THE CITY OF NORFOLK

2026
CITY OF NORFOLK TRAILS MASTER PLAN

NEXT PRACTICE PARTNERS
be different

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Norfolk community who participated in this planning process to help shape a more connected Norfolk.

CITY OF NORFOLK

Parks and Recreation Department

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Bicycling, Pedestrian and Active Transportation Commission

Elizabeth River Trail

Bike Norfolk

CONSULTING TEAM

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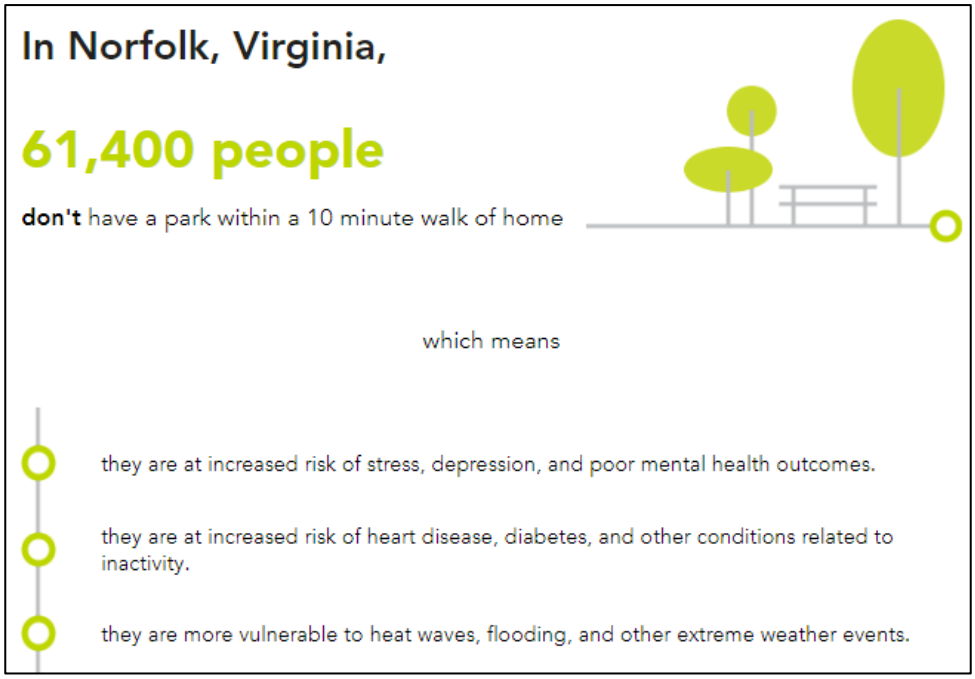
CHAPTER ONE **INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Parks and Recreation Master Plan identified trails as one of the high priority investments for the community and included key recommendations to maximize inclusive access to all offerings while creating interconnected trail networks.

Based on data from Trust for Public Land, Urban Land Institute and National Recreation and Park Association's assessment of the 10 min walk access, one in four residents of Norfolk do not have access to a park within a 10 min walk. That translated to nearly 61,400 residents without access and lack of access has shown to result in increased risk of stress, depression and poor mental health outcomes along with physical health conditions (heart conditions, diabetes etc.) related to poor physical activities and being more vulnerable to heat waves, flooding, and other extreme weather events in a coastal city like Norfolk.



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Thus, trails in Norfolk are evolving from recreational amenities into essential infrastructure that supports mobility, health, environmental resilience, and economic vitality.

The Norfolk Trails Master Plan establishes a comprehensive, long-term vision for a connected, equitable, and resilient trail network. This plan is grounded in a multi-faceted planning process that included community engagement, stakeholder input, field assessments, and data-driven analysis. Together, these efforts provide a clear understanding of existing conditions, community priorities, and the opportunities and challenges that will shape future investment in everyday infrastructure that connects people to places and opportunities.

1.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.2.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

Norfolk's population is gradually declining while becoming more diverse and older (see more details here), shifting the focus toward quality, accessibility, and equitable access to infrastructure. Economic conditions and demographic trends reinforce the importance of free, connected, and inclusive trail systems.

Key Takeaways:

- Population decline shifts focus from expansion to system quality and connectivity
- Aging population increases demand for accessible, low-impact infrastructure
- Lower income levels reinforce the importance of free public amenities
- Historically underserved populations require targeted investment
- Tree Equity and access analysis highlight neighborhood-level disparities

1.2.2 PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

Community input consistently emphasized safety, connectivity, accessibility, and amenities as top priorities. See detailed info here. Residents view trails as both recreational spaces and essential transportation routes that should connect to daily destinations.

Key Takeaways:

- Safety is the highest priority, especially lighting, crossings, and separation from traffic
- Strong demand for a connected, citywide and regional trail network
- Trails should connect to schools, transit, parks, businesses, and waterfronts
- Amenities such as restrooms, shade, and seating are critical to increasing use
- Environmental features and resilience are highly valued
- Trails are seen as both community assets and economic drivers

1.2.3 TRAIL ASSESSMENT

Existing trails provide a strong foundation but lack consistency in design, maintenance, accessibility, and connectivity. Each assessed corridor offers unique strengths, along with opportunities for improvement and can be seen in detail here..

Key Takeaways:

- Existing trails have valuable assets but lack cohesive design and identity
- Maintenance challenges, including flooding and vegetation, impact usability
- Accessibility gaps limit use for all ages and abilities
- Wayfinding, amenities, and connectivity require improvement
- Opportunities exist to unify the system through consistent standards and upgrades

1.2.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations establish a strategic framework focused on safety, connectivity, equity, accessibility, and long-term sustainability. Investments are prioritized to create a cohesive, resilient, and user-focused trail network. Detailed recommendations can be found here.

Key Takeaways (as identified in the plan):

- Prioritize safety as the foundation of the trail system
- Build a connected citywide (and regional) network
- Advance equity through targeted investment
- Design for all ages and abilities
- Expand comfort amenities that increase use
- Use trails to support climate resilience
- Strengthen waterfront and nature-based experiences
- Leverage trails for economic development
- Establish design standards and maintenance ownership
- Create and implement a regional vision

Recommended Strategic Priorities (Next 5 Years):

- Fix critical safety gaps
- Complete missing network links
- Invest in underserved neighborhoods

- Upgrade amenities and accessibility
- Deliver resilient waterfront trail projects
- Standardize branding, maintenance, and operations
- Advance regional trail partnerships

1.3 CONCLUSION

In summary, Norfolk has the opportunity to transform its trail system into a defining element of the City's future by treating trails as essential infrastructure that supports everyday life.

Key Takeaways:

- Trails can enhance health, mobility, and quality of life for all residents
- A connected and equitable system strengthens neighborhoods and access
- Implementation will require sustained commitment and strategic investment
- The plan is a living framework that should evolve over time
- A well-executed trail system can and will position Norfolk as a more resilient and connected city

CHAPTER TWO **COMMUNITY PROFILE**

2.1 OVERVIEW

The Community Profile provides a comprehensive understanding of the people, conditions, and characteristics that define Norfolk. This section establishes the foundation for the Master Plan by examining demographic trends, socioeconomic conditions, and equity considerations that influence how residents live, move, and engage with trails and open space.

Rather than viewing the community as a single data point, this profile explores the full context of who Norfolk serves including population trends, age distribution, racial and ethnic composition, income levels, and the presence of historically underserved populations. These factors shape not only current trail use, but also future demand, preferences, and barriers to access.

The analysis reveals a community experiencing gradual population decline, increasing diversity, and a shift toward an older age profile, alongside economic conditions that elevate the importance of free and accessible public infrastructure. In this context, trails play a critical role as both recreational amenities and essential connectors that support mobility, health, and quality of life.

This section also incorporates key equity-focused frameworks, including Tree Equity and 10-minute walk access, to better understand how environmental benefits and park access are distributed across the City. Together, these elements provide a holistic view of the community and help ensure that future trail investments are data-driven, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all residents.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

The Demographic Analysis provides an overview of the population characteristics within the City of Norfolk, including age distribution, race and ethnicity, and key socioeconomic indicators such as income. This analysis reflects the full population of the City and is intended to inform trail planning decisions by identifying current and future community needs, preferences, and potential demand for trail use.

Understanding demographic trends is critical to developing a trail system that is equitable, accessible, and responsive to all residents. Factors such as population growth, age composition, and diversity directly influence how trails are used whether for recreation, transportation, health, or social connection. While this analysis provides a data-driven foundation for planning, it represents a snapshot in time and should be interpreted within the context of broader community input and evolving local conditions.

2.2.1 METHODOLOGY

The demographic analysis for this plan utilizes data from two primary sources: the U.S. Census Bureau and Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), a leading provider of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and demographic forecasting. Data was collected in April 2026 and includes 2020 Census base data, along with updated estimates and projections available at that time.

ESRI projections are developed using a combination of historical population trends, migration patterns, and economic indicators. These projections do not account for localized policy changes, such as zoning updates or housing development initiatives, and should therefore be viewed as trend-based estimates rather than precise forecasts. As such, this analysis reflects conditions as of April 2026 and should be periodically updated to remain aligned with future policy and development changes.

For this study, ESRI estimated current population characteristics for 2025 based on post-2020 trends and provided projections through 2030. To extend the planning horizon, the consulting team applied a straight-line linear regression model to estimate demographic conditions for 2035 (10-year) and 2040 (15-year) timeframes. This approach assumes a consistent rate of change over time and provides a simplified framework for long-range planning.

While this method offers a reasonable baseline for forecasting, actual growth may vary due to economic shifts, regional development, or environmental factors. If population growth exceeds projected levels, demand for trails, open space, and related amenities may increase beyond current expectations. Ongoing monitoring and periodic updates are recommended to ensure the trail system continues to align with community needs.

2.2.2 POPULATION

The City of Norfolk is projected to experience a gradual population decline over the next two decades. The population decreased from 238,005 in 2020 to an estimated 234,596 in 2025 and is expected to continue declining to 231,571 in 2030, 228,290 in 2035, and 225,073 by 2040.

This represents a consistent but modest annual decline ranging from approximately -0.26% to -0.29% per year. Overall, the City is projected to lose roughly 12,900 residents between 2020 and 2040, a decrease of approximately 5.4%.

While the rate of decline is relatively slow and stable, this trend reflects a shifting population dynamic rather than rapid contraction. For planning purposes, this indicates that future demand for infrastructure will not be driven by population growth, but rather by changing demographics, usage patterns, and community preferences.

For the trail system, this trend reinforces the importance of focusing on quality over expansion alone. Investments should prioritize connectivity, accessibility, and user experience ensuring that existing and future residents are well-served rather than relying solely on population growth to drive demand. At the same time, trails can serve as a strategic tool to enhance livability, attract residents, and support long-term community sustainability.

2.2.3 RACE/ETHNICITY

RACE/ETHNICITY DEFINITIONS

The minimum categories for data on race and ethnicity for Federal statistics, program administrative reporting, and civil rights compliance reporting are defined below. The Census 2020 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 2010 Census and earlier censuses; therefore, caution must be used when interpreting changes in the racial composition of the U.S. population over time. The latest (Census 2020) definitions and nomenclature are used within this analysis.

- American Indian – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- Asian – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- Black or African American – This includes a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- White – This includes a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- Hispanic or Latino – This is an ethnic distinction, a subset of a race as defined by the Federal Government; this includes a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Census states that the race and ethnicity categories generally reflect social definitions in the U.S. and are not an attempt to define race and ethnicity biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. We recognize that the race and ethnicity categories include racial, ethnic, and national origins and sociocultural groups.

Please Note: The Census Bureau defines Race as a person's self-identification with one or more of the following social groups: White, Black, or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, or a combination of these. While Ethnicity is defined as whether a person is of Hispanic / Latino origin or not. For this reason, the Hispanic / Latino ethnicity is viewed as separate from race throughout this demographic analysis.

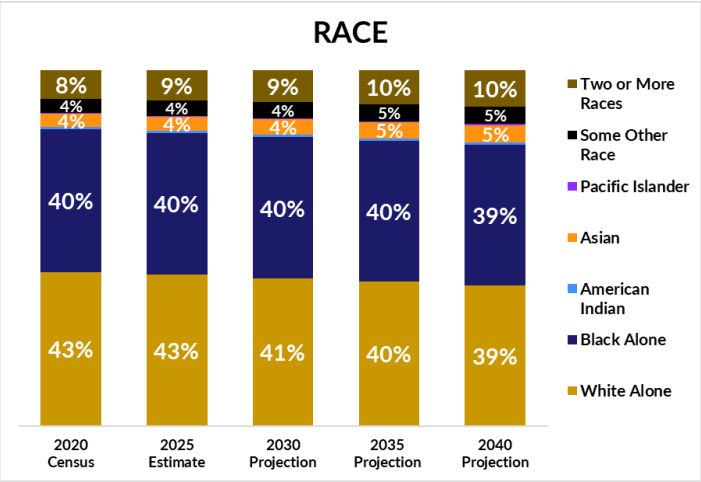
POPULATION BY RACE/ETHNICITY

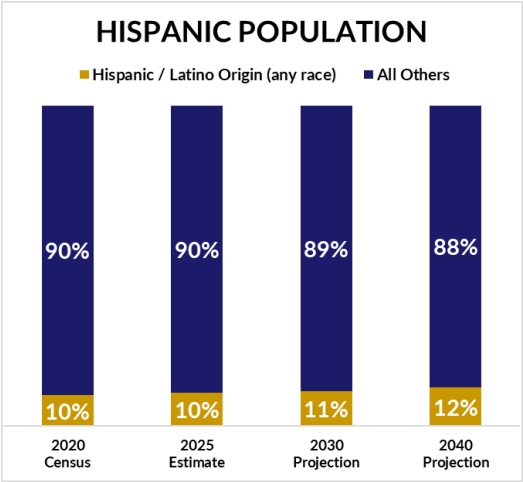
The racial and ethnic composition of Norfolk is projected to remain relatively stable over time, while gradually becoming more diverse. In 2020, the population was primarily composed of White Alone (43%) and Black Alone (40%) residents, together representing the clear majority of the population. Smaller segments included individuals identifying as Two or More Races (8%), Asian (4%), Some Other Race (4%), and American Indian (1%), with no measurable Pacific Islander population.

By 2040, modest shifts are projected across several groups. The White Alone population is expected to decline slightly to 39%, while the Black Alone population also decreases marginally to 39%. At the same time, the share of residents identifying as Two or More Races is projected to increase from 8% to 10%, and both Asian and Some Other Race populations are expected to grow to 5%. The American Indian population remains stable at approximately 1%.

Ethnically, the Hispanic/Latino population (of any race) is projected to grow steadily, increasing from 9.72% in 2020 to 12.12% by 2040. While this represents moderate growth, it contributes to the City's overall diversification and reflects evolving community demographics.

Collectively, these trends indicate a community that remains anchored by its two largest racial groups while experiencing gradual increases in multiracial and Hispanic/Latino populations. For trail planning, this reinforces the importance of equitable access across all neighborhoods, inclusive engagement strategies, and culturally responsive design considerations. As the community becomes more diverse, the trail system should function as a unifying asset—providing safe, welcoming, and accessible spaces that serve residents of all backgrounds and abilities.





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2.2.4 POPULATION BY AGE

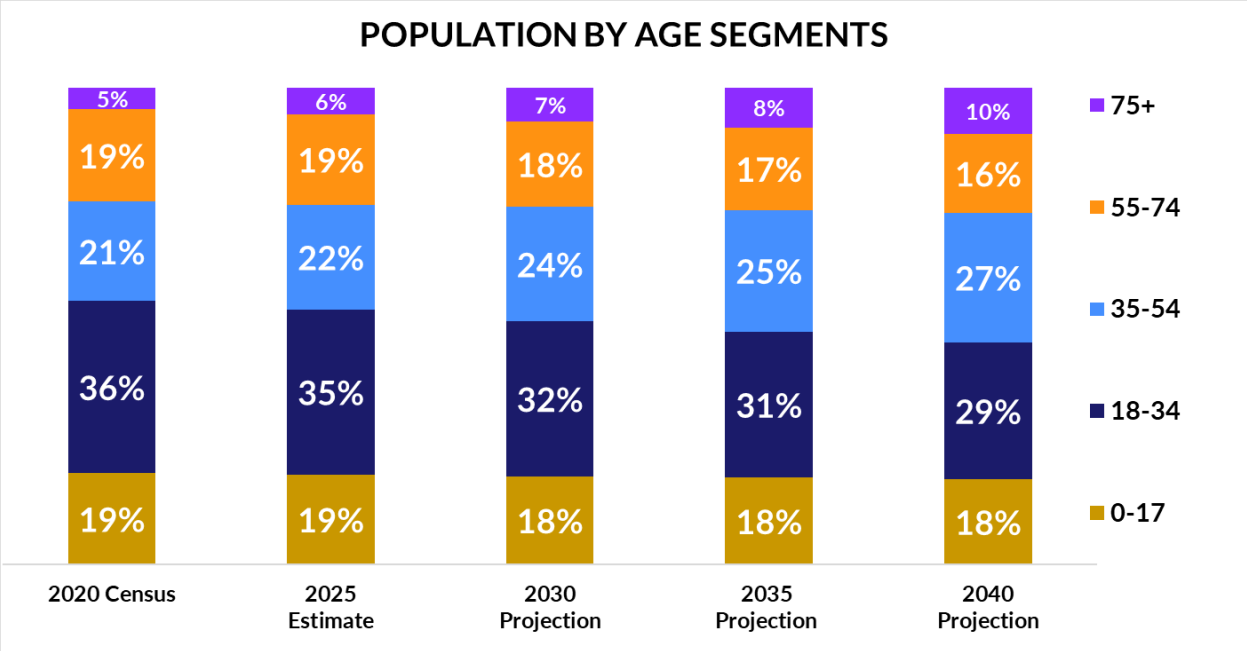
Norfolk's population is projected to undergo a noticeable shift over the next two decades, characterized by a declining young adult population and a growing middle-aged and older adult demographic.

In 2020, the largest segment of the population was ages 18–34, representing 36% of residents, followed by ages 35–54 at 21%. Youth (0–17) and older adults ages 55–74 each accounted for 19%, while those 75 and older made up 5%.

By 2040, this distribution is expected to rebalance significantly. The 18–34 population is projected to decline to 29%, while the 35–54 segment grows to become the largest age group at 27%. At the same time, the population age 75 and older is expected to double from 5% to 10%, representing the fastest-growing segment. The 55–74 group experiences a slight decline from 19% to 16%, while the youth population (0–17) remains relatively stable at approximately 18%.

These trends reflect a maturing population with increasing demand for accessible, health-focused, and low-impact recreation opportunities. For trail planning, this shift emphasizes the importance of universal design, including smooth and consistent surfaces, safe crossings, adequate lighting, and shaded rest areas. As older adult populations grow, trails will play an increasingly important role in supporting active aging, wellness, and social connection.

At the same time, the continued presence of youth and younger adults reinforces the need for a multi-generational system—one that supports both recreational and transportation uses, including safe routes to schools, neighborhoods, and community destinations.



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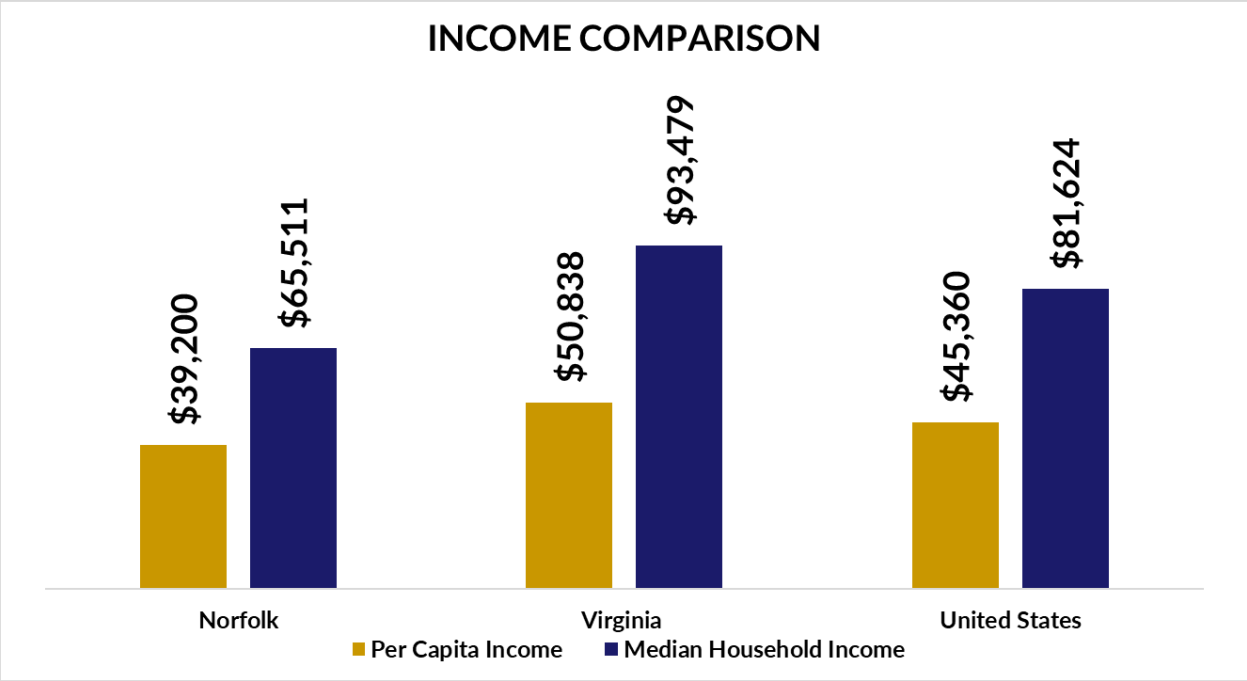
2.2.5 INCOME

Income levels in Norfolk are lower than both state and national benchmarks, which has important implications for access, affordability, and the role of public infrastructure.

The City's per capita income is $39,200, compared to $50,838 in Virginia and $45,360 nationally. Similarly, the median household income in Norfolk is $65,511, which falls below the state median of $93,479 and the national median of $81,624.

These disparities indicate that a larger share of Norfolk residents may have limited discretionary income for fee-based recreation. As a result, publicly accessible amenities—such as trails—play a critical role in providing equitable opportunities for recreation, transportation, and health.

For trail planning, this reinforces the importance of maintaining a system that is free, accessible, and well-connected to everyday destinations. Investments in trails should prioritize neighborhoods with greater financial barriers, ensuring that all residents have access to safe, high-quality spaces for physical activity, mobility, and community connection.



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2.2.6 HISTORICALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Historically underserved populations are groups that have experienced systemic barriers to resources, opportunities, and services due to socioeconomic, physical, linguistic, or institutional factors. These barriers can limit access to recreation, transportation, healthcare, and other essential aspects of daily life. Common indicators include income level, housing status, disability, language, and access to health services.

Understanding these populations is critical to ensuring equitable access to trails and related amenities. In Norfolk, several key indicators highlight both areas of relative advantage and areas where barriers to access may be more pronounced compared to state and national benchmarks.

Norfolk has a smaller share of foreign-born residents (7.9%) and households where a language other than English is spoken at home (11.8%) compared to Virginia (13.1% and 17.4%, respectively) and the United States (14.1% and 22.3%). While this may suggest fewer language-based barriers overall, it does not eliminate the need for inclusive communication and outreach strategies.

Housing and economic indicators point to more significant challenges. A majority of Norfolk residents (53.7%) are renters, substantially higher than both the state (32.7%) and national (34.8%) averages. Additionally, 16.5% of residents live in poverty—well above Virginia (9.7%) and the U.S. (10.6%). These factors can limit access to private recreation opportunities and increase reliance on publicly accessible infrastructure.

Health and accessibility indicators also highlight important considerations. Norfolk has a higher percentage of residents with disabilities (11.7%) compared to both the state (8.8%) and national (9.3%) averages. Additionally, 10.4% of residents lack health insurance, exceeding both state (8.3%) and national (9.6%) levels. These conditions reinforce the importance of safe, accessible, and health-supportive environments.

Collectively, these characteristics underscore the need for a trail system that prioritizes equitable distribution, universal accessibility, and connections to essential destinations. Investments should focus on underserved neighborhoods, ensuring that trails function not only as recreational amenities but also as critical infrastructure supporting mobility, health, and quality of life for all residents.

2025 Demographic Comparison		Norfolk	Virginia	United States
Historically Underserved Population Characteristics	Foreign Born	7.9%	13.1%	14.1%
	Language other Than English Spoken at Home	11.8%	17.4%	22.3%
	% of Renters	53.7%	32.7%	34.8%
	With a Disability	11.7%	8.8%	9.3%
	No Health Insurance	10.4%	8.3%	9.6%
	Persons in Poverty	16.5%	9.7%	10.6%

2.3 TRENDS

Understanding how residents experience access to green space requires looking beyond traditional metrics and examining how environmental benefits and opportunities are distributed across the community. In Norfolk, two key frameworks—Tree Equity and 10-minute walk access—provide important insight into emerging trends related to equity, health, and connectivity.

Together, these measures highlight a shift in how parks, trails, and green infrastructure are evaluated. The focus is no longer solely on the presence of amenities, but on who benefits, where gaps exist, and how access varies across neighborhoods. Tree Equity emphasizes the distribution of environmental benefits such as shade, air quality, and heat mitigation, while the 10-minute walk standard evaluates how easily residents can reach parks and open space on foot.

These trends reveal a community that performs relatively well overall yet still experiences disparities at the neighborhood level. While many residents have walkable access to parks and the City maintains a solid tree canopy, nearly all neighborhoods fall short of full equity benchmarks, and gaps persist in both canopy coverage and proximity.

As a result, planning efforts are increasingly guided by a more targeted and data-driven approach—prioritizing investments in areas with the greatest need, particularly where environmental burdens and access limitations intersect. This integrated view of equity and access helps ensure that future investments in trails and green space are not only effective, but also intentional, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all residents.

2.3.1 TREE EQUITY

WHAT IS TREE EQUITY AND WHY IT MATTERS

Tree Equity refers to the fair and just distribution of urban tree canopy so that all residents, regardless of income, race, age, or neighborhood, can experience the environmental, health, and social benefits that trees provide. These benefits are not just aesthetic. Trees act as natural infrastructure, reducing urban heat, improving air quality, managing stormwater, and contributing to both physical and mental well-being.

Historically, tree canopy has not been evenly distributed. Lower-income neighborhoods, communities of color, and areas with higher environmental burdens often have fewer trees and, as a result, experience higher temperatures, poorer air quality, and increased health risks. Tree Equity addresses this imbalance by identifying where investment in tree canopy is most needed.

The American Forests Tree Equity Score is a nationally recognized metric designed to quantify these disparities. It evaluates how well the benefits of trees are reaching communities that are disproportionately impacted by extreme heat and other environmental hazards. By centering both environmental and demographic factors, Tree Equity shifts tree planting from a general beautification effort to a targeted strategy for health, resilience, and social equity.


trees keep Norfolk beautiful!
#Jam'nJan

METHODOLOGY

The Tree Equity Score is calculated at the Census block group level, allowing for a detailed, neighborhood-scale understanding of tree canopy distribution and need. Scores range from 0 to 100, with:

- 100 indicating that a neighborhood has sufficient tree canopy to meet equity-based benchmarks
- Lower scores indicating higher priority areas for tree planting and investment

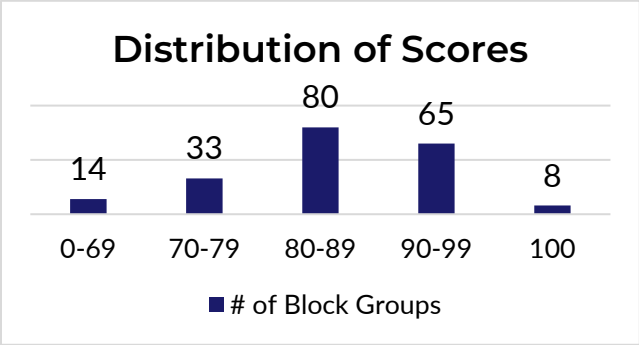
The score is derived using a combination of environmental and socio-demographic indicators, including:

- Existing tree canopy cover
- Surface temperature and heat disparity
- Population density
- Income levels and poverty rates
- Race and ethnicity (communities of color)
- Age (children and seniors)
- Health burden indicators
- Employment and linguistic isolation

By integrating these variables, the methodology prioritizes areas where residents are both more vulnerable to environmental stressors and less likely to benefit from tree canopy.

APPLICATION IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

In Norfolk, the overall Tree Equity Score is 84 (national average is 82), indicating that while the city performs relatively well overall, significant disparities remain at the neighborhood level.



- 96% of neighborhoods fall below a score of 100, meaning nearly all areas could benefit from additional tree canopy
- 14 block groups score below 70, representing the highest priority areas for investment
- The city's tree canopy coverage is 27%, with a need to expand canopy by approximately 10.6 square miles (about 491,256 trees) to achieve full equity

Demographic and environmental conditions further underscore the importance of this work:

- 17% of residents live in poverty
- 57% of residents are people of color
- 31% are children or seniors, populations more vulnerable to heat and environmental stress
- The city experiences measurable health burdens and heat disparities, which are directly influenced by tree canopy coverage

Why This Matters for Planning

Tree Equity provides a data-driven framework for prioritizing investment, ensuring that limited resources are directed where they will have the greatest impact. Rather than distributing tree planting efforts evenly, this approach aligns with broader goals of:

- Equitable access to environmental benefits
- Climate resilience and heat mitigation
- Public health improvement
- Targeted investment in historically underserved neighborhoods

Incorporating Tree Equity into planning efforts allows the City to move beyond traditional park and landscape metrics and toward a more holistic understanding of how green infrastructure supports community well-being. It transforms tree planting from a passive amenity into an active strategy for advancing equity, resilience, and quality of life.

CHAPTER THREE **PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY**

3.1 NORFOLK TRAILS PUBLIC INPUT MEETING

Facilitators and participants displaying results from the Public Meeting Activity Boards

Presentation during the Noon Meeting

In September 2024, two public input meetings were conducted to gather feedback on desired trail types, locations, and amenities in Norfolk.

This section provides a summary of the input exercises and written comments shared by attendees. The tabulated results from the input exercises are attached to this document.

ACTIVITY BOARD #1 YOUR DESTINATIONS-WHERE WE ARE NOW

THE CITY OF NORFOLK | Norfolk Trail Network Assessment | Existing Trails and Sidewalk Infrastructure - "Where we are now" | May 2025 | NEXT PRACTICE PARTNERS | Kimley»Horn

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ACTIVITY BOARD #2 WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

- Nature received the most green dots followed by parks, events, and shopping.
- Nature also received the most red dots indicating it stands out as a priority destination

ACTIVITY BOARD #3 YOUR TRAIL ACTIVITIES

- Walk/Hike received the most green dots followed by Connect with nature, and fun with friends.
- Transportation (getting to work, school, etc.) received the most red dots indicating that it is a priority activity.

ACTIVITY BOARD #4 YOUR TRAIL AMENITIES

- Restrooms received the most green dots, followed by places to sit, and wayfinding signage.
- Shade received the most red dots indicating that it is a priority amenity.

ACTIVITY BOARD #5 YOUR TRAIL EXPERIENCE

- Unpaved nature trails received the most green dots followed by paved nature trails, then rustic trails.
- Delineated shared use path received the most red dots indicating that it is a priority trail type.

ACTIVITY BOARD #6 YOUR BENEFITS

- Improving health and wellness receive the most green dots followed by Improving environmental conditions, and social interaction.
- Improving transportation alternatives received the most red dots indicating that is identified as having the greatest benefit.

ACTIVITY BOARD #7 YOUR THOUGHTS & IDEAS

Lunch Meeting

- Connect with Chesapeake - future East Coast Greenway alignment, downtown Norfolk, Berkley Bridge, Berkley, South Norfolk, Veterans Bridge.
- Connect to other cities - especially Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and Suffolk; prioritize green space.

- Add more shade at Town Point Park (trees, tension fabric, awnings or pergolas, swings like those in Beaufort, SC).
- Dream big; safe infrastructure will encourage more people to use the trails.
- Provide signage that is accessible to people with visual impairments.
- Connect neighborhoods to the Tide. It's possible to take a bike on the Tide, but riding from the Newtown end is challenging due to safety concerns.
- Complete the Elizabeth River Trail and connect it to other neighborhood trails.
- Ensure dedicated, protected, or physically separated bike/walk lanes from car lanes; avoid relying solely on sharrows or road paint.
- Coordinate trail connections to other cities in Tidewater, especially between downtown Norfolk, Military Circle, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake.
- Extend the Elizabeth River Trail from Naval Station Norfolk to Newtown Road light rail station, and provide public access restrooms.
- Plan the trail system to complement business and light rail routes; redundancy is key.
- Work collaboratively with VDOT and regional departments for better connectivity.
- Include amenities like hydration stations and water stops.
- Recognize that nature includes our beaches.
- Allow for development along trails for activities like indoor amphitheaters and picnic seating areas.
- Refer to the draft Chesapeake Trails and Connectivity Plan for additional planning insights.
- Provide dedicated trail connections to Naval Station Norfolk.
- Connect the Elizabeth River Trail to the naval base.
- Improve accessibility for people accessing trails and amenities.
- Explore the potential for trails in Woods Corner, Miller Store, and Robin Hood areas.
- Plan connections between green spaces to facilitate biking and walking between them.
- Establish connections from Chesapeake, downtown Norfolk, Indian River Road, and Indian River Park in Chesapeake.
- Add connections to water sports activities (identify needed facilities and link trails to them).
- Add more boardwalks and fishing platforms.
- Ensure the Elizabeth River Trail extends to Newtown Road light rail station to link with the future Virginia Beach Trail.
- Include public restrooms and water fountains along trails.
- Connect downtown Town Point Park and Nauticus to the beaches via a safe route, as no safe bike or pedestrian route currently exists.
- Link downtown Town Point Park and the Newtown Road area to Virginia Beach; there is no safe bike or pedestrian route for this trip.
- Consider trails as essential city infrastructure and transportation; prioritize safe, off-road routes without cars. Trails are more than just parks.
- Include water access and develop water-adjacent trails.
- Comments from 6pm Meeting
- Speak to community groups personally.
- Add more true kayak launches.
- Ensure clear signage on the Elizabeth River Trail.
- Safety is paramount.

- Consider connecting trails to Hampton; it is possible!
- Connect schools to trails.
- Create trails in underserved communities, particularly Black communities.
- Develop a trailway that weaves through neighborhoods.
- Avoid adding bike lanes on E. Little Creek Rd.
- Install a kayak launch at Charlton Park, which already has parking.
- Increase trail use among kids, as they are rarely seen on trails.
- Note the Harbor Point boardwalk trail along the water off Campo Stella.
- Use trails to promote sustainability and resilience to sea level rise through innovative design and green space preservation.
- Provide more fishing access points near water-based activities.
- Strengthen connections in the existing trail network and complete sections that connect to Virginia Beach and Chesapeake.
- Incorporate Strava data in planning.
- Use trails to address divisive infrastructure.
- Consider who implements trail improvements to ensure stewardship.
- Add more trails and footpaths at Northside Park.
- Enable kids to walk or bike to school using trails.
- Add amenities like benches to the Mayflower Arch Trail.
- Create an eastern trail similar to the Elizabeth River Trail to provide additional connectivity.
- Connect the Seaboard Coast Trail and the Virginia Beach Trail to the ocean.
- Create or brand city trail connectors that prioritize safety over speed.
- Collaborate with the Bike, Pedestrian, and Active Transportation Commission to gather feedback from civic leagues.
- Focus on creating a functional network of trails rather than isolated alignments.
- Improve access to the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail via bus or train.
- Add more campsites along nature trails.

3.1.2 PRIMARY THEMES FROM COMMENTS

1) **Enhanced Connectivity Across Communities and Regions**
   - Residents envision a more integrated trail network that links Norfolk to surrounding areas such as Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and Hampton, with prioritized connections to military and business hubs like Naval Station Norfolk, Newtown Road, and downtown. This includes bridging gaps in the existing trail system (e.g., Elizabeth River Trail extensions) and connecting neighborhoods to transit stations like the Tide Light Rail.

2) **Safety and Accessibility as Top Priorities**
   - Safety is the community's primary concern, with calls for dedicated, protected bike and pedestrian lanes separated from vehicular traffic. Emphasis was also placed on accessible signage for visually impaired users and the need for amenities such as lighting, hydration stations, and public restrooms to make trails more user-friendly.

3) **Inclusivity and Access for Underserved Communities**
   - Participants stressed the importance of expanding trails into underserved areas, including historically marginalized neighborhoods, to ensure equitable access. Suggestions included

creating connectors through neighborhoods and integrating trails into school routes to encourage more kids to walk or bike safely to school.

4) **Environmental Resilience and Sustainable Design**
   - Norfolk's waterfront and green spaces were highlighted as essential elements for trail resilience against sea-level rise. Participants expressed interest in incorporating sustainability into trail designs, such as preserving natural habitats, establishing shaded areas, and leveraging green infrastructure to mitigate flooding and erosion.
   -
5) **Community and Recreation Amenities Along Trails**
   - Residents are interested in more recreational opportunities on trails, including fishing platforms, kayak launches, and designated nature trails with campsites. Calls for enhanced amenities included shaded seating, picnic areas, and benches, particularly at popular spots like Mayflower Arch Trail and Northside Park.

6) **Cultural and Economic Integration**
   - Trails are seen as part of Norfolk's broader city infrastructure, with potential to support local businesses and connect people to cultural hubs. Residents suggested that trails align with business districts and transit routes to create a more redundant, multi-modal system that encourages active use.

7) **Regional Collaboration for a Unified Network**
   - Participants encouraged collaboration with regional planning and transportation departments, including the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and civic leagues, to create a cohesive, safe, and user-focused trail network that aligns with future plans, such as the East Coast Greenway.

3.2 ONLINE SURVEY REPORT

The Plan's Online Community Survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey to gauge broader community input and received 197 responses. While the survey offers valuable insights into community interests and trail usage, the results are not statistically valid and may not be demographically representative of the Norfolk population.

Full survey results with charts are in the Appendix. Demographically, the survey skewed significantly older, whiter, and more female than the city's actual population. Specifically:

Age:

- 45.4% of respondents were age 55 and older, compared to just 25% of Norfolk's total population.
- No respondents were under 18.

Gender:

- 60.6% identified as female (Norfolk: 49%)
- 36.4% identified as male, and 3% selected another or chose not to disclose.

Race/Ethnicity:

- 83.6% of respondents identified as White (Norfolk: 42%)
- Only 11.2% identified as Black or African American (Norfolk: 40%)

These disparities highlight the need for cautious interpretation. The results reflect the perspectives of a highly engaged segment of the population but do not capture the full diversity of Norfolk's communities. As such, they should be viewed as supplemental qualitative input, not the only measure of citywide needs or priorities.

3.2.1 TRAIL USE AND PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

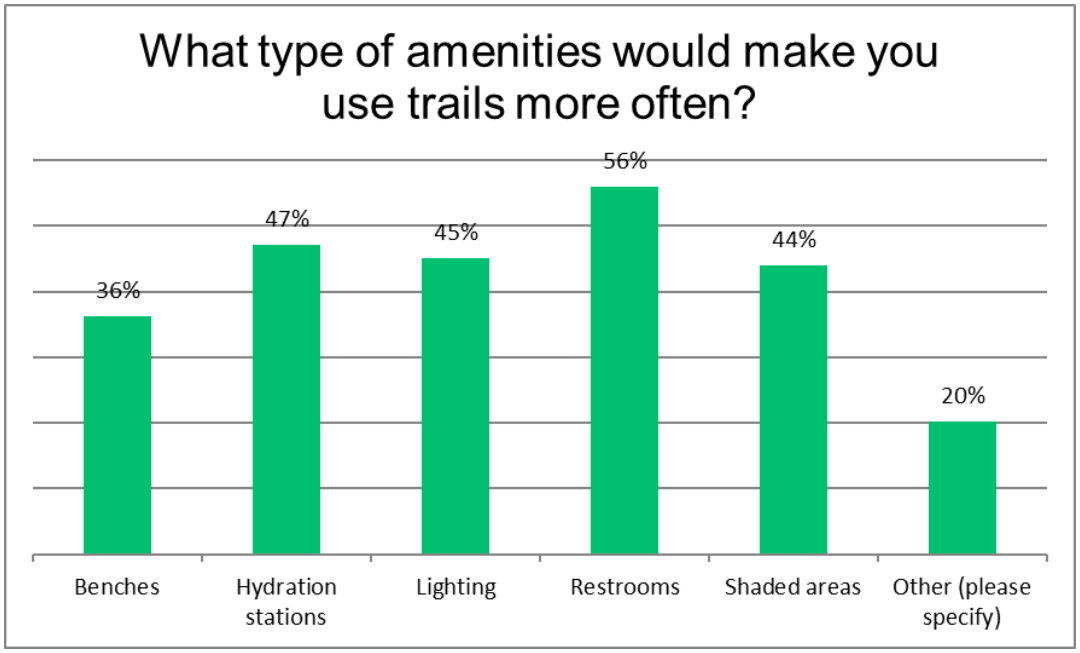
Trail use in Norfolk is overwhelmingly driven by recreational and wellness activities:

- Walking – 87%
- Biking – 62%
- Nature observation – 46%
- Recreation – 35%
- Jogging – 31%
- Commuting – 15%

When it comes to frequency of use:

- 39% of respondents use trails weekly
- 19% use them daily
- 23% use them monthly
- Only 15% reported rarely using trails, and just 4% said never

These results confirm that Norfolk's trails are most frequently used for leisure, health, and enjoyment of the outdoors. While commuting is a lesser-reported use, the combined interest in walking, biking, and trail connectivity suggests potential to support non-motorized transportation with infrastructure and amenity improvements.



3.2.2 AMENITIES AND EXPERIENCE ENHANCERS

Respondents identified several high-priority amenities that would increase their use of Norfolk's trails:

- Restrooms – 56%
- Hydration stations – 47%
- Lighting – 45%
- Shaded areas – 44%
- Benches – 36%

These responses suggest that basic comfort, safety, and accessibility features are a top concern for users. Restrooms ranked highest, indicating that longer trail use and inclusivity for all ages and abilities are important. Lighting and shade were also noted frequently, underscoring a need for both visibility and protection from the elements.

3.2.3 CONNECTIVITY AND DESTINATIONS

Respondents highlighted a clear desire for better trail connectivity to key destinations across Norfolk, with a focus on safety, accessibility, and convenience. The most requested connections included:

- Ocean View – Mentioned 14 times
- Naval Bases and Military Installations – Mentioned 12 times
- Granby Street – Mentioned 6 times
- Norfolk Botanical Garden – Mentioned 6 times
- Elizabeth River Trail (ERT) – Frequently referenced for expansion or connection

Participants emphasized the need for safe, continuous routes that link neighborhoods to the waterfront, employment centers, parks, and cultural landmarks. Many comments called for:

- Direct routes to the Zoo, Downtown, and Ghent
- Extended connections to Virginia Beach, especially via Newtown Road and the planned Virginia Beach Trail
- Increased access to transit, such as Tide Light Rail stations and bus stops
- Separation from vehicular traffic, particularly along major corridors like Granby Street and Tidewater Drive

Notably, only 23% of survey respondents felt trails were well-connected to transit options like light rail or bus stops, while 37% said no, and 40% were unsure.

These findings reflect a widespread interest in creating a fully integrated active transportation network, where trails function not just as recreational assets, but also as practical commuting routes that promote equity, reduce reliance on cars, and foster community access to essential destinations.

3.2.4 SAFETY CONCERNS AND TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Safety emerged as a top concern among survey respondents, with both amenity preferences and open-ended feedback identifying specific risks and improvement opportunities.

When asked about desired safety features, respondents prioritized:

- Lighting – 72%
- Emergency call boxes – 54%
- Separated lanes for different users – 44%
- Signage for visually impaired users – 25%
- Only 4% said no additional safety features were needed

Beyond features, open-ended responses identified specific trail segments where users currently feel unsafe. The most frequently mentioned area was the Hampton Boulevard corridor, particularly its underpasses and adjacent sections of the Elizabeth River Trail (ERT). Concerns focused on:

- Poor or no lighting
- Narrow pathways
- Lack of separation from high-speed traffic
- Unsafe or poorly maintained crossings
- Visibility issues, especially at night

Other locations noted include Granby Street, Colley Avenue, Ocean View, Brambleton Avenue, and several underpasses and trail-road crossings citywide. In total, 85 respondents shared safety concerns, with recurring themes of faded or unprotected bike lanes, conflicts with vehicles, and a general feeling of isolation in certain trail areas.

This input highlights the need for strategic safety investments, including:

- Better lighting and visibility
- Clearer and more consistent signage
- Emergency infrastructure (e.g., call boxes)
- Physical separation from vehicles and traffic-calming near crossings

Improving safety is critical not only to increase trail usage but also to ensure that all users, especially pedestrians, cyclists, and mobility device users—can travel confidently and comfortably.

3.2.5 ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVE TRAIL USE

Trail accessibility emerged as a key theme in both multiple-choice and open-ended responses, with many users expressing uncertainty or dissatisfaction with current conditions.

When asked if trails are accessible to all users, including those with disabilities:

- 33% said Yes
- 23% said No
- 44% said Not Sure

Among those who said "No" or shared concerns, responses pointed to a range of physical and design-related barriers:

- **Uneven surfaces** – Bumpy or cracked pavement, gravel, tree roots, and cinder made trails difficult to navigate, particularly for wheelchair users and older adults.
- **Lack of ADA features** – Missing or inadequate curb cuts and ramps, especially near bridges, beach access points, and sidewalk intersections, limited usability.
- **Narrow sidewalks and trails** – Especially in older areas like the Freemason District, sidewalks were described as too narrow or cluttered for safe passage by those using mobility devices.
- **Lack of transit access and trailhead parking** – Some respondents noted that trails were hard to reach without a car and were not well-integrated with public transit options.
- **Sensory barriers** – Users with visual impairments described challenges with dog leash interference, cyclist behavior, poor signage, and a lack of tactile or auditory cues.

Additional feedback emphasized gaps in connectivity, inaccessible beach or shoreline access, and discomfort navigating trail-road intersections due to poor crossing design or fast-moving traffic.

- This input highlights several improvement priorities to support more inclusive access:
- Smoother, ADA-compliant trail surfaces
- More consistent curb cuts and ramps
- Wider and unobstructed sidewalks and trail segments
- Better connections to public transit
- Tactile, visual, and auditory wayfinding cues for all users

Creating a universally accessible trail system is essential to ensure people of all ages and abilities including those using wheelchairs, mobility aids, or strollers can enjoy safe and equitable access to Norfolk's growing trail network.

3.2.6 WANTS AND NEEDS

Community feedback clearly indicated a desire for trails that are more connected, environmentally engaging, and multifunctional. Survey responses and comments emphasized how improved connectivity and thoughtful design could significantly increase trail usage.

Connectivity to Community Destinations

- 80% of respondents said they or their families would use trails more often if they connected to schools, libraries, or community centers.
- This finding reinforces the importance of designing trails that serve both recreational and everyday transportation purposes making them viable routes for walking or biking to school, work, or community events.

Environmental Features That Matter Most

Respondents expressed strong preferences for natural and comfortable trail environments:

- Natural habitats – 78%
- Waterfront views – 70%
- Shaded areas – 61%
- Flood-resilient designs – 48%

Only 1 person (less than 1%) said none of these environmental features were important.

Flooding and Erosion Issues

Open-ended feedback revealed frequent flooding and erosion concerns, especially around:

- Larchmont (including Surrey Crescent and Richmond Crescent)
- The Hague
- Elizabeth River Trail segments near Water Street, Harbor Park, and Colonial Place
- Plum Point Park
- These areas were noted for ponding, root damage, or erosion that impacts safety and usability—particularly for walkers and cyclists.

Recreational Integration Preferences

When asked what recreational features should be integrated into trails, respondents favored:

- Nature trails – 80%
- Kayak launches – 49%
- Fishing platforms – 30%
- Campsites – 11%

These preferences support a more dynamic, diverse trail system that goes beyond basic walking and biking.

Support for Business Integration

- 88% believe trails should integrate with local businesses such as cafés, bike shops, and markets.
- Suggested locations include Ghent, Downtown, Chelsea, ODU, Colonial Place, and Ocean View—areas with strong potential for trail-driven economic development.

Regional Connectivity

- 43% rated it "very important" that Norfolk's trail system connects to larger networks like the East Coast Greenway, with another 31% saying it is "somewhat important."
- This interest in regional connections highlights a growing desire for long-distance mobility and tourism potential through trail use.

Together, these findings emphasize the community's desire for a trail system that is functional, scenic, integrated with everyday life, and designed to support both recreation and transportation. Enhancing environmental resilience and increasing access to amenities could transform Norfolk's trails into a valued part of residents' daily routines.

3.2.7 SUMMARY

The Norfolk Trails Master Plan Online Community Survey provided a valuable snapshot of resident perspectives, offering detailed input on how the city's trail system is currently used—and how it can be improved. While not statistically representative of the city's full demographic diversity, the survey captured voices of highly engaged residents and highlighted recurring themes that can help guide future investments.

Across all sections of the survey, one message was clear: Norfolk's community wants a safer, more accessible, better connected, and more inclusive trail network. Residents overwhelmingly use trails for recreation and wellness but also expressed interest in trails that support everyday transportation particularly if those trails connect to schools, libraries, transit stops, and local businesses.

Several consistent priorities emerged:

- **Safety and accessibility** must be foundational to all future trail planning. Residents cited lighting, emergency call boxes, physical separation from traffic, and ADA-compliant design as essential to creating a trail system that people feel confident using—regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel.
- **Connectivity to neighborhoods and destinations** is critical. Many called for extended connections to Ocean View, military bases, Virginia Beach, and under-served areas such as Larchmont and eastern Norfolk. Better transit access and improved crossings were also frequently mentioned.
- **Environmental features and trail amenities** like restrooms, shaded areas, and natural scenery are highly valued. These not only improve comfort but help make trails welcoming to a wider range of users.

- **Recreation and economic integration** present opportunities to create trails that serve multiple functions. From kayak launches and nature trails to cafés and markets, residents envision trails as both community assets and economic catalysts.

While the survey results should be interpreted with an understanding of their limitations, they offer powerful qualitative insights into how people interact with Norfolk's trail system and what they hope it will become. By centering safety, accessibility, and connectivity, the City can create a trail network that supports health, mobility, equity, and economic vitality for all Norfolk residents.

3.3 WHAT WE HEARD

NEXT PRACTICE PARTNERS

CHAPTER FOUR **TRAIL ASSESSMENT**

In September 2024, three potential trail corridors identified by the City of Norfolk: Elizabeth River Trail, Lambert Point Public Open Space, and Northside Park were walked and assessed for key features, environmental concerns, access points, and connectivity. Field notes and photographs were collected at each site to document findings and better understand the unique conditions and needs of each trail.

Elizabeth River Trail

- **Strengths**: The trail features a variety of surfaces—such as asphalt, concrete, pavers, and gravel—and is equipped with amenities like bike repair stations, lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and public restrooms. Its width accommodates walkers, cyclists, joggers, and scooter users, and wayfinding signage is generally adequate.

- **Weaknesses**: The lack of a cohesive design, due to reliance on existing infrastructure, results in inconsistent site furnishings and pavement markers, diminishing the sense of place and continuity. Urban parking is not directly connected to the trail, which complicates access. Sections of newer asphalt show washout, and limited shade and weed growth detract from the user experience.

- **Opportunities**: Adding shade trees and consistent design elements, including furnishings and signage, could enhance continuity and user experience. Improved wayfinding at public spaces and adding parking options near the trail would also facilitate access.

Figure 1 Delineation of trail unclear in certain locations

Figure 2 Washout after rain event

Figure 3 Wayfinding signage along the trail

Figure 4 Wide sections for various user types

Lambert Point Public Open Space

Figure 5 Limited signage

- **Strengths**: The open terrain and rolling topography provide good visibility, while 5-foot-wide concrete sidewalks are suitable for walkers and joggers. The site includes both mowed and naturalized areas.

- **Weaknesses**: Limited amenities, such as benches and trash receptacles, and a lack of shade from trees diminish the user experience. The absence of extensive wayfinding makes navigation difficult, and the limited lighting restricts use to daylight hours. Steep slopes present accessibility challenges. The site also has areas with predominantly invasive plants.

Figure 6 Lack of shade and other pedestrian amenities along trail

- **Opportunities**: Enhancing the site with shade trees, additional amenities, and wayfinding signage would improve functionality. Expanding the pathway width and adding accessible trails with lighting could make this space more inclusive and usable for various activities.

Northside Park

- **Strengths**: The park's mountain biking trail and connecting network provide diverse trail experiences for users and link nearby fields and neighborhoods. The rolling terrain enhances the variety of recreational options.

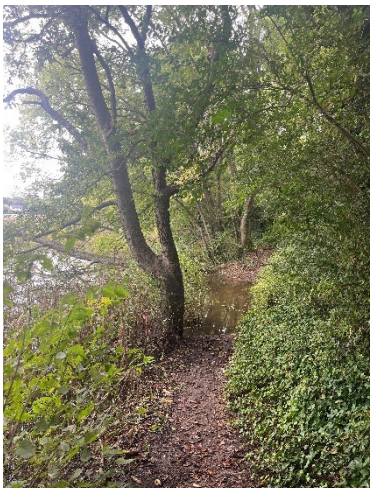


Figure 7 Flooding after rain event

Figure 8 Uneven paving

- **Weaknesses**: Sections of the trail are prone to flooding after rain, creating maintenance challenges. Inconsistent surfaces, litter, and invasive vegetation reduce accessibility and detract from user experience. Limited wayfinding and visibility due to overgrowth make navigation difficult, and unclear maintenance responsibilities contribute to deficient upkeep.

- **Opportunities**: Improving drainage and flood-prone areas, installing consistent surfaces, and enhancing wayfinding, especially at neighborhood access points, would improve connectivity and accessibility. Regular maintenance and vegetation management would boost visibility and safety throughout the park.

Figure 9 Lack of signage and connectivity from neighborhoods

Summary

In summary, each trail presents distinct strengths and challenges. The Elizabeth River Trail's urban amenities and accessibility could be further enhanced with a more cohesive design elements and improved wayfinding. Lambert Point Public Open Space offers suitable sidewalks for walkers and joggers, though additional amenities and accessibility improvements are needed. Northside Park provides diverse trail experiences but suffers from connectivity issues, poor maintenance, and accessibility challenges due to flooding and inconsistent surfaces.

These findings will inform the City's trail planning efforts, supporting safe, connected, and enjoyable trail networks for all users.

CHAPTER FIVE **RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

Based on community input and the Consulting team assessment, these recommendations guide the next generation of trail investment in Norfolk. They reflect a clear message: trails should function as essential infrastructure that improves mobility, health, resilience, and quality of life.

Given the scale and long-term nature of these recommendations, reliable cost estimates at this stage would be challenging. Costs remain volatile, and site-specific factors can significantly influence totals. As such, these recommendations are presented at a strategic level, and projects advanced from them should undergo feasibility studies to establish accurate cost estimates prior to implementation.

5.1 PRIORITIZE SAFETY AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE TRAIL SYSTEM

Safety emerged as the most consistent public priority. Future investments should focus on protected trail alignments, improved crossings, lighting, visibility enhancements, emergency call stations, and physical separation from traffic where feasible. High-concern corridors such as Hampton Boulevard underpasses, major crossings, and isolated segments should receive near-term attention. A trail system people do not feel safe using will never reach its full potential.

5.2 ADVANCE EQUITY THROUGH TARGETED INVESTMENT

Trail expansion and upgrades should prioritize neighborhoods with higher poverty rates, renter populations, historically underserved communities, lower park access, and lower Tree Equity scores and in areas without safe access to parks and recreation centers. Investments should intentionally direct resources where mobility, health, and environmental benefits can have the greatest impact. Equity should be embedded in project prioritization, not treated as a separate initiative.

5.3 DESIGN FOR ALL AGES AND ABILITIES

With a growing older adult population and strong community interest in accessibility, future trails should embrace universal design principles. This includes smooth surfaces, wider pathways, ADA-compliant crossings, curb ramps, rest areas, shade, benches, tactile wayfinding, and accessible signage. Norfolk's trail system should be welcoming to seniors, children, families, cyclists, runners, wheelchair users, and people with sensory needs.

5.4 EXPAND COMFORT AMENITIES THAT INCREASE USE

Residents clearly identified restrooms, hydration stations, shade, benches, and lighting as priorities. These basic amenities often determine whether residents stay longer, return more often, or use trails at all. Future capital projects should include user-comfort elements as standard components rather than optional add-ons.

5.5 BUILD A CONNECTED CITYWIDE (AND REGIONAL) NETWORK

Residents emphasized the need to move beyond isolated trail segments and create a connected network linking neighborhoods, parks, schools, employment centers, military installations, transit stations, beaches, and downtown destinations.

Priority corridors should include expanding the Elizabeth River Trail (ERT), improved connections to Ocean View, Naval Station Norfolk, Newtown Road, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, and underserved neighborhoods. Trails should be planned as part of the city's transportation system, not solely recreation assets.

Estimates show that the Virginia Beach Trail (shared use path adjacent to a roadway), which is a

12-mile long trail is expected to cost $76,500,000 = approx. $6.4 million per mile).

For a smaller, greenway-style trail, the expected costs for 3.7 miles is $22,000,000 ($29,000,000 with restrooms, parking, and other amenities) = range of $5.9 million to $7.8 million per mile

Thus, a general cost range for trail design and implementation could be summarized as $5 million/mile – $8 million/mile (not including large pedestrian bridges).

5.6 USE TRAILS TO SUPPORT CLIMATE RESILIENCE

As a coastal city facing flooding, heat, and sea-level rise, Norfolk should integrate resilience into all trail planning. This includes flood-tolerant materials, elevated boardwalks where appropriate, drainage improvements, tree planting, native landscaping, erosion control, and green infrastructure. Trails can become part of the city's adaptation strategy while enhancing recreation and mobility.

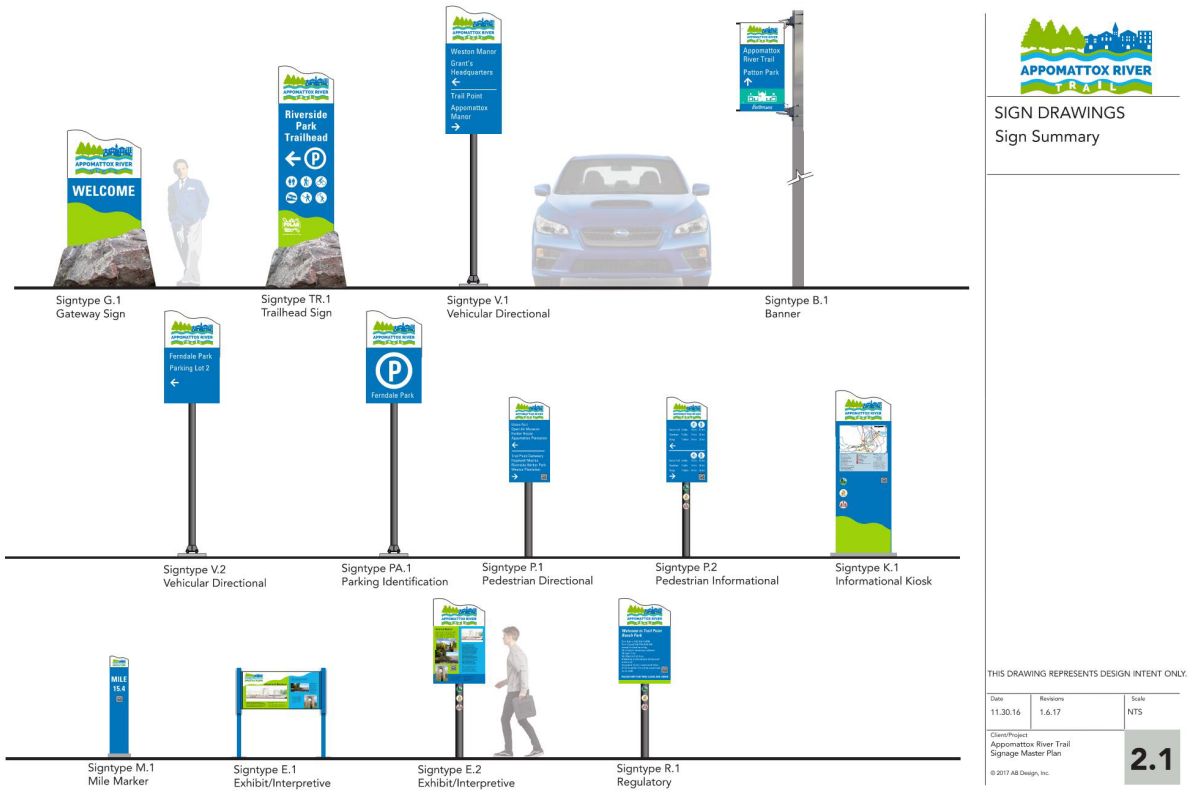
5.7 STRENGTHEN WATERFRONT AND NATURE-BASED EXPERIENCES

Residents value natural habitats, waterfront views, fishing access, kayak launches, and nature trails. Norfolk has a unique opportunity to create a nationally distinctive trail identity centered on water, ecology, and coastal recreation. Future investments should maximize public access to shoreline experiences while protecting sensitive environments.

5.8 ESTABLISH DESIGN STANDARDS AND MAINTENANCE OWNERSHIP

Field assessments identified inconsistent materials, deferred maintenance, invasive vegetation, flooding impacts, and unclear stewardship responsibilities. Norfolk should adopt citywide trail design standards covering signage, pavement markings, furnishings, branding, lighting, and maintenance expectations. Clear ownership and lifecycle funding are essential for long-term success.

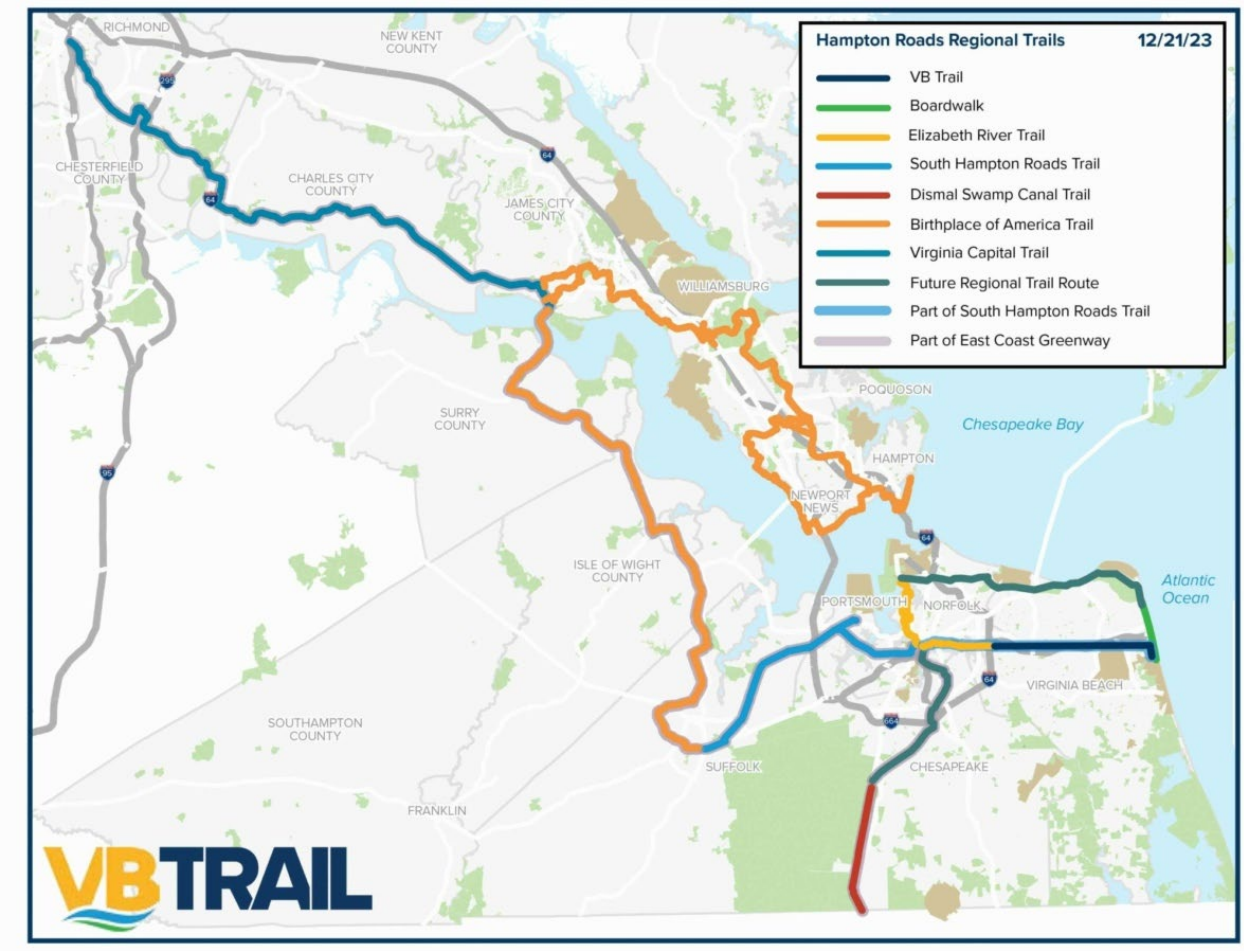
5.9 LEVERAGE TRAILS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The community strongly supports integration with local businesses such as cafés, markets, bike shops, and neighborhood commercial districts. Strategic trail investments in areas such as Downtown, Ghent, Ocean View, Chelsea, and ODU corridors can support small businesses, tourism, and neighborhood vitality. Trails should be viewed as economic engines as well as public amenities.

5.10 CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A REGIONAL VISION

Norfolk's future trail success depends in part on regional collaboration. The City should continue partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions, transit providers, VDOT, military partners, and regional agencies to advance seamless connections to Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Suffolk, Hampton, and the East Coast Greenway. Norfolk can become the hub of a broader Hampton Roads active transportation network.

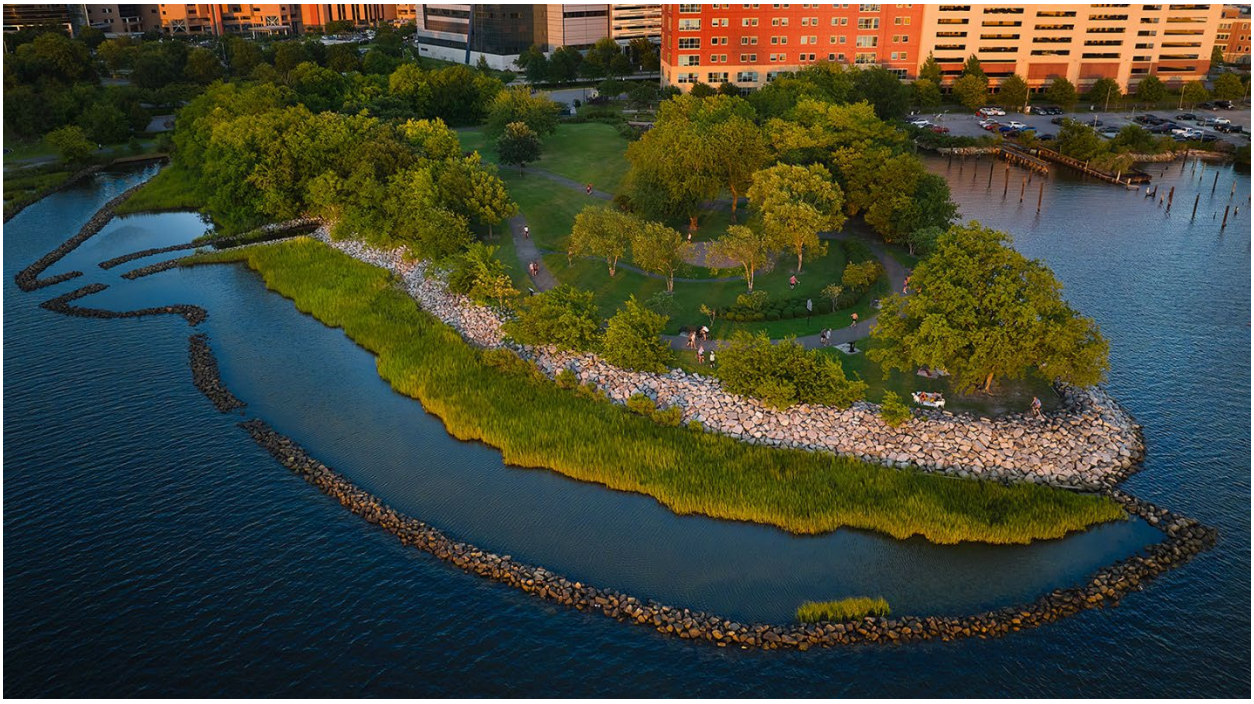


NEXT PRACTICE PARTNERS

5.11 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (NEXT 5 YEARS)

The following are the recommended strategic priorities over the next 5 years for Norfolk to implement:

- Fix critical safety gaps
- Complete missing network links
- Invest in underserved neighborhoods
- Upgrade amenities and accessibility
- Deliver resilient waterfront trail projects
- Standardize branding, maintenance, and operations
- Advance regional trail partnerships



5.12 WHERE WE ARE HEADED (PROPOSED SHARED USE PATH NETWORK)

CHAPTER SIX **CONCLUSION**

This Plan reflects a clear and consistent message from the community: trails are not simply recreational amenities, but essential infrastructure that supports how residents live, move, and connect. Across all phases of this process, data analysis, field assessments, and public engagement, residents emphasized the importance of a trail system that is safe, connected, accessible, and equitable.

Norfolk is uniquely positioned to build upon this vision. With existing assets such as the Elizabeth River Trail and growing regional initiatives, the City has a strong foundation to create a comprehensive network that links neighborhoods, waterfronts, parks, schools, employment centers, and regional destinations. At the same time, the City's coastal context reinforces the need to integrate resilience, environmental stewardship, and innovative design into future investments.

This plan provides a roadmap to move from isolated trail segments to a cohesive, citywide system. It prioritizes safety as the foundation, emphasizes connectivity across communities and regions, and advances equity by directing resources to areas with the greatest need. It also recognizes the importance of designing for all ages and abilities, enhancing user comfort, supporting economic development, and establishing clear standards for long-term maintenance and stewardship.

Implementation of this plan will require sustained commitment, strategic partnerships, and thoughtful investment over time. While not all recommendations will be realized immediately, each step forward, whether closing a critical gap, improving a crossing, or adding key amenities will contribute to a stronger and more functional system. As conditions evolve, this plan should serve as a living framework, guiding decisions while allowing flexibility to adapt to new opportunities and challenges.

By treating trails as everyday infrastructure, Norfolk can create a system that does more than connect places: connect people. It can support healthier lifestyles, expand transportation choices, strengthen neighborhoods, and enhance resilience in the face of environmental change. Most importantly, it can ensure that all residents regardless of age, ability, or background have access to safe, welcoming, and high-quality spaces.

The path forward is clear. With intentional investment and a continued focus on community priorities, Norfolk has the opportunity to build a trail system that defines the City's future: one that is safer, more connected, more equitable, and more vibrant for generations to come.

APPENDICES

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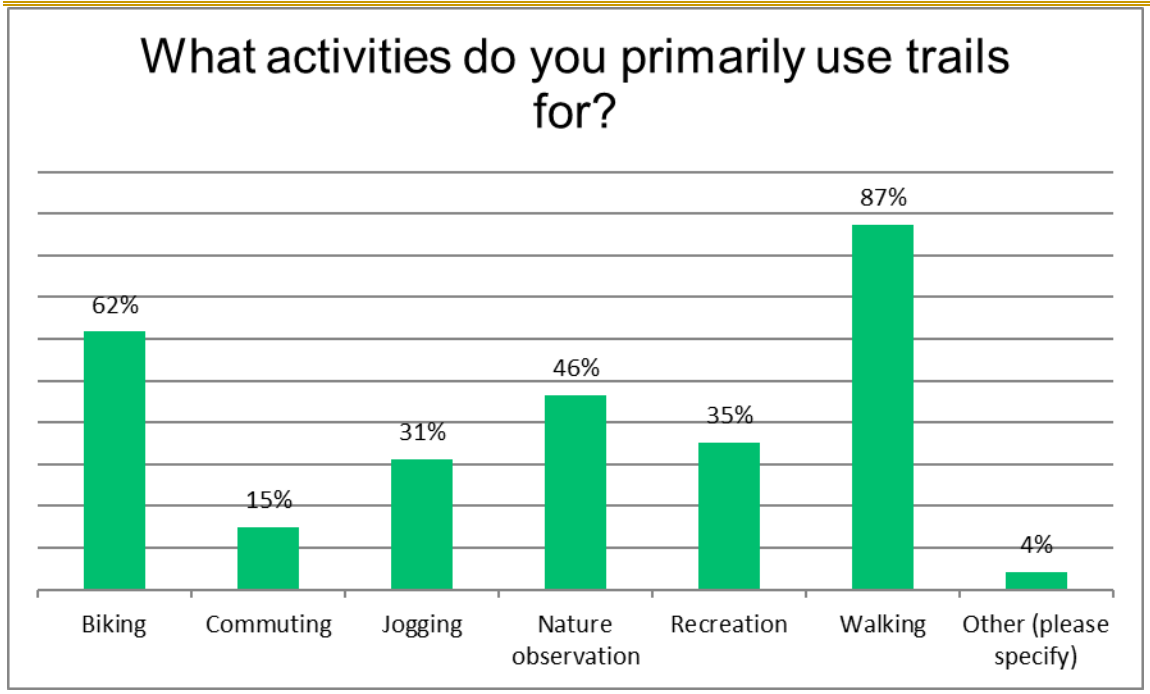
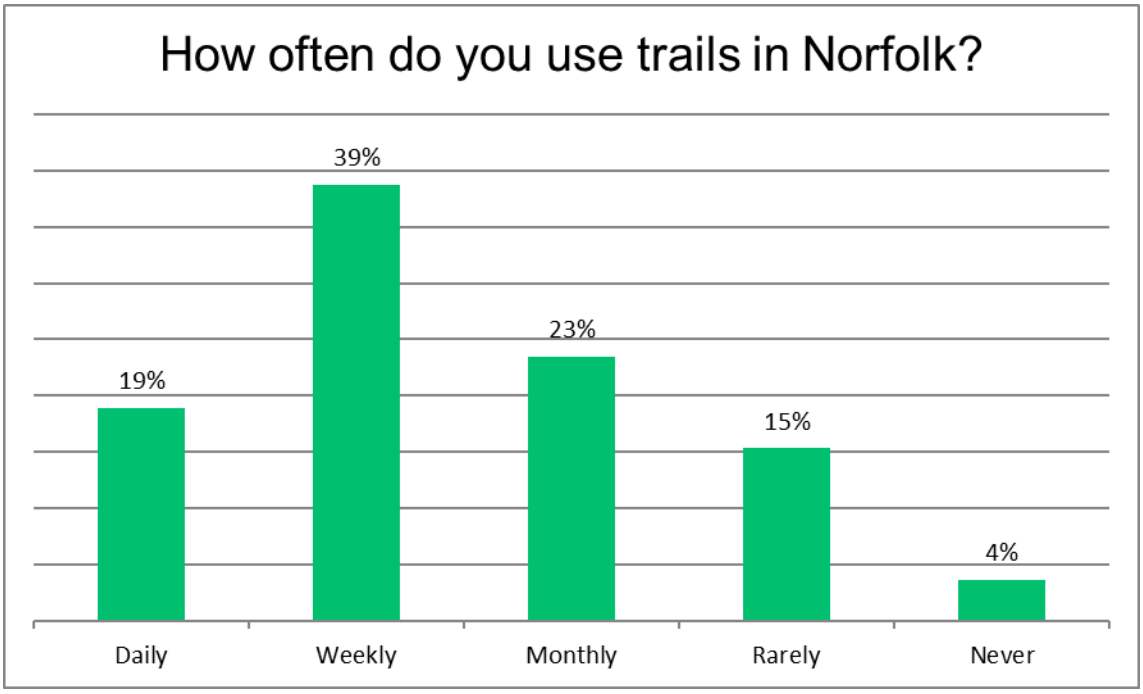
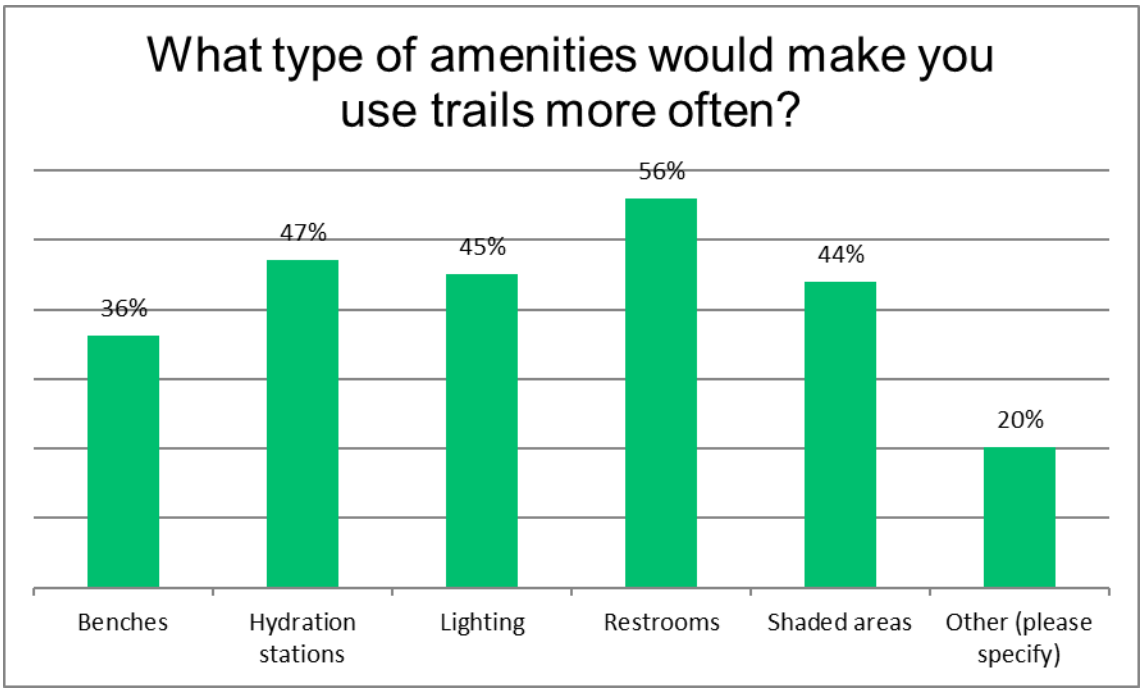

What activities do you primarily use trails for?
62%
15%
31%
46%
35%
87%
4%
Biking
Commuting
Jogging
Nature observation
Recreation
Walking
Other (please specify)

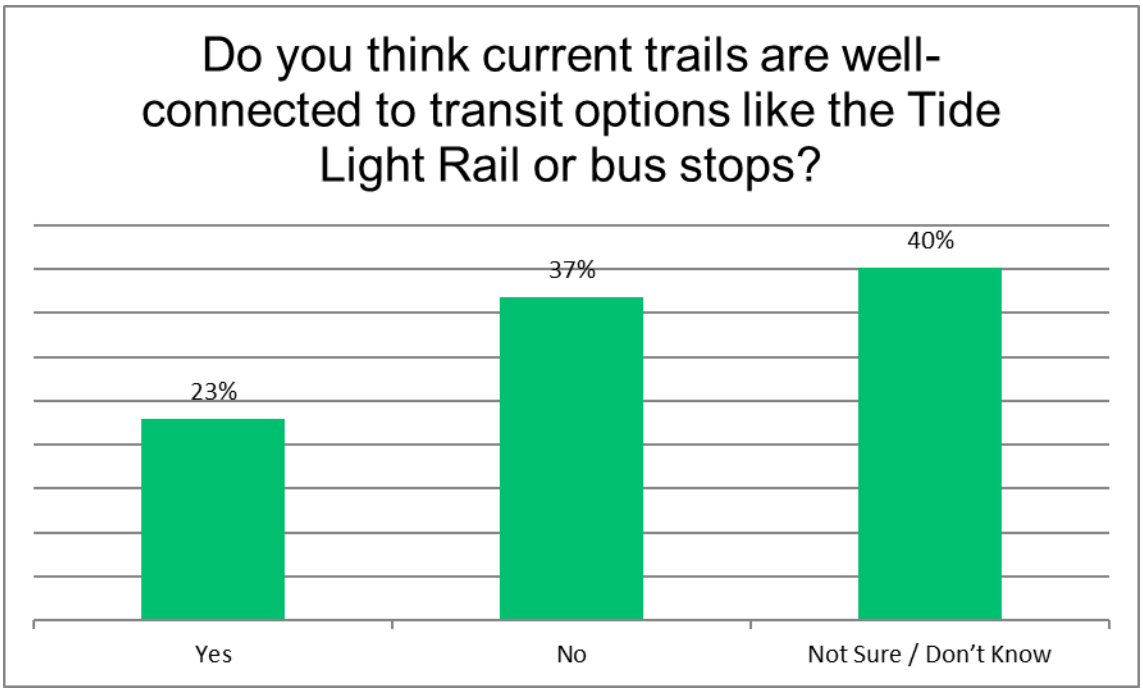

How often do you use trails in Norfolk?
19%
39%
23%
15%
4%
Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Rarely
Never

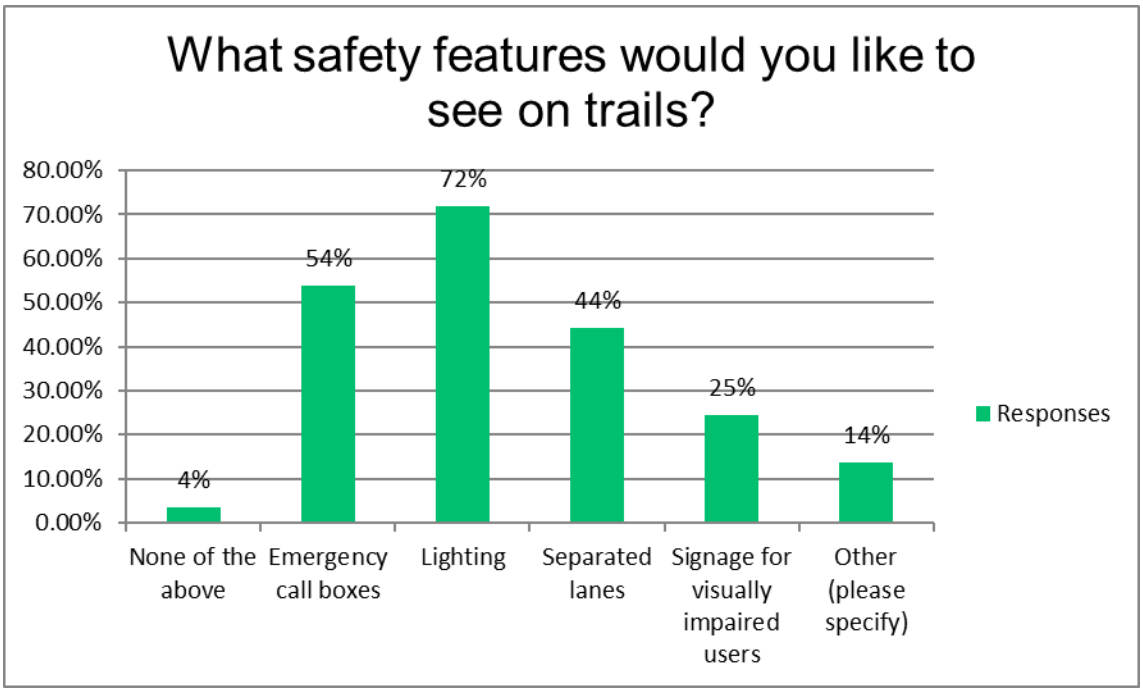


"Other" responses:

- Locating a trail in Ocean View. I drive to Sea Shore State Park in Va Beach
- Trail head parking!
- I would love a dedicated bike lane crossing the Hampton Bridge north of the ODU campus
- Clear pathways
- Connection to places I go
- Dog waste stations for dog walkers
- The reflective tape on the yellow poles we all put on years ago with ERT needs to be replaced as poles are difficult to see at night.
- trails along the ocean view parks connecting one to the other
- Nothing in particular.
- Trees
- Organized activities (i.e. jogging club or bike parade)
- parking/accessibility
- make it easier to get over the railroad tracks-using the underpass is not an attractive option
- If they were connected to each other so that I didn't have to drive so far to reach the beginning of one. Also, much better signage....at the moment, its hard to know how to follow a trail since the signs are confusing.
- Parking spots to access trails.
- Dog poop bags
- A close to home access point. I live in West Ocean View off Granby. There are no sidewalks on Granby near the graveyard.
- Trash cans
- Trash receptacles
- Longer, more

- Safe designated crossings of roadways
- Expansion into other parts of the city/region. Berkeley and Campostella Bridges drop you into an area without trails.
- Trash bins
- parks
- Better quality. The ERT near Hampton St is awful because the tree roots have made the path too rough to enjoy on a bicycle or scooter.
- Kayak launches
- Easy Access to more waterways
- Pedestrian safety
- Exercise Equipment
- Safety from cars and creeps
- Mile markers
- Convenient Locations
- trailhead shelter
- Coffee Shop / Places to stop and eat / Grab and go
- ADA accessibility
- Parking
- Away from traffic
- Trails that connect to make longer trails. Trails that run through or near places to eat or places to stop for ice cream or a snack
- Like varied terrain like Lamberts Point Open Space

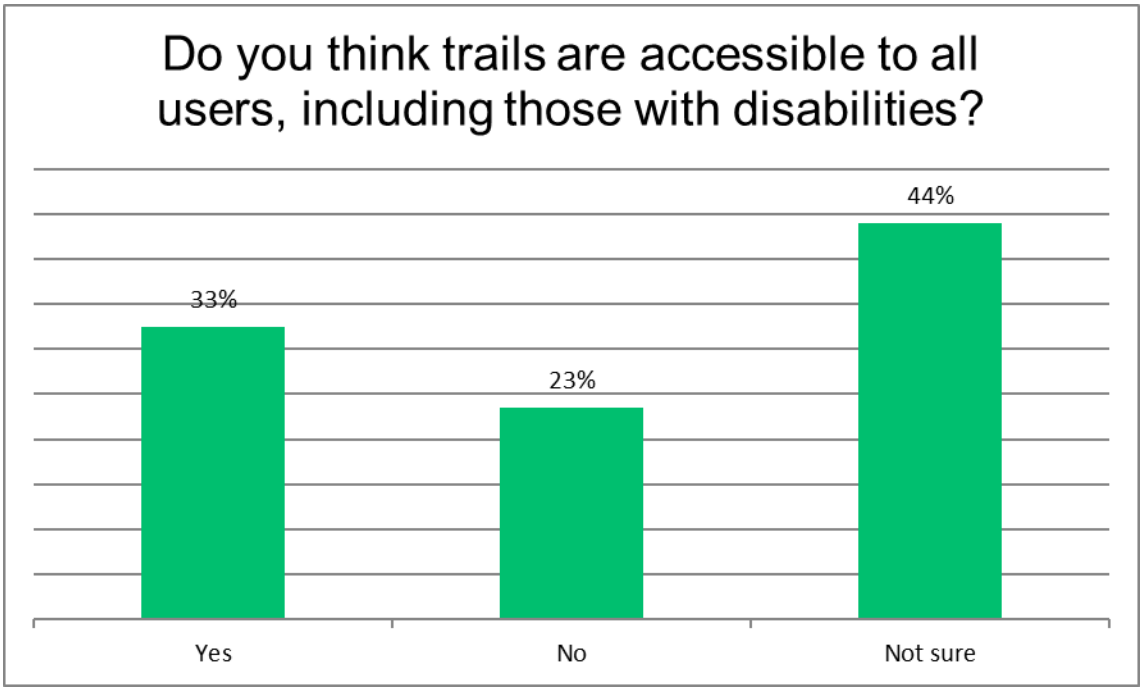


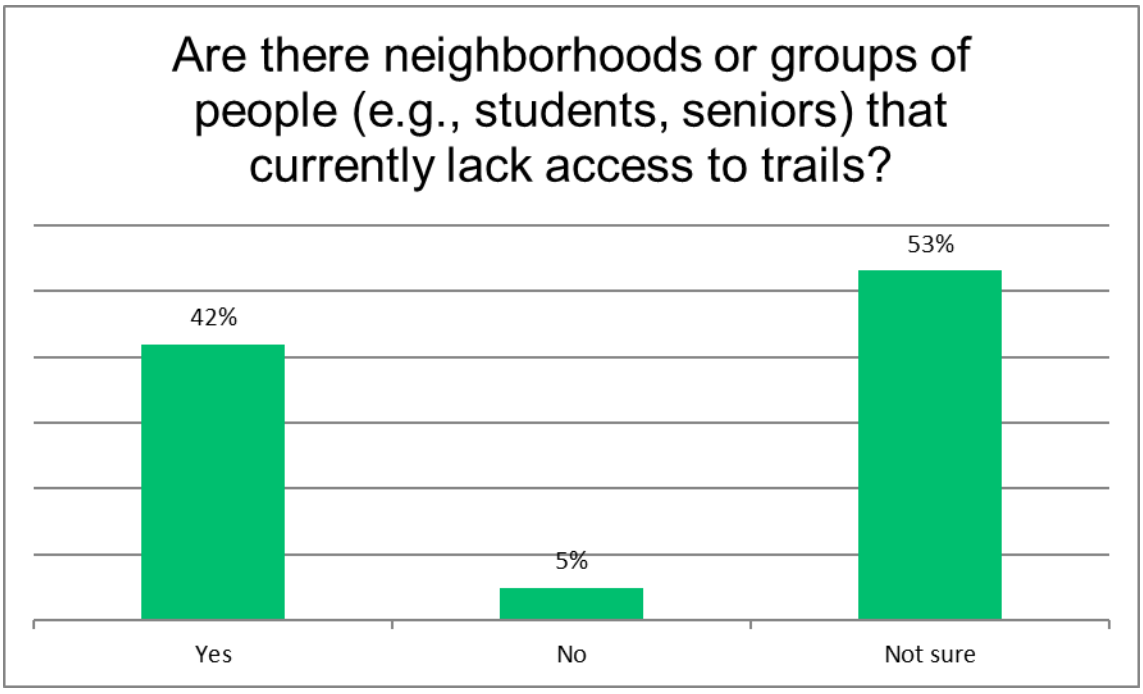


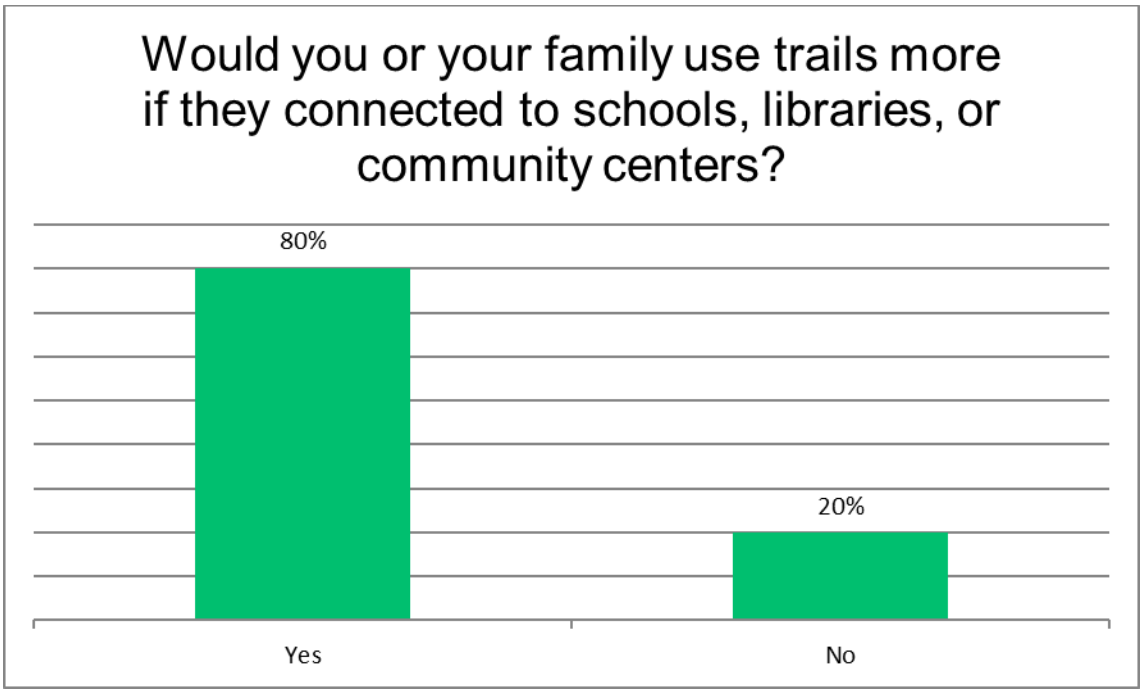
"Other" responses:

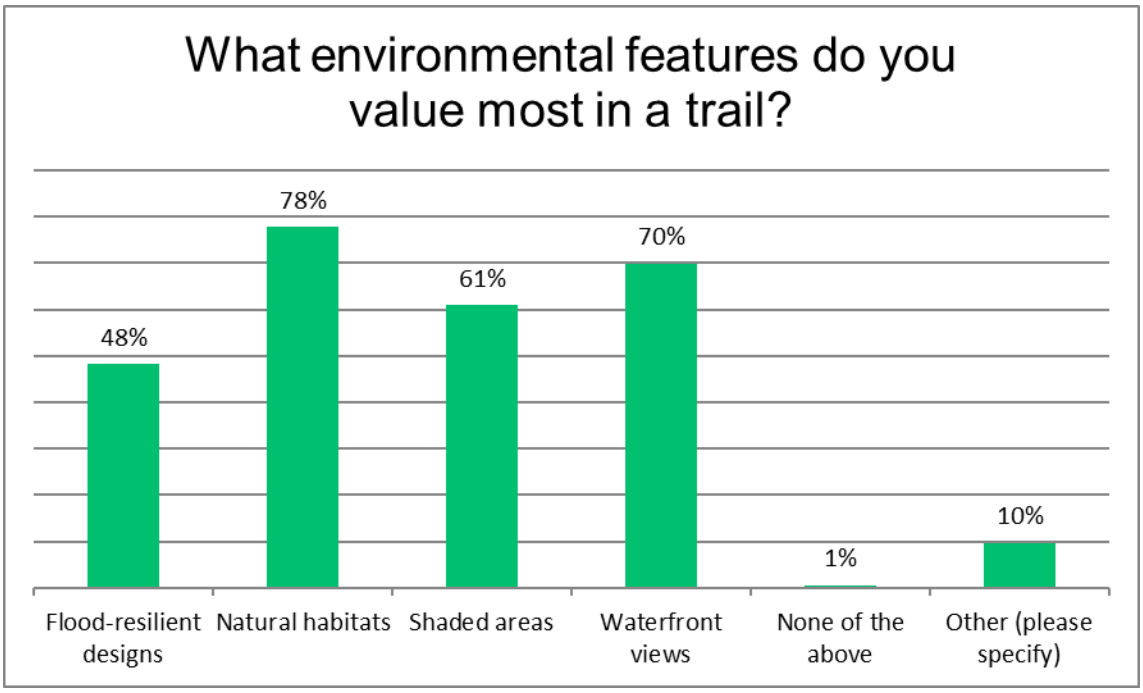
- Trail etiquette signage for pedestrians about how bikers will alert them they are passing, reminders to graciously share the trail with cyclists when no off-sidewalk trail is safe or an option
- Cameras, Paid Ambassadors
- trail markers, trash cans
- Lighting and Emergency Call Boxes would be great if they aren't cost prohibitive.
- See previous comments
- Wheelchair access
- If possible, wider spaces for bikes versus people walking
- Random security checks
- Alerts for cars at street crossings
- Trash cans
- Visible ambassadors to help assist people
- Pedestrian crossing lights
- Dog Poop Bags
- Signs identifying trees and plants.
- Overpass/underpass at rail tracks north of Bluebird park
    - Also shoulder on Campostella Bridge is very scary.
- Regular patrol by park rangers
- good security works and police patrol
- Park Rangers
- Clear crosswalks with flashing lights like ODU if we have to cross a street.
- Something to separate bicyclists from everyone else.

- Specifically, trails that are physically separated from cars
- Water fountains
- Mile markers, wayfinder





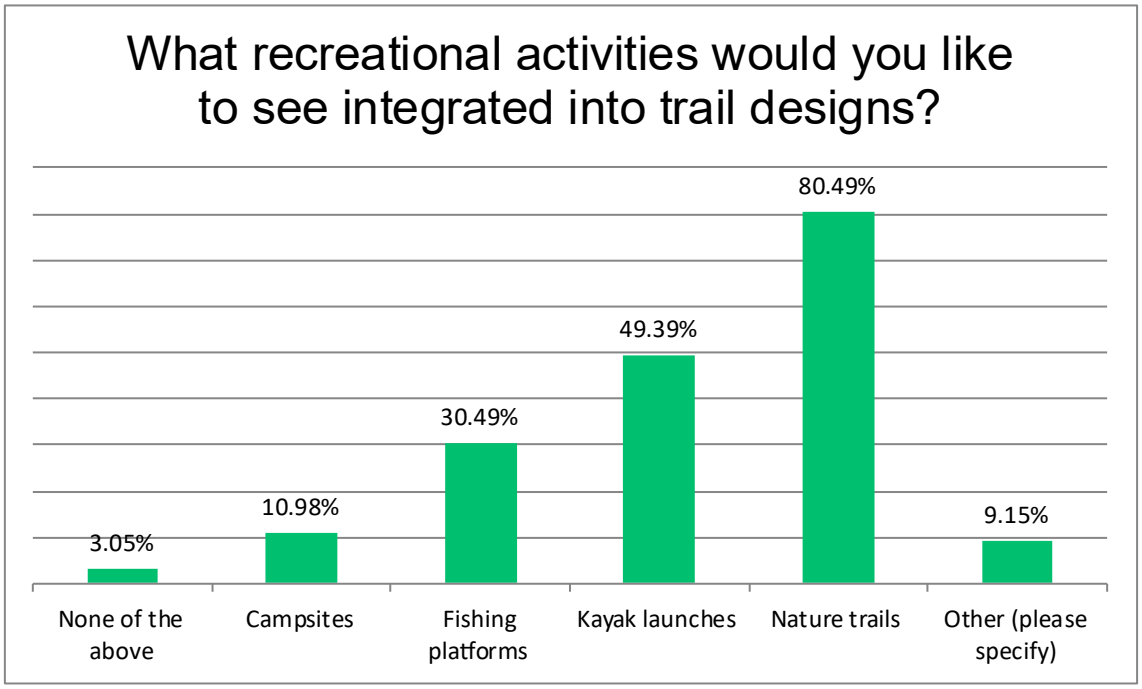




"Other" responses:

- The trail should follow the river behind Harbor Park and never cross the Tide.
- Waterfront access to swim, sit, boat, play
- Clear pathways
- Pollinator stations
- Safety

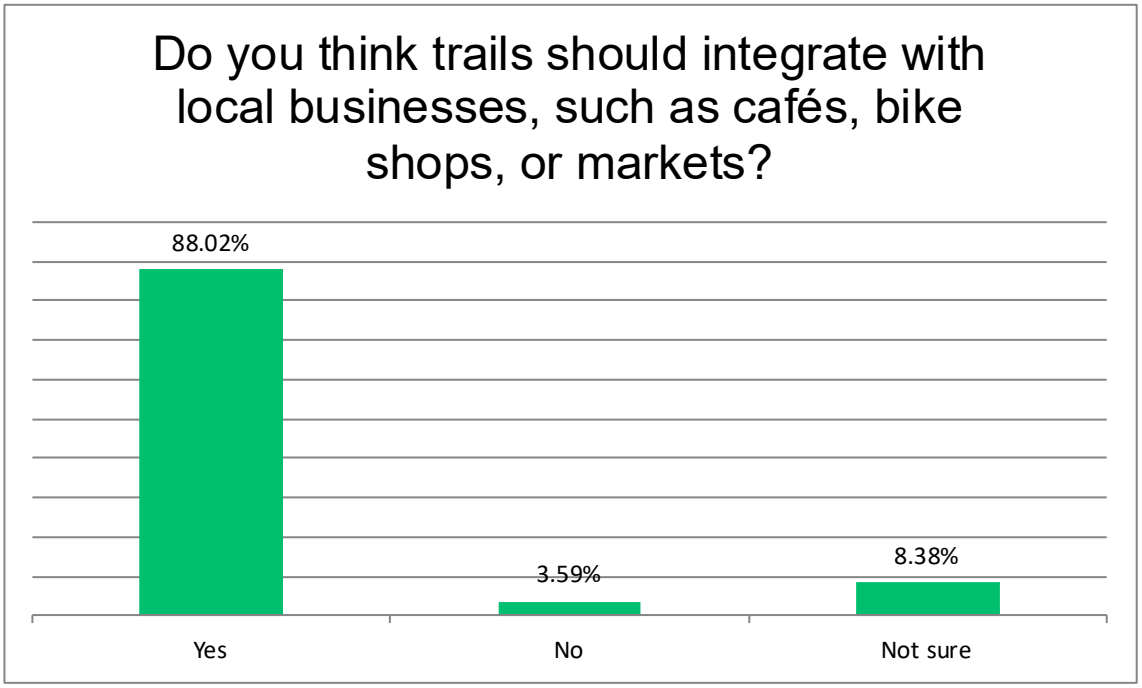
- Ways to dispose of trash that I pick up as I use the trails
- Safety and car free
- Area kept clean
- Bike & walking friendly (wide enough for bikes to pass pedestrians)
- Protection
- Connectivity and police protection
- Pavement
- Protection from vehicles
- Places to eat or grab coffee along the trail
- Hills

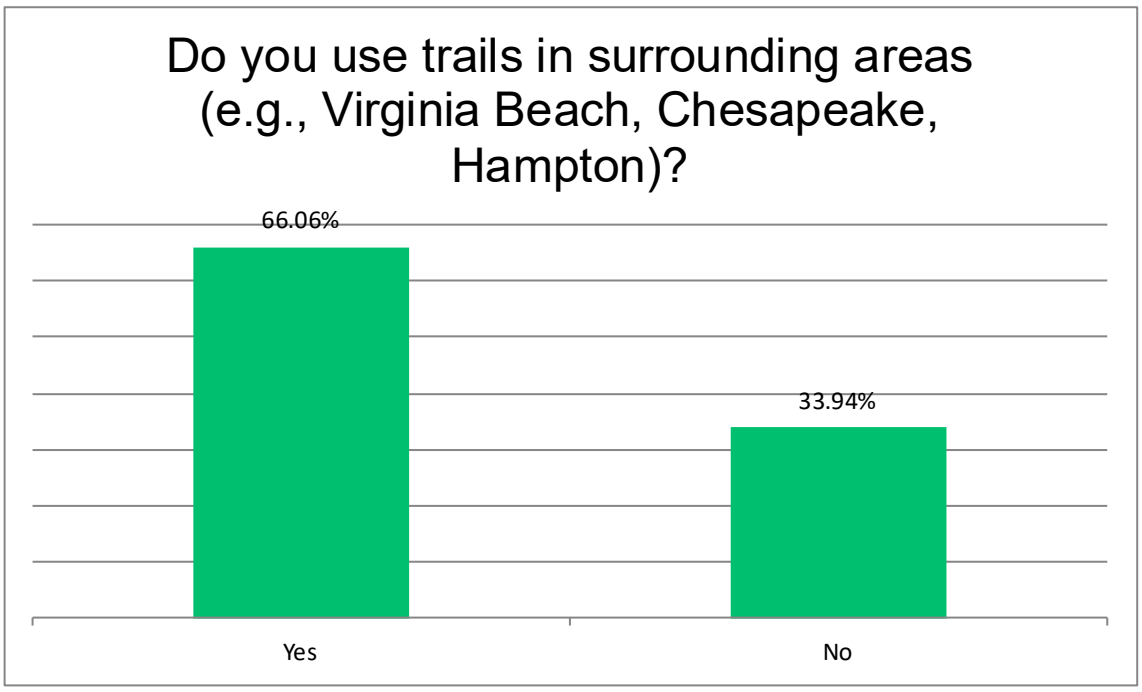


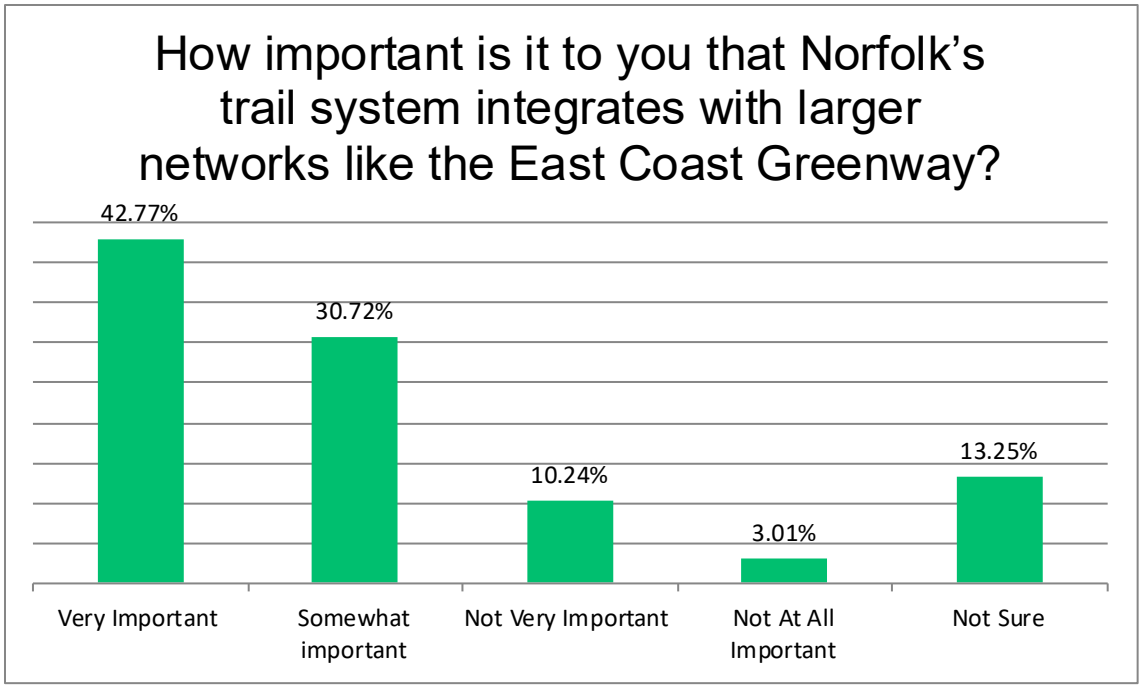
"Other" responses:

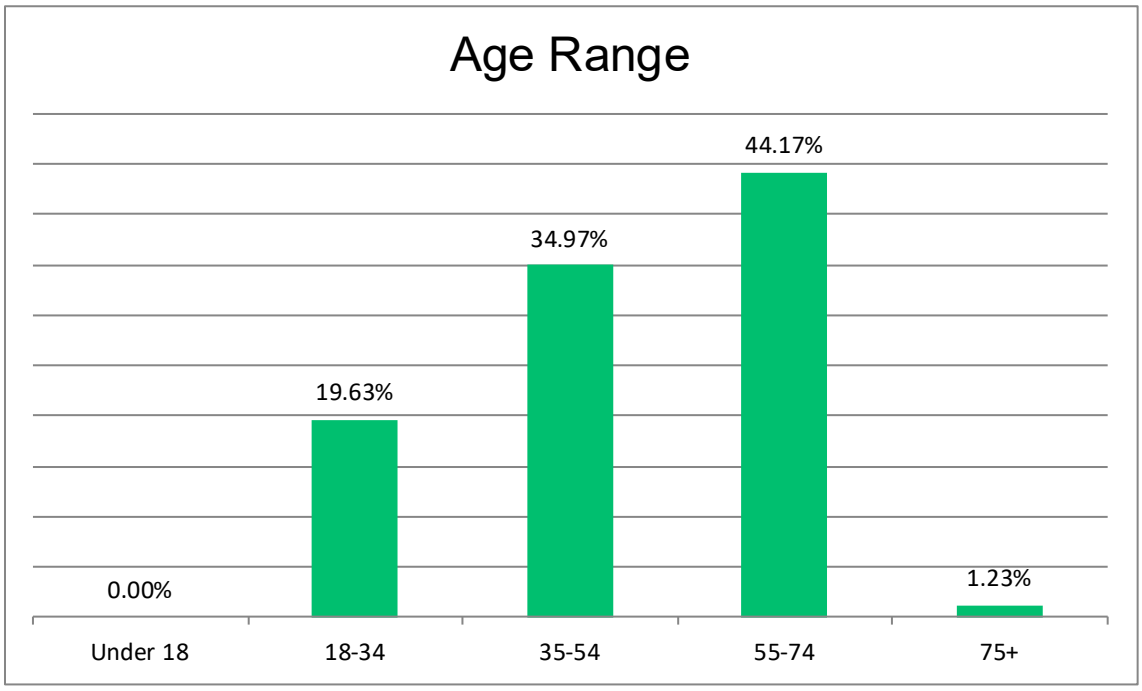
- Fixed Exercise Stations
- The ERT should extend to Oceanview for beach access.
- Picnic tables
- Swimming / wading in the river
- Rest stops
- just walking
- More trail miles is more important than more trail amenities
- Running mileage markers
- Friendship benches
- Education about the trails and good trail hosts.
- A kayak launch in the Hague!!!!
- Parks, open green spaces
- Historical and nature educational signs

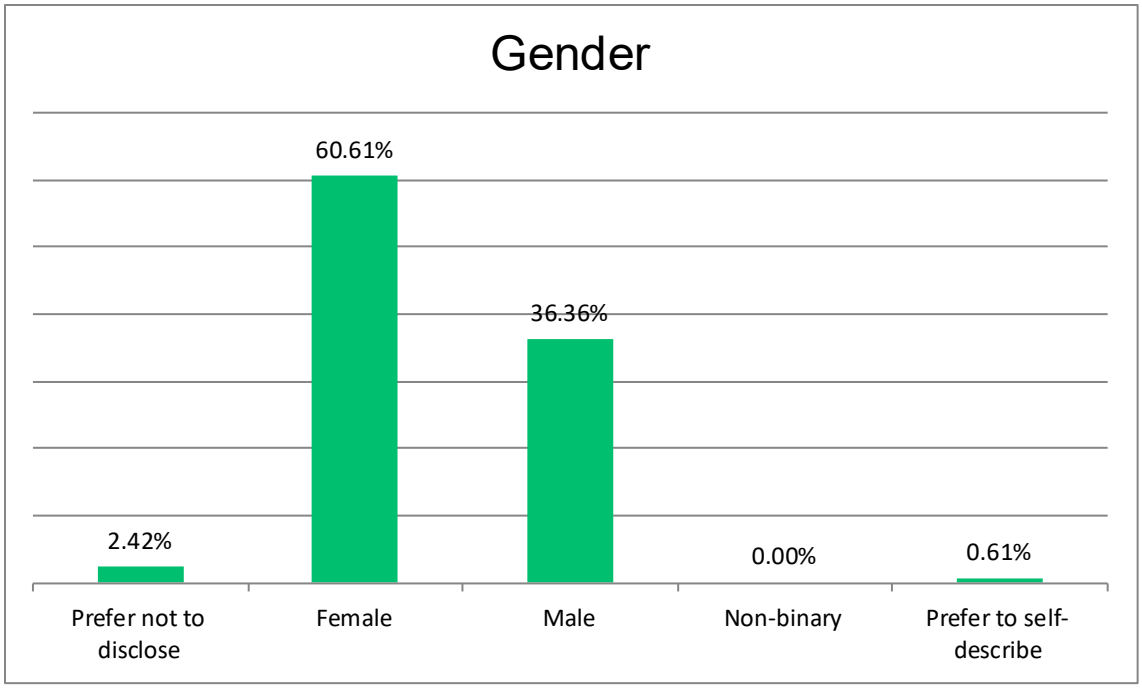
- Playgrounds, mini amphitheater
- fitness equipment





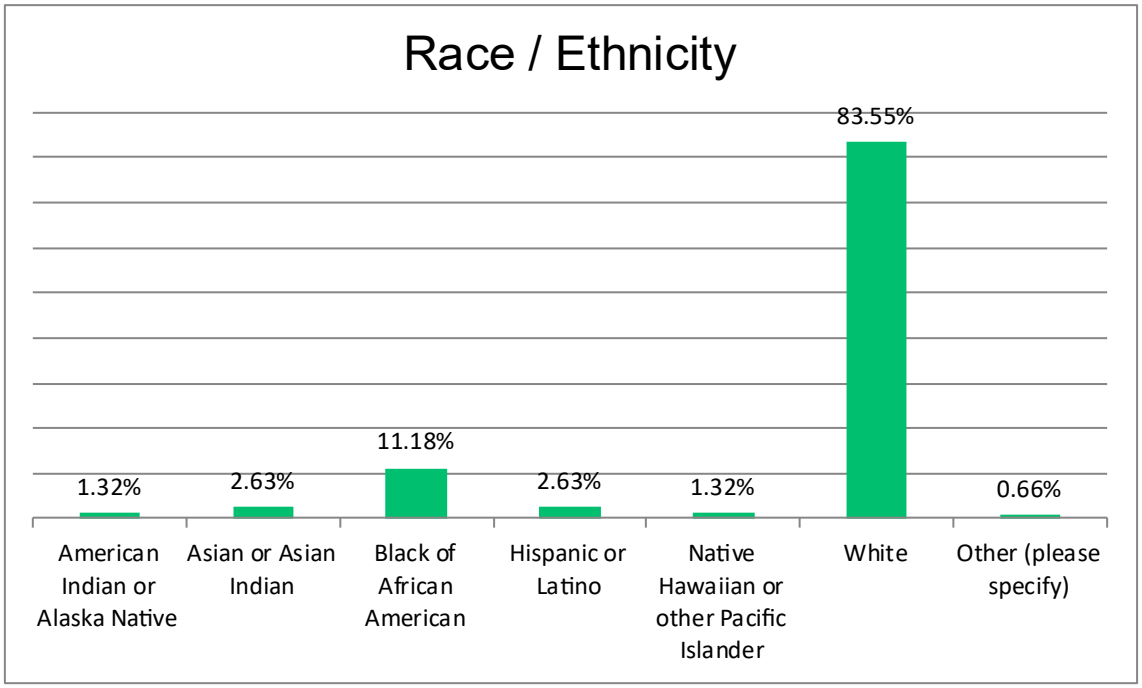






"Prefer to self-describe" response:

- I am interested in studying parks and trails



"Other" responses:

- Mix