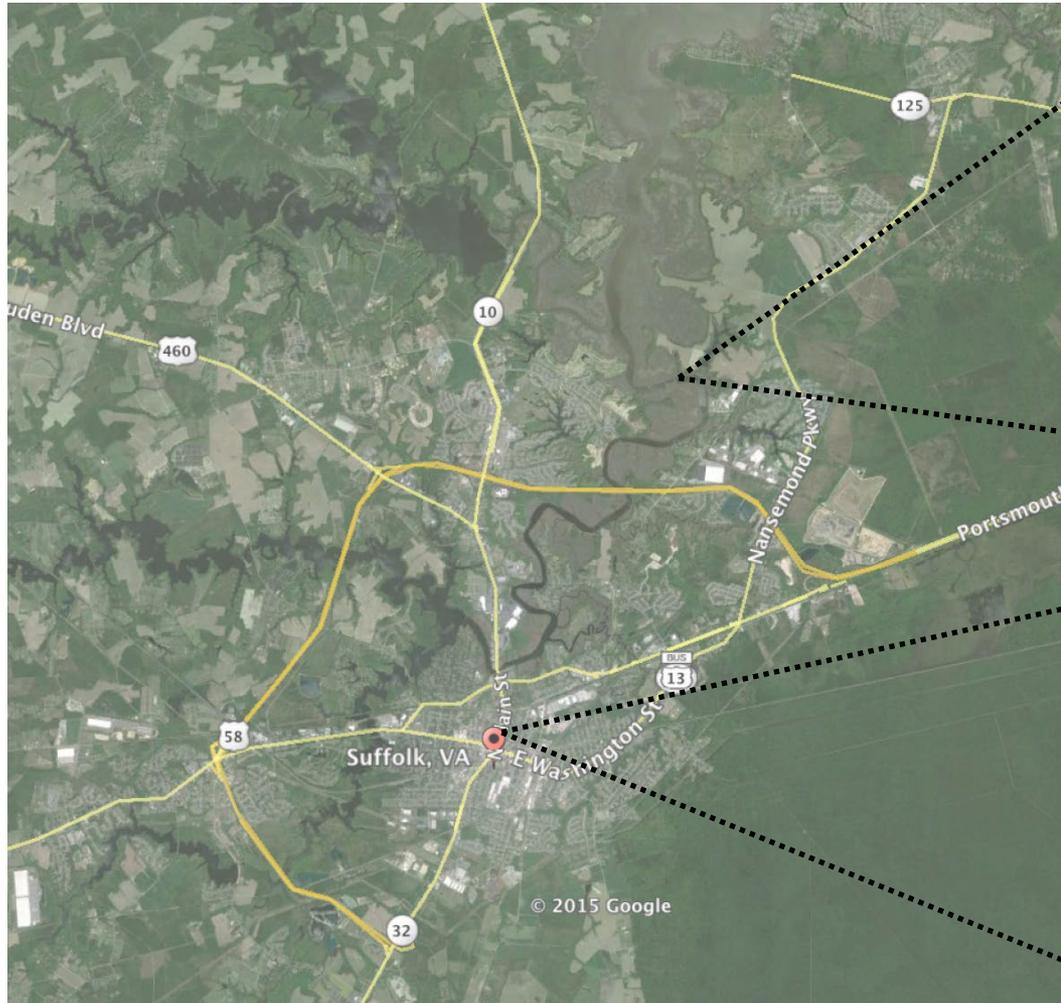
Green Infrastructure Planning in Suffolk, Virginia: Preliminary Assessment and Recommendations

This work was contributed by students in the Green Lands Class at the University of Virginia in partnership with the Green Infrastructure Center Inc. Funding is provided by the Virginia Department of Forestry's Urban and Community Forestry Program and the USDA Forest Service.

AGENDA

- I. Project Scope | Student Role | Review of Committee meeting
- II. Stormwater Management | Tree Canopy
- III. Recreation | Downtown Park Access
- IV. Recreation | Nansemond River Access
- V. Heritage Tourism | Downtown Tour
- VI. Next Steps

Project Scope



Nansmond River



Downtown



Student's Role

- Identify assets, challenges, and opportunities
- Collect initial community input
- Conduct preliminary assessment of green infrastructure network
- Recommend opportunities to improve green infrastructure network



November Citizens Committee Meeting

- Water Quality of Rivers and Lakes
 - Increasing development pressure
 - Mandates and requirements
- Inadequate Trails and Water Access
 - Limited public access points
 - No trail connectivity
 - Unofficial “social” trails
- Downtown Access
 - Poor walkability
 - Vacant storefronts and buildings



II. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT | TREE CANOPY

GOAL:

Reduce urban stormwater runoff by increasing Suffolk's tree canopy



Why Address Stormwater?

Federal and State water quality requirements

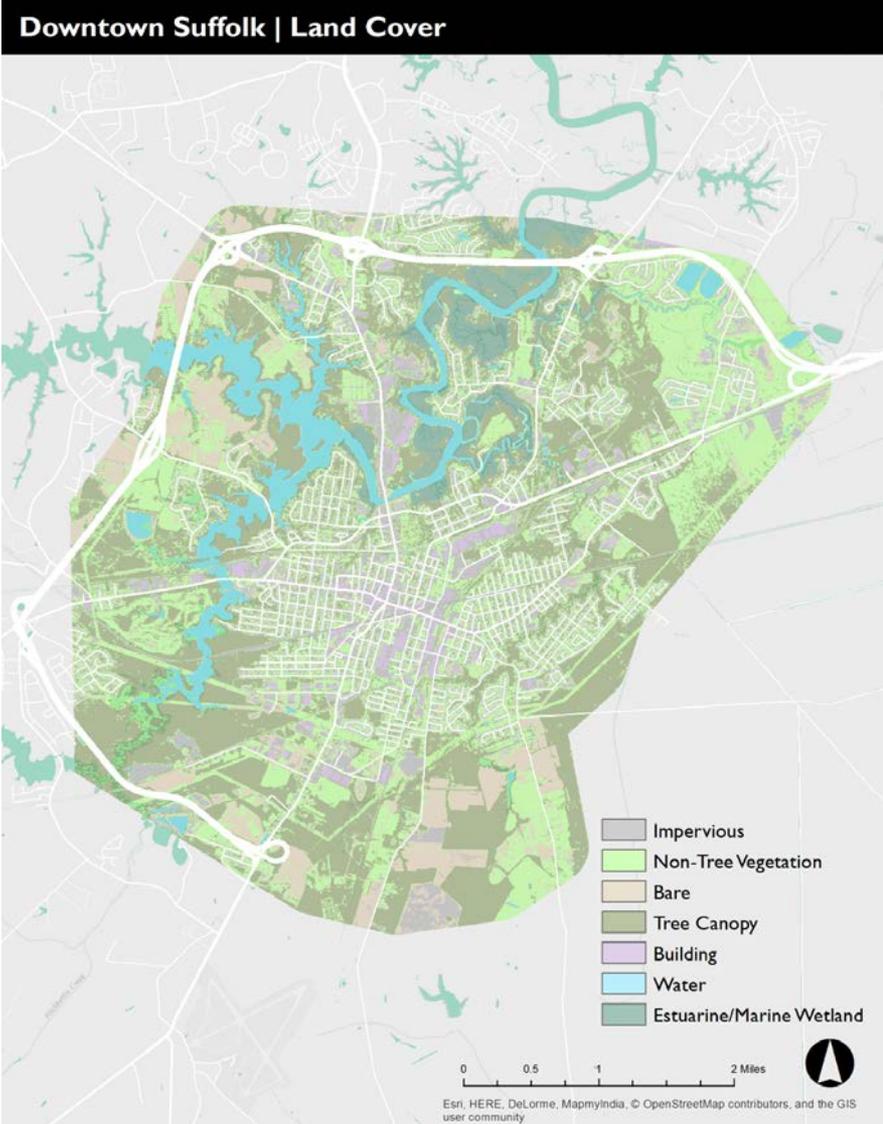
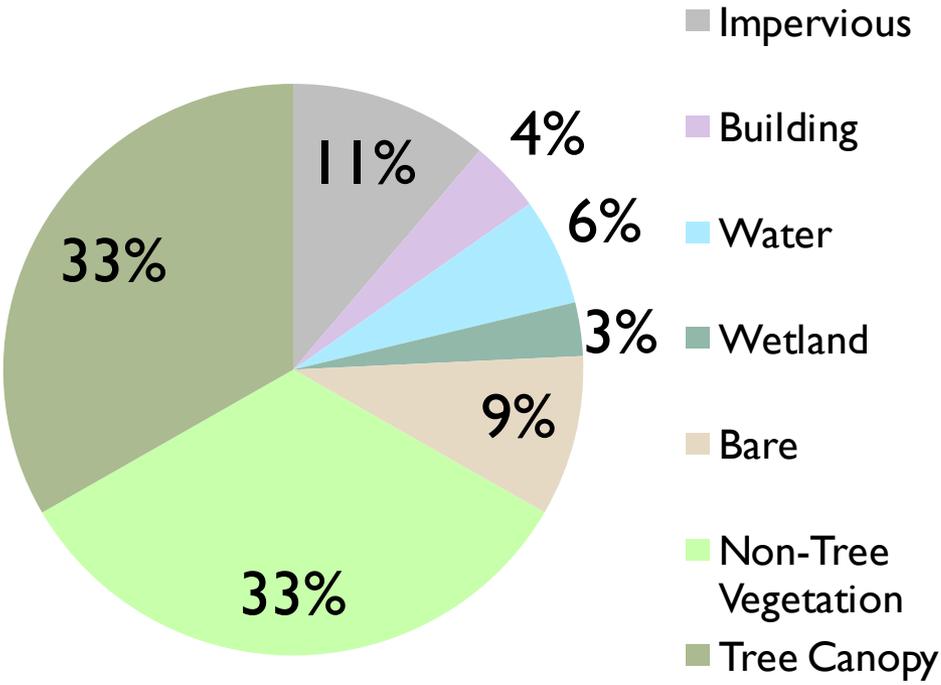
- Nansemond River and Chesapeake Bay TMDL requirements
- MS4 permit requirements

Growing public concern and interest



Nansemond River

Current Land Cover



Existing Conditions



W. Washington and Main



W. Washington and Henley

Existing Conditions



Portsmouth Blvd

Existing Conditions



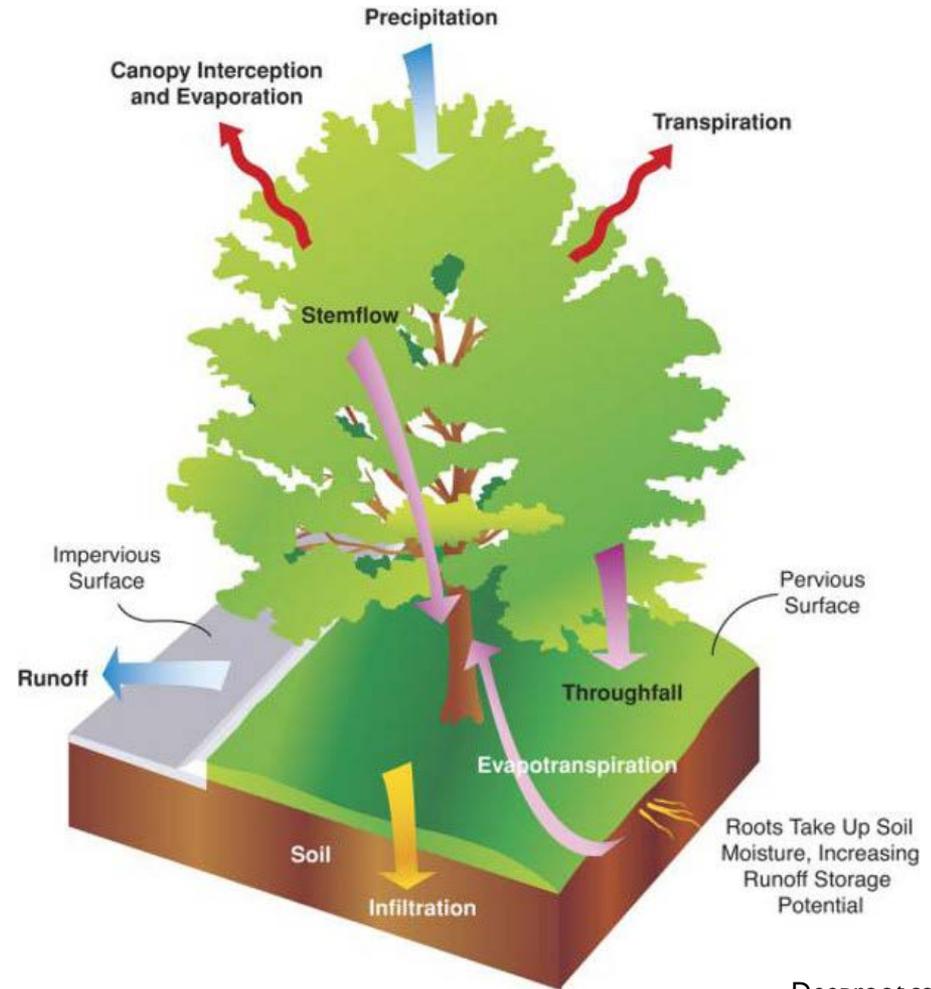
Vacant lot on Washington St.



S. Saratoga St.

Trees for Stormwater Management

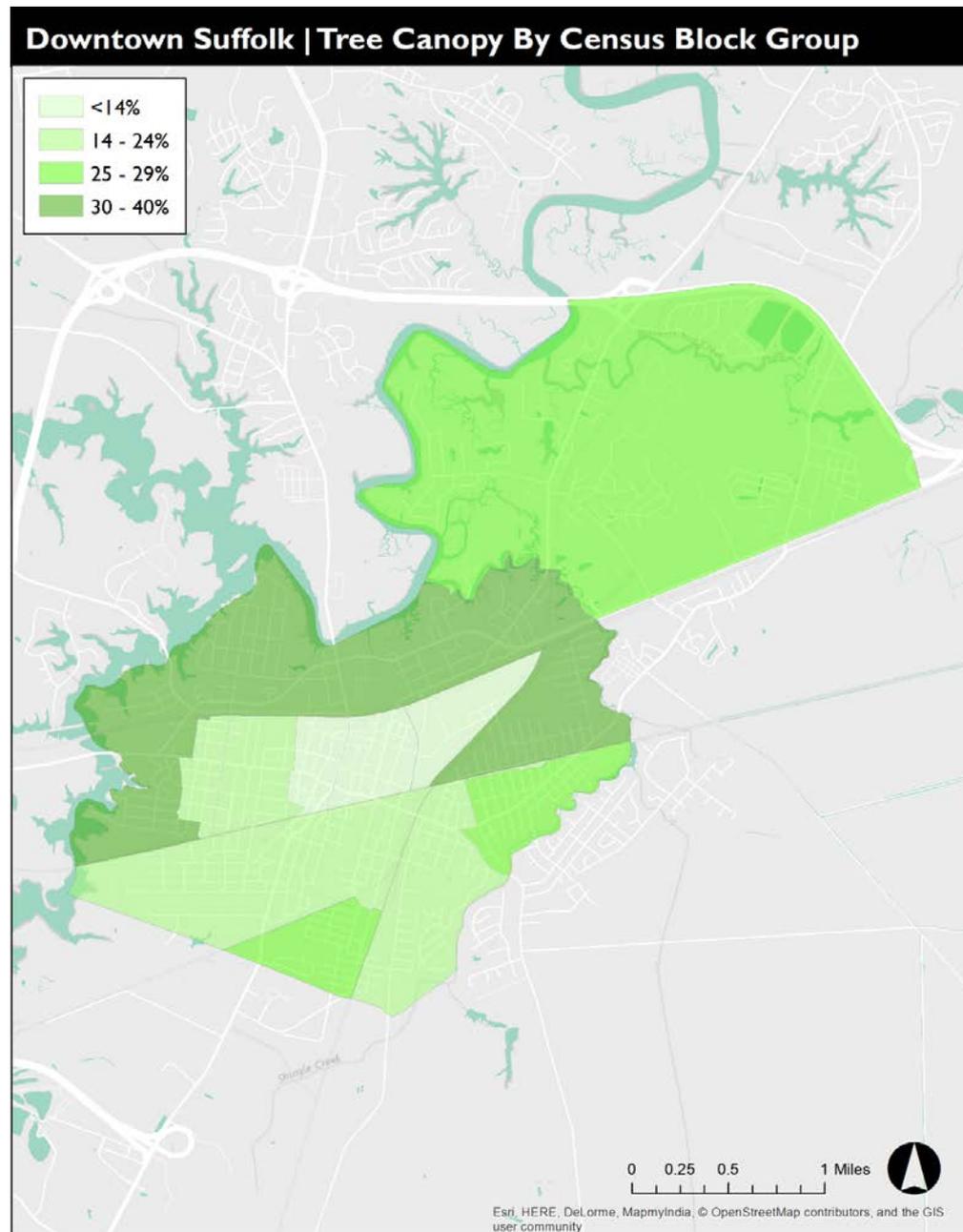
- More trees = less stormwater
 - Intercept rainfall (~3,000 ga/tree)
 - Slow runoff
 - Infiltrate into groundwater
- Low cost!
 - 2-3 times benefit over cost



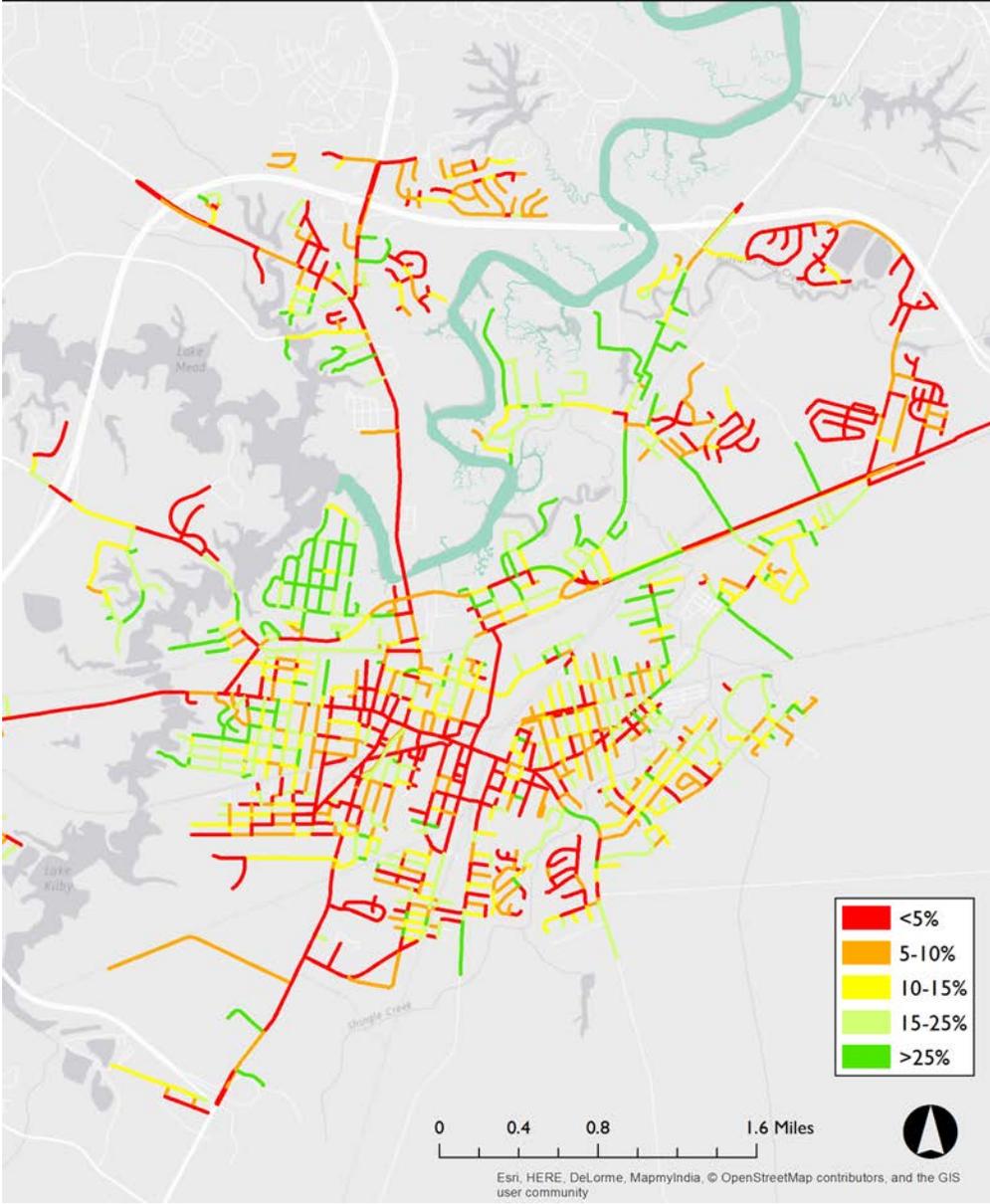
Deeprooot.com

Existing Tree Canopy

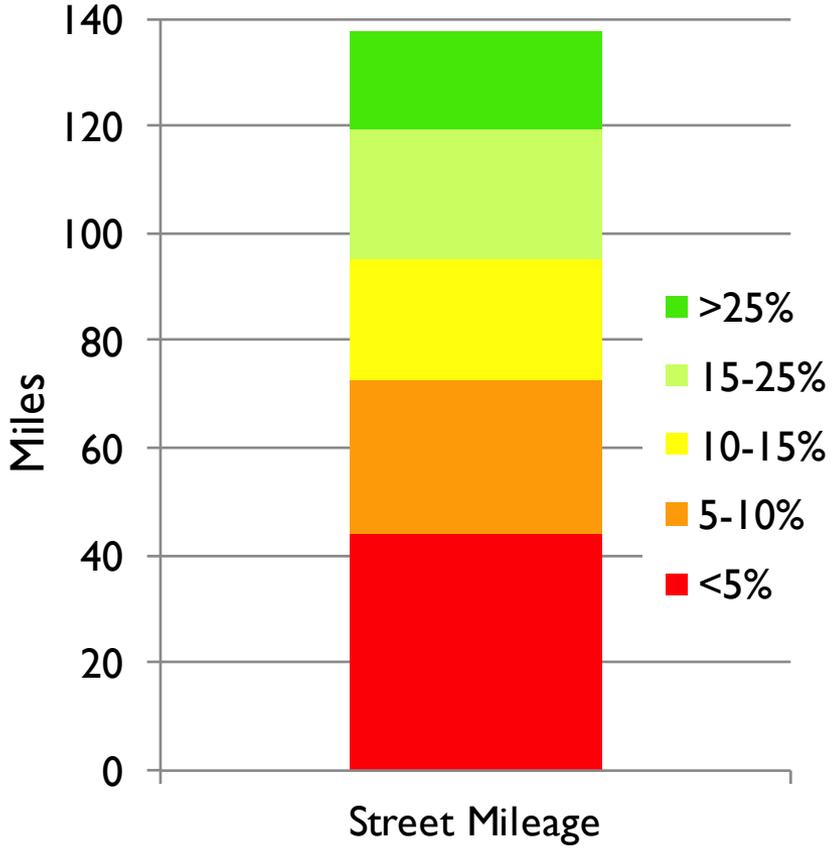
- Overall canopy: 33%
- Lowest in core of downtown and historic, higher-density neighborhoods



Downtown Suffolk | Tree Canopy Coverage of Streets



Street Tree Coverage



Tree Canopy Improvement

Set a goal!

- 40% recommended for cities east of Mississippi

Incremental steps

- E.g., 35% by 2017
- ~400 acres

Become member of Tree City USA

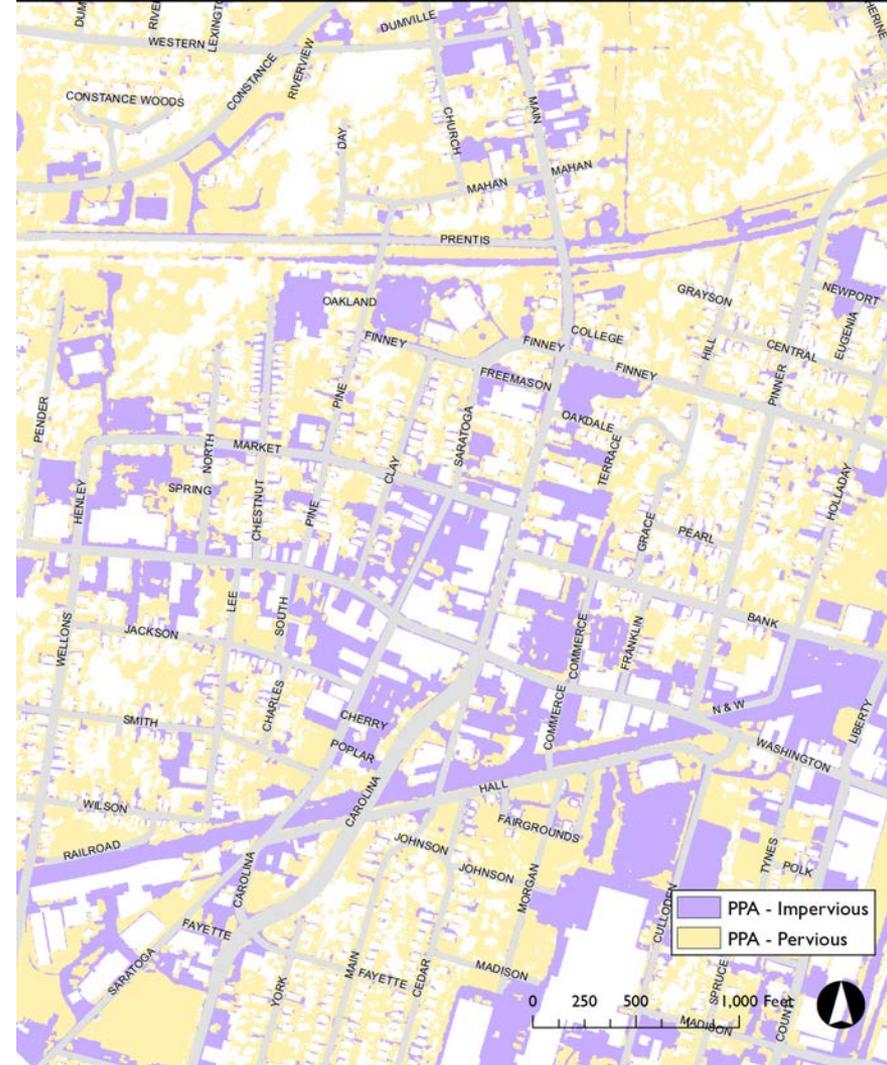


Possible Planting Area

Downtown Suffolk | Tree Canopy



Downtown Suffolk | Possible Planting Area





What more tree canopy could look like

Before



After - W.Washington St. and Saratoga St.

III. RECREATION | DOWNTOWN PARK ACCESS

GOAL:

Ensure equitable distribution of parks in the downtown area to provide walkable recreational opportunities for all residents



Cypress Park

Why Do We Need More Parks?

- Concerns over equal distribution
- Proximity matters
- Lots of public interest
- Parks have many community benefits

THE POWER OF PARKS

Do you know the power of your local parks and recreation? Yes, they provide beautiful green spaces and fun programs, but they do so much more and the benefits are immense. Learn more at www.nrpa.org/power-of-parks and watch the video.

PARKS HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL POWER

1 ACRE OF TREES
absorbs the carbon dioxide produced by
DRIVING A CAR 11,000 MILES.

PARKS HAVE HEALTH POWER

Increased access to places for physical activity leads to a
25% increase
in people exercising
3 or more days a week.

PARKS HAVE SAFETY POWER

In Macon, GA, a revitalized park that included new programming and beautification efforts
reduced incidents of crime and violence by
50%.

PARKS HAVE COMMUNITY POWER

Parks strengthen community ties and
bring diverse populations together.

Parks have the power to strengthen communities, transform lives, and protect the future.

Parks are the most powerful aspect of every community.

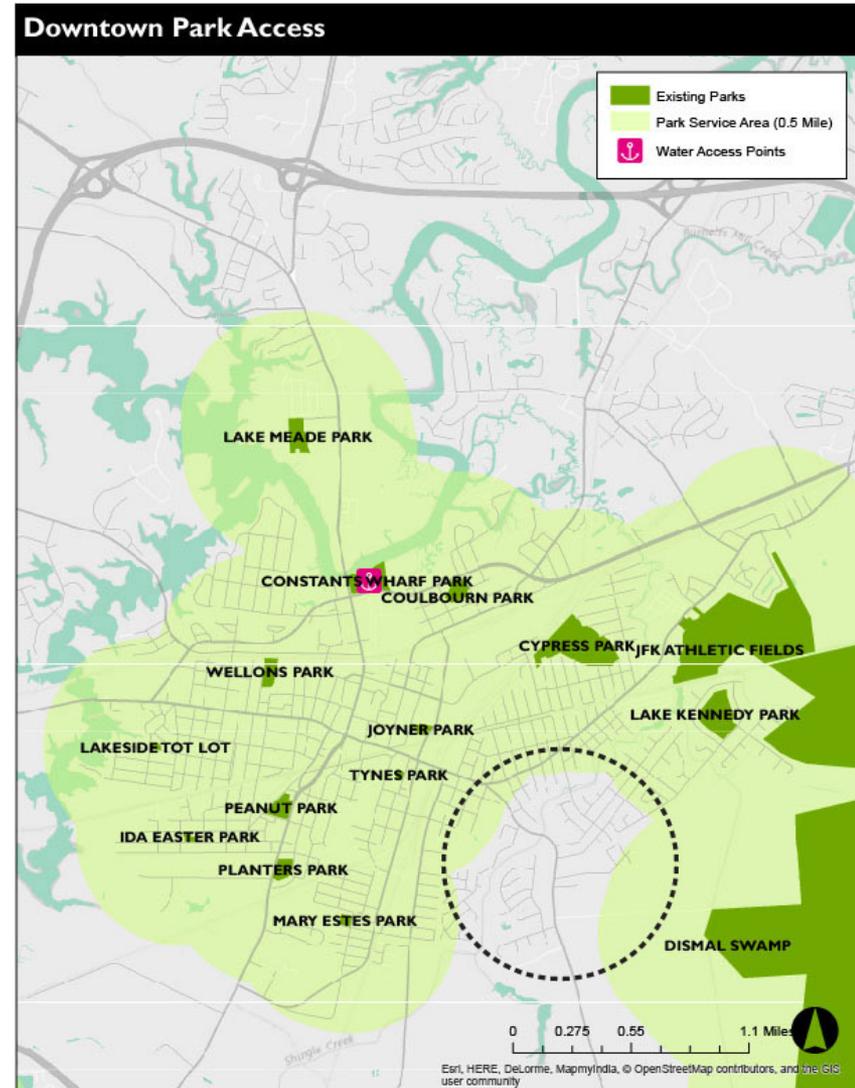
Sources:
Centers for Disease Control, Environmental Protection Agency,
American Planning Association

National Recreation and Park Association

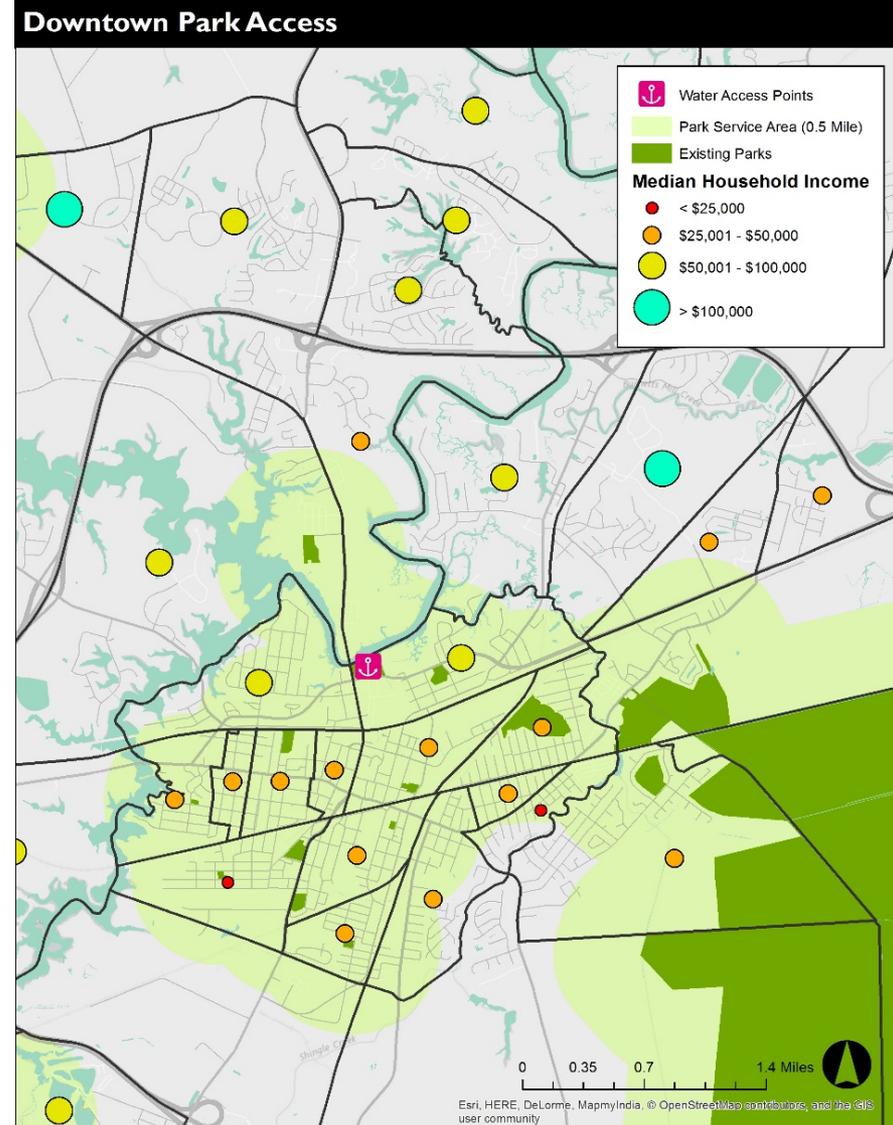
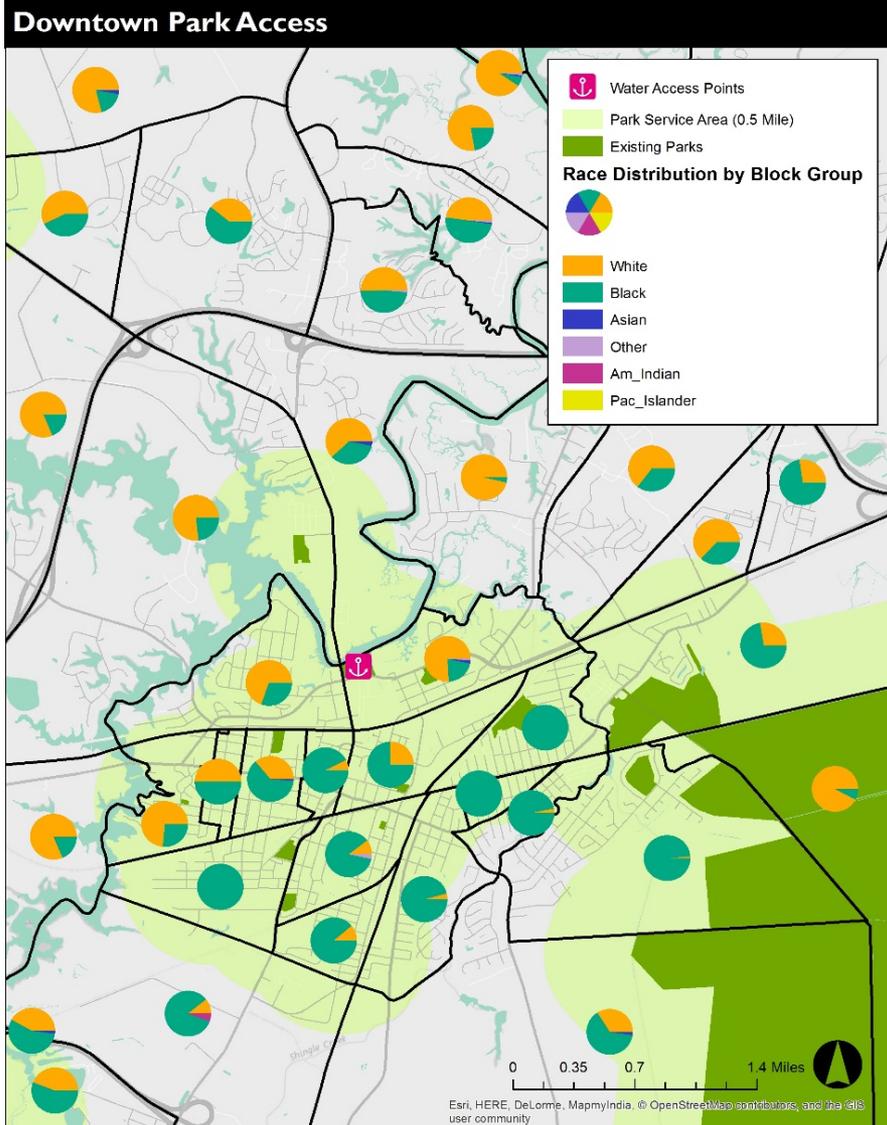
#PowerOfParks

Assessing Downtown Park Access

- 15 parks in downtown area
- Walking distance to park = 0.5 miles
- Most of downtown within walking distance to a park
- One area without adequate walkable park access



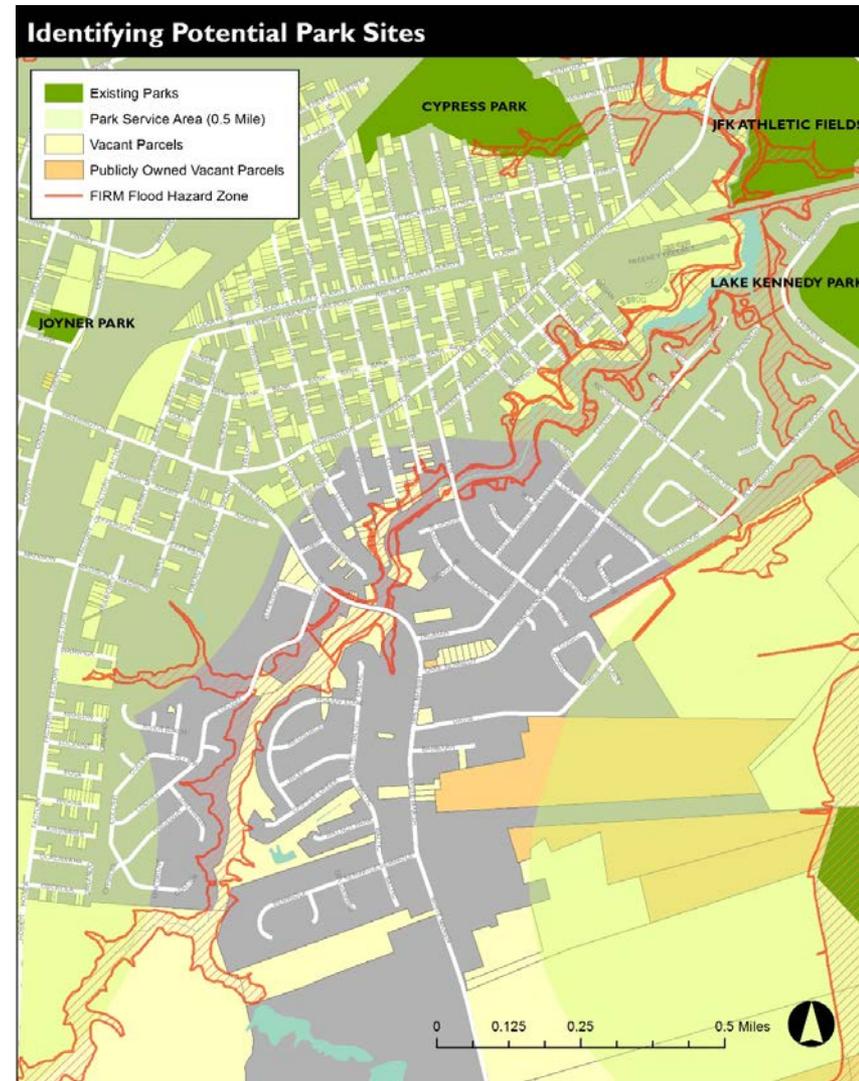
Park Distribution by Race & Income



Identifying Sites for New Parks

Criteria:

- Lots within park deficient area
- Vacant lots
- Publicly owned vacant lots
- FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Flood Zones



Shingle Creek Greenway & Trail

- Improve park & trail access to underserved neighborhoods
- Protect Shingle Creek
- Improve connectivity to existing parks



IV. RECREATION | NANSEMOND RIVER ACCESS

GOAL:

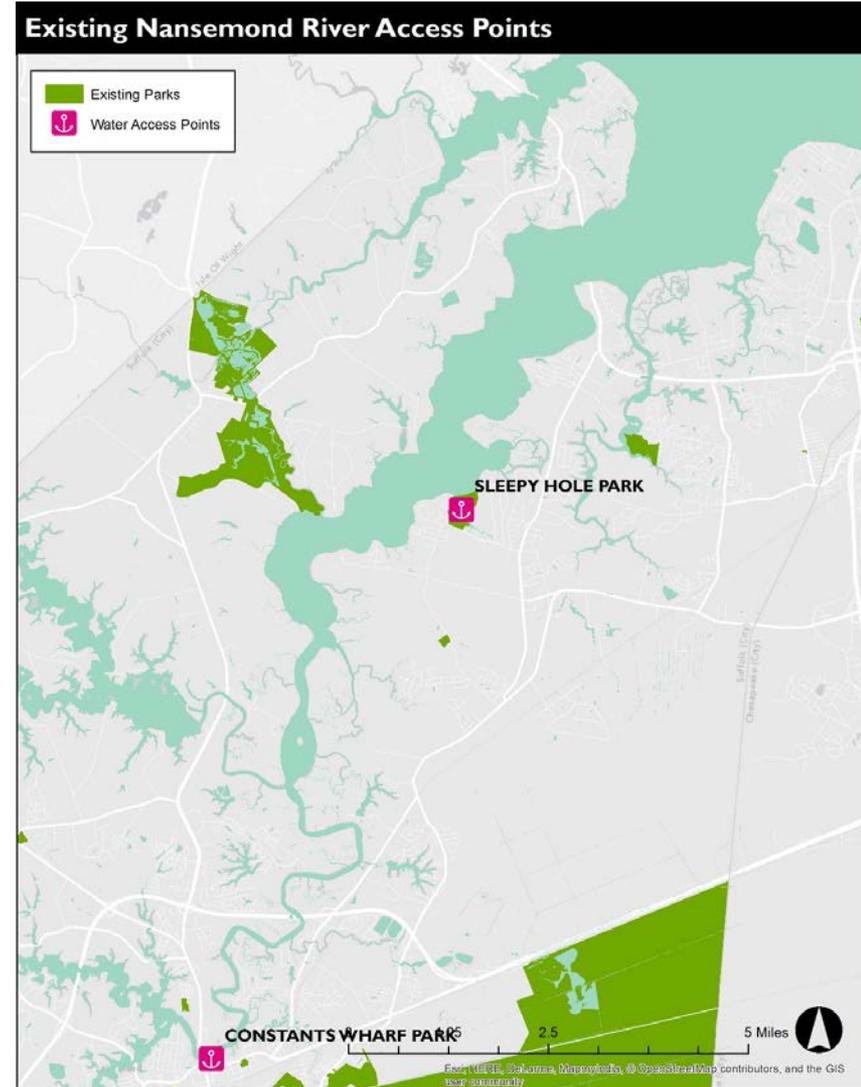
Promote river stewardship and protection by improving recreational access to the Nansemond River



Sleepy Hole Park

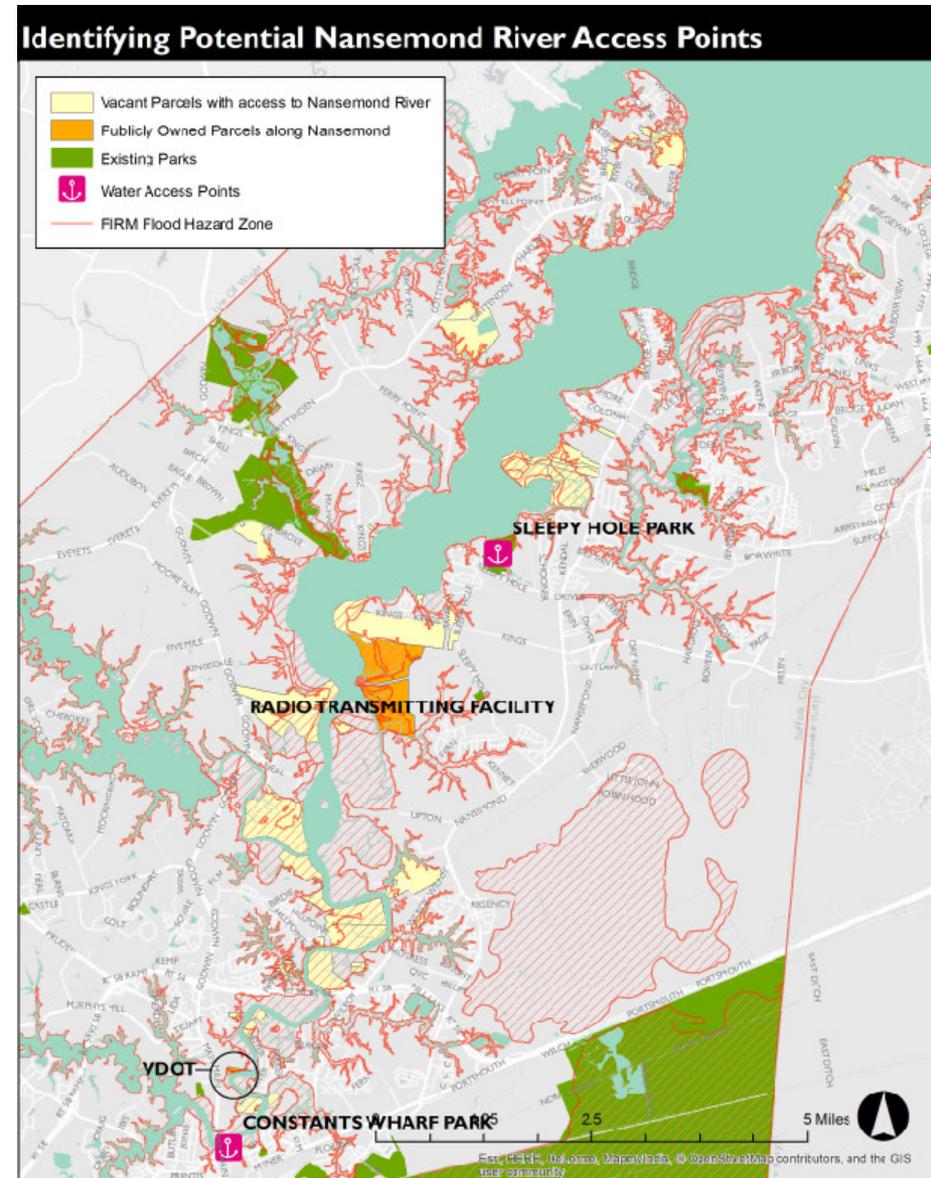
Why Do We Need More Public River Access?

- Limited Public Access
- Public Interest
- Potential Benefits
 - Stronger community connection to the river
 - More river stewardship and protection
 - Healthier Nansemond



Identifying Sites for New River Access

- **126 vacant lots** (3019 acres) with Nansemond River access
- **2 publicly owned vacant parcels:**
 - VDOT facility
 - Former Radio Transmitting facility
- All within FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map **Flood Hazard Areas**



Community Engagement: *Nansemond River Docent Program*

Nansemond River Docents could lead...

- River education programs
- Clean-up events
- Buffer plantings

Partners:

- Department of Parks & Recreation
- Nansemond River Preservation Alliance

Case Study:

- Friends of the LA River Docent Program



Friends of the Los Angeles River (FOLAR)

V. HERITAGE TOURISM | DOWNTOWN TOUR

Goal:

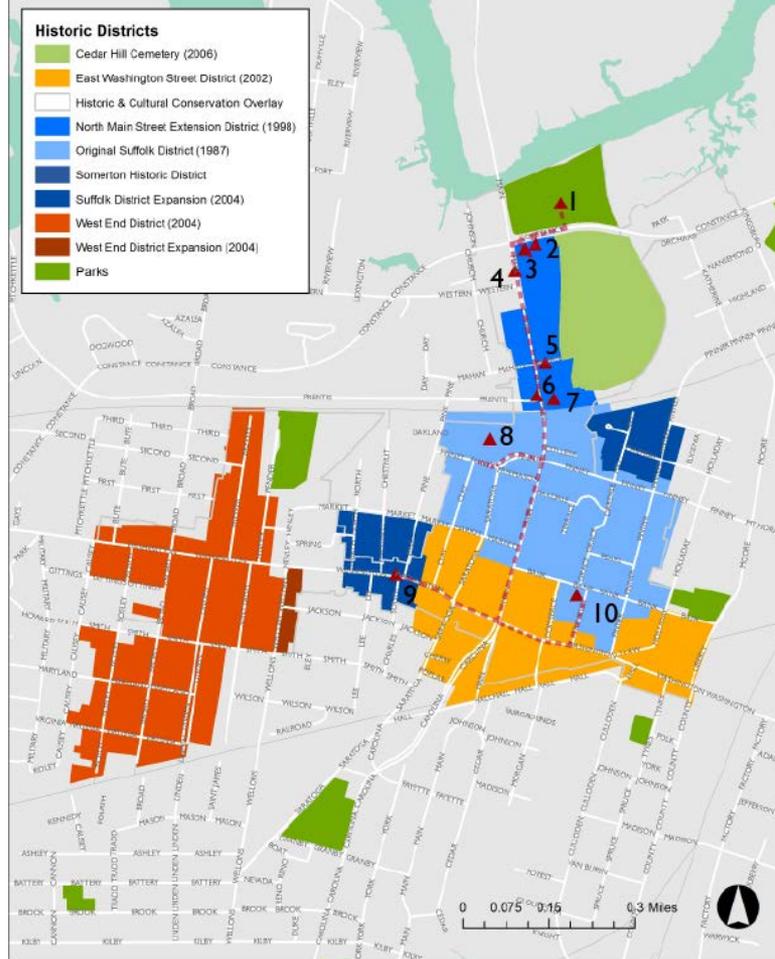
Provide Suffolk with historical walking tour in response to Citizens Committee low satisfaction of walkability of the downtown area



Downtown Tour

- Improve connectivity of cultural amenities
- Can be the focus of the planting plan to increase street tree coverage
- Provide locations for wayfinding signage
- Increase tourism

Downtown Suffolk | Historic Resources



Downtown Walking Tour

1. Constants Wharf
2. Visitors Center
3. Courthouse
4. Riddick's Folly
5. Cedar Hill Cemetery WWII Monument
6. 1810 Historical Building
7. Suffolk Seaboard Passenger Station & Caboose
8. Cultural Center Nansemond Indian Relics
9. Peanut Center
10. Suffolk Nansemond Historical Society

New Historical Downtown Trail = 1.7 miles

Example Brochure



Suffolk, Virginia

Historical Downtown Walking Tour

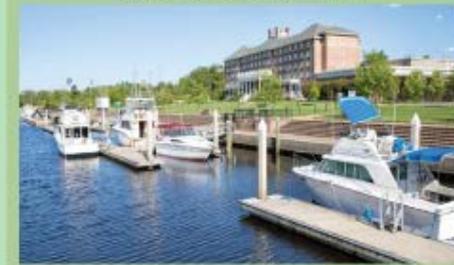


9. Peanut Center



This location is the historical shop that continues to sell peanut products. Suffolk is known as the Peanut Capital of the World. Various news articles and machinery can be found here. The peanut roaster, for example, was built in 1936, and serves the community with its product. The Center has an online store where you can order authentic Planters Peanuts.

1. Constance Wharf



The historical Wharf is located alongside the Nansemond River and is currently a park and marina. It was created around the 1720s and serves as a trading post, created by an English settler by the name of John Constant and the location was called both Constants Wharf and Constants Warehouse. Products such as gin, wine, corn, tobacco, and lumber were traded.

10. Suffolk Nansemond Cultural Society



The Society was created by the Phillips-Dawson family, in was created in their home which was purchase by the family in the early 1880s. Today the society holds Civil War tours, a Hands-on-History day, house, church, and candlelight tours, a Halloween Touch-A-Truck event for children, and various Speaker Series events.

2. Visitor's Center



Located on North Main Street, the Visitors Center provides a variety of brochures and pamphlets on tourist attractions, historical landmarks, and sites in Suffolk. The center also contains displays of its Planters peanut history and some biological and natural history. The Gift Shop is open from 9am-5pm.



Example Brochure

3. Courthouse



Located in the same building as the Visitor's Center, the Nansmond County Courthouse was burned by the British in 1779 and rebuilt after the Revolutionary War. It was later renovated and tourism offices are located above the Visitor Center space.

4. Riddick's Folly



Following the 1837 fire, the Riddick family built this home. Members of the Riddick's Family served in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and in the Union occupation of the Civil War. Etchings of the soldiers can be found on the home's walls. It is now Suffolk's only house museum, with ongoing maintenance and restoration.

5. Cedar Hill Cemetery & WWII Monument



Cedar Hill Cemetery, previously known as Green Hill Cemetery, is primarily a Civil War Cemetery, it holds an official Virginia Civil War Trail Site. Other historical features of the cemetery include the Old Union Church where worship and meetings were held, and the Confederate monument inspired by Thomas Washington Smith to honor his fellow soldiers. Other unmarked historical sites related to the Cemetery include the Union Towns and the Watering Fountain.

6. 1810 Historical Building



This building is located Across from the Station. Throughout the downtown there are various buildings with historical markers and this will serve as a standard for the others that can be highlighted or noticed during the tour.

7. Suffolk Seaboard Railroad Station



The railroad museum outlines the history of the seaboard and Roanoke railroad. The lines served passengers in the past. Inside the museum you can find a detailed handmade replica of the city of Suffolk. The Caboose beside the museum was used by the train crew in the 1960s. It included a generator, stove, and restroom.

8. Cultural Center & Nansmond Indian Relics



Many events are held at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. Suffolk residents can also take classes and see plays throughout the year, and there are camps for children and teens. The building also contains Nansmond Indian artifacts. At this stop on the tour the Indian history can be explained because of this presence. The prime location for the reservation, the Mattanock Town, is distant from the downtown.

Increase wayfinding throughout Suffolk





Questions/Discussion

Are there ideas you heard tonight that you like/dislike?

Are there other ideas you would like the Citizens Committee to consider related to green infrastructure?

Any follow-up questions and comments can be sent to:

Janelle Wright

wright.paige.janelle@gmail.com