

# Youth Component of the Community Plan

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## Youth Planners 1997-2005

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## **Section I**

### **Background: Youth Engagement in Community Planning**

#### *a. Collaboration & Inclusiveness – How Young People Became Involved In Neighborhood Planning*

The City of Hampton has, since 1990, placed a high priority on engaging young people in community decision-making and the overall life of the community. This focus on youth began with the creation of the Coalition for Youth, a group of City leaders convened by City Council to develop a plan of action to ensure that Hampton's youth would become productive members of the community and workforce. Some of these leaders believed that this planning would be enhanced by inviting youth to participate. Through an extensive community outreach process these youth and adults contacted over 5,000 of their peers to determine the most strategic City investments to ensure the long term health and success of Hampton's youth.

The Plan of Action resulting from the Coalition's work was the first City plan addressing the needs of young people in the community. Included was a policy statement with six commitments – Appreciation of Diversity, Care and Nurturing, Safety, Health, Education, and Partnership in the Community. This last commitment has become the foundation of the city's youth civic engagement. It states:

*“All young people in Hampton are entitled to be seen, heard, and respected as citizens of the community. They deserve to be prepared, active participants in community service, government, public policy, or other decision-making which affects their lives and their well-being.”*

The plan also recommended four strategic areas of focus for City government: supporting strong families, building healthy neighborhoods, developing youth as resources to the community, and creating a long-term city-wide investment in youth. The focus on neighborhoods evolved into the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative, which supports residents as they engage in an inclusive planning process to identify and tackle neighborhood issues. The focus on youth as resources led to the creation of a community-wide initiative to train youth and adults to work in partnership to build caring communities within neighborhoods and schools, and to create opportunities for youth to serve the community. By recognizing youth as an important stakeholder group in inclusive planning and working together, these two initiatives created the first roles for young people in city planning.

Alternatives, Inc., a local non-profit youth development agency, was given responsibility to recruit, train, and support young people to participate. In the Aberdeen neighborhood a leadership group was formed of youth who wanted to make a difference in their neighborhood. These youth were invited to join some adult neighbors who were working with City staff on a neighborhood plan. The Aberdeen

youth proved that young people could play a valuable role in planning. They improved the process, helped make difficult decisions, and even had ideas that saved the City money. The Director of Planning was so impressed; he decided that young people should have an ongoing role in city planning.

### *b. The Developmental Asset Approach*

One of the fundamental principles that create the opportunity for Hampton to engage youth in planning is the City's focus on the 40 developmental assets. Developmental Assets are the qualities and experiences, identified by Search Institute's research that help all youth succeed. Included in the Assets are the importance of the community's view of youth as resources and young people serving meaningful roles in their neighborhoods, schools, and communities. The Asset framework focuses on the importance of adults caring about the youth of the community and becoming active parts of a web of support that will ensure their success.

The Developmental Assets look at the strengths of youth and help the community determine how to build more opportunities for youth to contribute and experience success. Instead of seeing youth as problems to be fixed, adults are trained to see youth as resources as well as experts who understand the unique needs of young people. Hampton's mobilization to increase the Developmental Assets of young people is linked closely to the City's Youth Engagement Initiative. This ensures that adults focused on asset-building are supportive of all aspects of the City's efforts to include youth in neighborhood, school, and community-based planning efforts.

### *c. Youth Planners and the Hampton Youth Commission*

With this firm base of support and through some re-allocation of resources, two young people were hired in the Planning Department as the first Youth Planners. Beginning in January 1997 they started to design their initiative. Their first task was to contact hundreds of youth in focus groups to determine what young people believed would improve Hampton for youth. From this discussion, the Youth Planners determined two essential methods of youth involvement – the development of a Youth Component to the City's Comprehensive Plan, and the creation of a Youth Commission with the authority to represent youth issues and the power to appropriate funds. In the fall of 1997, Hampton City Council endorsed these two recommendations.

The Youth Planners designed the new Youth Commission to be an effective voice for the youth of Hampton and to serve as a board of youth who would be responsible for the Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan developed by the Youth Planners. The preface to the first Youth Component summarizes how the Youth Planners believed the whole initiative would work.

*“The youth of the City of Hampton wish to have a voice. They would like a voice in the way their city grows and develops. The plans put into place now will influence the entire community, but for the most part, will affect the youth of today who will be tomorrow’s adults. A partnership between city leaders and youth would create a progressive, harmonious environment in which the youth would have the convenience to give their input. The city leaders could use this opportunity to teach the youth, in a more in-depth method, about city government. This partnership will help each understand and respect the role of one another. Together, youth and city leaders can mold Hampton into a more enjoyable city for all its citizens.”*

#### *d. The Youth Component of the Hampton Comprehensive Plan*

The Youth Planners began their responsibility of creating the only component of a city’s comprehensive plan written entirely by youth anywhere in the country. From the issues identified by the focus group research, the Youth Planners developed four major topics for the plan: Youth Space, Transportation, Employment, and Community Interaction. Under each topic, community youth had surfaced almost 100 issues, so the task of the Planners and the Commission was to prioritize issues and create strategies to address them.

This became an annual event – each year the Youth Planners led the Commissioners through a consensus process to identify one or two issues under the four topics to research and create strategies. The Youth Planners researched the topics and prepared information for Commissioners to understand the issue. Then the Commission’s Comprehensive Plan Committee surveyed their peers, held public meetings, and solicited input in order to develop recommendations to address the year’s issue. Youth Planners then developed the document which is subject to public hearing and Youth Commission approval. When the annual installment of recommendations was finally presented to the Planning Commission and City Council for adoption into City policy, it represented countless hours of extensive youth research, deliberation, and consensus. Commissioners also monitored the recommendations from previous years to ensure implementation. This involved working with the boards or organizations responsible for implementation, and identifying projects to further the plan’s goals.

#### *e. Youth engagement in the new Hampton Community Plan*

In 2003, when it was time to update the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, city officials envisioned a plan that would combine all of the City’s existing planning efforts. Neighborhood and city planning had overlapped sufficiently for planners to understand the interconnected aspects of all of these plans and the need to consolidate them. Fortunately, city officials also realized the importance of continuing to include youth as an important stakeholder group.

As city officials identified the strategic issues that would drive the plan, they discussed whether the “youth agenda” would be included within another issue, or if it should stand alone. Due to the success of the Youth Component within the previous Comprehensive Plans, and the importance the city continued to place on youth planning, the decision was made to maintain a separate section within the plan devoted entirely to youth issues. This decision successfully reinforces the role of youth as planners within the community and their ability to have an impact on issues that are important to them.

## **Section II**

### **The Hampton Community Plan: Vision and Goals**

#### ***Key Issue Areas***

The Vision and Goals document of the Hampton Community Plan is the blueprint for the subsequent action plan that will carry out the guidelines of the Community Plan. In developing this initial document, eight community based focus groups were created to generate the contents of the Vision and Goals.

The seven original focus groups derived from the City's 1998 Strategic Plan were made into eight with the inclusion of the Youth focus group, meant to capture the youth perspective in its own body.

However, as young people are concerned citizens just as adults, the topics of the other seven focus groups are equally pertinent to young people. By outlining the eight key issues, a connection between the youth agenda and the City's planning process can be made.

#### **Customer Delight**

*Vision: "Hampton will provide unparalleled public education, neighborhood, city, and community service that will exceed its customers' expectations."*

Any business or public agency knows that without a high degree of customer satisfaction, there is no way to be successful. Long term success can only be attained by meeting or exceeding these expectations.

Young people are an important part of the customer population, and for many businesses, especially those that cater to young people as their primary customer, to not seek to satisfy their expectations would be disastrous. A good impression brings customers back time after time, and by striving to improve their services and skills, businesses can easily flourish in Hampton. Additionally, a business atmosphere that makes a positive impression on young people will help to draw them back to the city later in life.

#### **Healthy Business Climate**

*Vision: "Hampton will be the community of choice for businesses seeking an environment that maintains, expands, and attracts investment."*

In order for Hampton to continue to develop as a city, its economic foundation must remain solid and sustained. The key factor is having a well trained and educated workforce. The best communities attract the "best and brightest" which fuels the local

economy with an abundance of highly skilled workers, and this in turn attracts more businesses. By bringing more and more businesses to the city, Hampton's value increases as a desirable city in which to live, work, and do business.

### **Healthy Growth and Development of Children and Youth**

Vision: *"Hampton's children and youth will thrive and succeed in a caring community."*

Young people are the next generation of active citizens in any community. If their development is ignored by their community, the young people would just as soon leave the city when they come of age rather than stay where they do not feel they were nurtured.

Hampton has identified that by paying attention to the specific needs of young people, from the time they are born until they graduate high school; the young people have the best possible chance of becoming strong community members.

### **Healthy Neighborhoods**

Vision: *"Hampton neighborhoods: the best places to be."*

The neighborhood is a microcosm of the city in which it is located. The focus groups quickly identified that the neighborhoods in Hampton reflect the city itself. Neighborhoods are places where youth and adults work to invest their time and energy into creating a caring and developmental asset-based environment.

By making sure that every neighborhood in Hampton is economically viable, civically functional, and diverse, the City can be sure to create locations where young people want to live and grow.

### **Healthy Diverse Community**

Vision: *"Hampton will thrive as a diverse community which celebrates, supports and encourages positive people-to-people relations as a foundation for community success."*

As a city that is tremendously diverse in terms of ethnicity, Hampton has a unique opportunity to harness the benefits of such diversity. The first step taken by the focus group was recognizing that inclusiveness and tolerance are key to the city's future.

The global economy is by definition a diverse "place." To succeed socially as well as economically our community and its citizens must be able to thrive in this type of environment. Young people grow up with the values that are instilled in them by their parents, by their community, and by their friends. The City has many resources at its disposal for the promotion of multicultural appreciation, and by continuing to encourage



these assets, especially in the youth of the community; we can better lead our city into a stronger economic and social era.

## **Healthy Region**

*Vision: "Hampton Roads will be a thriving economically competitive region."*

Hampton is just one city in a booming economic region known as Hampton Roads. While Hampton's first obligation is to provide for its own citizens, it would be short sighted to not recognize that Hampton's success as a city is dependent on the successful development of Hampton Roads.

By collaborating with other communities in our region on the subject of long term community planning, and by pooling ideas and strategies across cities, the Hampton Roads region can increase its standing and reputation across the country as a viable social and economic region. By having young people from across the region collaborate, they can be exposed to a multitude of opportunities for engagement and involvement not only in their city but their region as well.

## **Strong Schools**

*Vision: "Hampton City Schools, the first choice for academic and lifelong success by every single student."*

One of the defining aspects of the Community Plan is the incorporation of the Hampton City Schools' Strategic Plan along with the City's Comprehensive and Strategic Plans. This combination strengthens the connection among school and civic officials in terms of goals and strategies.

Hampton City Schools strives for both personal and academic excellence in its students. By constantly looking at how to improve not just the educational opportunities, but life skills and workforce opportunities as well, the school system can readily prepare young people for entering the world beyond high school.

## **Overarching Themes**

Through the process of creating the Vision and Goals, certain concepts were commonly held by all of the focus groups. These concepts did not seem to fit into any specific category, so these recurrent thoughts were labeled as "overarching themes," and as "directions for moving forward." While not involved in the first phase of the Community Plan, these concepts will be included in the second, action-oriented, phase.

## **Economic Sustainability**

As with any other developed community, the viability of the City's economy is crucial to its continued success and expansion. The 1998 Strategic Plan mentioned numerous times "challenges of being a mature city." The theme of economic sustainability seeks to create a clearer definition for addressing these challenges.

## **Community Partnerships & Engagement**

The focus groups were made up of a variety of citizens ranging from young people to city/school employees, to parents and to public officials. Hence, it was not difficult for them to understand the need for full community participation in the planning process. Only by including the voice of all those affected - - be it young people, adults, students, teachers, parents, etc. - - can a policy be truly successful. Additionally, when groups seek out specific individuals to harness their talents and make sure they are put to use, a better solution is created.

## **Community Perception/Marketing/Image**

Oftentimes the media can play a large part in the public's perception of a certain community. The focus groups identified that many assets that were present in Hampton were not being properly portrayed in local media sources. The groups simply recognized that by harnessing the mass outreach power of the media, the visions and goals of the Community Plan would become potentially easier to attain.

## **Preparing Citizens for Future Success**

While the training of our young people in work force ethics and life skills has been outlined by Hampton City Schools, the focus groups noted that it is important for these opportunities to be open to any and all citizens. A community cannot exist without its citizens, and by providing educational opportunities that can last a lifetime, Hampton can expect to see a stronger base of people living in the City in the years to come.

## **Section III**

### **Youth as a Strategic Issue**

The eighth focus group formed during the first phase of the Community Plan process was the Youth Focus Group. The facilitators of the process recognized that through Hampton's continued support of youth engagement in the community; young people were becoming a unique constituent group. By having young people outline their visions and goals for themselves and their peers, the Community Plan would become more inclusive.

The vision statement for the Youth Focus Group sums up the necessity of involving young people in a process that is meant to help sustain and improve the city through the next few decades.

Vision: "Better Youth, Better Hampton, Better Future"

Although the youth of Hampton already had a document that expressed their vision for the city, the Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan, the Youth Focus Group decided to revisit issues deemed most important by young people in the city and came up with six new goals for the Youth Section of the Community Plan.

#### **Caring Relationships Within the Community**

- Does every young person grow up with positive examples from their family and community?
- Youth perceive the need for strong, positive youth/adult relationships in both business and the community at large.
- Neighborhoods and public places in which youth meet and recreate lack the perception of safety.

#### **Youth Share Leadership**

- Youth need opportunities on both the local and regional level to share leadership and participate fully in decisions that affect them.
- Youth engagement in civic activities, while prevalent in Hampton, needs to be increased.
- Hampton youth are not in contact with young people from other communities in the region.

#### **Youth Acquire Essential Life Skills**

- Youth perceive a lack of educational, social, civic, and recreational opportunities that provide essential life skills.

- Parents and youth do not have/realize they have access to technological resources.

### **Every Young Person is Prepared for a Career**

- Are teens knowledgeable about job opportunities in their community?
- Teens do not feel they are equipped with the proper skills to succeed in a job.
- Youth cannot access employment opportunities that provide training and work related skills.

### **Places to Go and Things to Do for Youth**

- Due to a lack of affordability and adult awareness/support of youth space, youth believe there is no place specifically set aside for teens.
- There is a lack of places and activities to entice teens and young adults to choose Hampton as a place to live.
- There is not a wide variety of age appropriate activities in neighborhoods.

### **Getting Around**

- Youth are not knowledgeable about transportation accessibility and options available both locally and regionally.
- Youth lack knowledge as to how to get around using public transportation.
- Youth are not informed about car safety.

As would be expected, parts of the original four goals from the Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan can be seen in the six new goals for certain issues that are of importance to young people. When the goals from the Comprehensive Plan are placed alongside the new goals, the evolution of the youth agenda in the city can be illustrated.

## ***Youth Space***

### **2010 Comprehensive Plan**

#### **Youth Space**

- There is no place specifically set aside for teens.
- There is a lack of recreational opportunities.
- Existing community retail/entertainment are not “youth friendly.”
- There is not a wide variety of entertainment.

### **Community Plan**

#### **Places To Go and Things To Do for Youth**

- Due to a lack of affordability and adult awareness/support of youth space, youth believe there is no place specifically set aside for teens.
- There is a lack of places and activities to entice teens and young adults to choose Hampton as a place to live.
- There is not a wide variety of age appropriate activities in neighborhoods.

### **Comparison of Youth Space Issues**

-Reasons youth space is not available in Hampton (lack of affordability, awareness, etc.) are given, and not simply left at “there is no youth space.”

-The importance of young people as a vital part of Hampton’s future and not as just a single interest group is better expressed in the Community Plan.

-Neighborhoods and their fundamental importance to young people and growth are mentioned in the Community Plan.

## ***Transportation***

### **2010 Comprehensive Plan**

#### **Transportation**

- Hampton is oriented for auto traffic, not pedestrian or alternative transportation, so youth are overly dependent on cars.
- There is a lack of knowledge as to how to get around using public transportation (Including school buses).
- There is a perception that bus stops are not safe.
- Public transportation (as an alternative to cars) is too expensive.

### **Community Plan**

#### **Getting Around**

- Youth are not knowledgeable about transportation accessibility and options available both locally and regionally.
- Youth lack knowledge as to how to get around using public transportation.
- Youth are not informed about car safety.

-Many of the specific issues concerning public transportation (other than general knowledge) have been at least partially resolved because of the recent focus on this issue by youth groups within the City of Hampton.

-Regional concerns about transportation are expressed in the Community Plan, not just City concerns.

## ***Employment***

### **2010 Comprehensive Plan**

#### **Employment**

- Youth are not knowledgeable about opportunities.
- Youth do not have/realize they have job skills.
- Youth are not always viewed positively by business.

### **Community Plan**

#### **Every Young Person is Prepared for a Career**

- Are teens knowledgeable about job opportunities in their community?
- Teens do not feel they are equipped with the proper skills to succeed in a job.
- Youth cannot access employment opportunities that provide training and work related skills.

### **Comparison of Employment Issues**

-These two objectives are quite close in both wording and meaning, except that the Community Plan offers a solution in the form of being able to access employment trainings and opportunities. Many of the same youth employment problems that existed when the 2010 Comprehensive Plan was written still exist today and the youth position on this issue is evidence of that.

## ***Caring Relationships***

### **2010 Comprehensive Plan**

#### **Caring Relationships**

- There is a lack of cooperation/participation from the school system.
- There is still a need to improve youth/adult partnerships to benefit the entire community.
- There is a lack of involvement in neighborhood concerns.

### **Community Plan**

#### **Caring Relationships Within the Community**

- Does every young person grow up with positive examples from their family and community?
- Youth perceive the need for strong, positive youth/adult relationships in both business and the community at large.
- Neighborhoods and public places in which youth meet and recreate lack the perception of safety.

### **Comparison of Caring Relationships**

-The importance of neighborhoods in the growth and development of youth is highlighted in both objectives. However, schools are not mentioned specifically in the Community Plan objective because of the high amount of effort put into caring environments in schools since the creation of the 2010 Plan (CARE Conference, Superintendent's and Principal's Advisory Groups, etc.).

-The need for businesses to have caring environments is mentioned in the Community Plan, reflecting the more inclusive horizon of the community planning process.

While the preceding four goals of the Community Plan fit nicely with the four outlined goals of the Comprehensive Plan Youth document that still leaves two objectives from the Community Plan unmatched.

### ***Youth Share Leadership***

Since the Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan was written, youth engagement within Hampton has dramatically increased (ex. Hampton Youth Commission, Uth Act, Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board, specific school and neighborhood youth boards, etc.). The Youth Focus Group determined that while youth engagement is an accepted concept in the city, it needs to be promoted and expanded across the region.

### ***Youth Acquire Essential Life Skills***

While the Employment objective of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan mentions that job skills are essential to young people in the city, there is no mention of life skills that

are not necessarily work oriented. The Youth Focus Group concluded that these skills are just as important as those offered in employment trainings, and that they deserve their own category for improvement and progression.



## **Section IV**

### **Goals and Objectives**

#### ***Goal Y-01: Caring Relationships Within the Community:***

Caring Relationships Within the Community is one of six “Youth” goals adopted in the updated Community Plan. Caring Relationships can include adult to youth relationships, youth to youth relationships, government to youth relationships, and business to youth relationships in the community. Because these types of relationships can exist throughout all aspects of a community, they are vital to the healthy development of young people in that community. According to a 1999 Community Interaction Survey conducted by the Hampton Youth Commission and the Youth Planners, 83% of the students surveyed agreed that it is important for young people and adults to be able to work well together. This same survey also asked if the young people thought that improving youth/adult relationships would increase job opportunities for youth and 73% of those surveyed agreed.

Caring Relationships are important because young people perceive that working together with adults will open up more opportunities for the youth. To improve Caring Relationships in the community, youth must grow up with at least 30 of the 40 Developmental Assets, have a strong, positive youth to adult relationship in both business and the community, and the neighborhoods and public places in which they meet and recreate must have the perception (and actuality) of safety.

#### **Objective Y1.1: Every Young Person In Hampton Grows Up With 30 Or More Developmental Assets.**

Young people are highly influenced by their surroundings when they are developing. Young people need to grow up with positive examples around them to better increase the chance that they will become successful. One method of categorizing and identifying these examples is through a system known as Developmental Asset-Building.

The 40 Developmental Assets were originally developed by Search Institute, a national organization based in Minneapolis and dedicated to providing leadership and research about young people across the country. Since 1989 they have surveyed nearly 2 million young people across the United States and Canada leading to the creation of a tool known as the Developmental Assets. These assets were further divided into two broad categories, external assets and internal assets. External assets deal with the positive experiences young people receive from the world around them. These 20 assets are about supporting and empowering young people, about setting boundaries and expectations, and about positive and constructive use of young people's time. External assets identify important roles that families, schools,

congregations, neighborhoods, and youth organizations can play in promoting healthy development.

Internal Assets are the twenty assets that identify those characteristics and behaviors that reflect positive internal growth and development of young people. These assets are about positive values and identities, social competencies, and commitment to learning. The internal Developmental Assets will help young people make thoughtful and positive choices and, in turn, be better prepared for situations in life that challenge their inner strength and confidence. These assets include the categories: commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.

According to Search Institute's surveys, 62% of young people have fewer than 20 of the Developmental Assets. Overall, the average young person in America has only 19 assets!

The program for increasing the total number of Developmental Assets among youth has been embraced by the City of Hampton over the past decade. Organizations such as Alternatives, Inc. and the Coalition for Youth utilize and refer to the Developmental Assets when working with groups of young people. Materials related to the Assets are always prevalent in either of these organizations as they are an integral part of many of their programs, such as the Hampton Youth Commission and the Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board.

**Objective Y1.2 and 1.3: Improve Youth/Adult Relationships, Especially Business and Other Community Organizations Relationships With the Youth.**

In order to have a truly caring environment in which young people can thrive, caring youth/adult relationships must be prevalent in all aspects of the community. These relationships include, but are not limited to, those within schools, businesses, neighborhoods, and community organizations that cater to young people.

Strong, positive youth/adult relationships are harder to attain at the business level than at the community level. These relationships in the business community are especially important to young people; the survey conducted in 1999 showed that 82% of those surveyed thought that improved youth/adult relationships would benefit businesses by providing responsible youth for jobs, and 78% of those surveyed agreed that improved youth/adult relationships would increase the number of youth-friendly businesses. An example of a strong relationship on the business level is a business that gives incentives when students come in with good grades.

The Youth Friendly Guidebook is a document created by young people to help businesses and service organizations understand how youth friendly they really are. The Guidebook lists several criteria for determining whether or not a business is youth friendly. The youth-friendly rating is decided by a team of youth evaluators entering

the business and scoring the business on the specific criteria. The list of youth friendly businesses will be available to young people across the city.

Relationships within the community are also important to young people since the community is the place where nurturing and growth usually occur. An example of a strong relationship on the community level is a community or neighborhood center that is willing to help the youth of the neighborhood when it is needed.

Another important connection that should be strengthened is between the youth of the community and the businesses of the community. An example of this problem is that every time a teen dance club is organized, it usually shuts down within the year due to fights. If there was a strong bond between the youth and the business, then the business would respect the youth as adults and not punish all for the crimes of a few, and the majority of the youth would respect the club and each other enough not to want to ruin the fun for everybody.

A survey about community interaction was conducted in Hampton's high schools. In this survey, youth were asked how they view the School System's involvement with the rest of the community. One finding from the survey showed that young people do not see a strong connection between their school and their neighborhood. Another popular theme found in the survey was that most youth would like to increase school/community involvement. Youth also indicated that they are not usually able to find out at school what events are occurring in their neighborhood and vice versa. From these findings, we have identified the need to assess the connection between the school system and the community in Hampton.

Not all communities are impassive about schools. Another example of cooperation between a school and the community is the partnership between Davis Middle School and the Northampton Community Center. Northampton happens to be attached to one side of Davis. At one time, Davis had a student population too large for its classroom capacity. Northampton, which is a City run facility, allowed the school to utilize the classroom space they have during school hours. After school hours, the center welcomes youth from the school to participate in extracurricular activities. Students feel that the community center is an extended part of their school where they can go for fun and support.

Not all businesses are impassive about the importance of education either. One example of this is Chuck E. Cheese's, where youth get free tokens for bringing in a good report card.

Organizations also contribute to the youth in the community. One organization that cares about the community is the Marching Elites. This organization requires students to provide good report cards before they are allowed to participate in trips and parades. The organization also provides tutoring for students with a grade lower than

a “C,” and has a babysitting class among many other activities that provide a connection between youth and their community. These and other groups, schools, neighborhoods, and businesses, are fighting to create a strong connection between adults, youth, and communities.

**Objective Y1.4: Improve Perception Of Safety In Neighborhoods And Other Public Places In Which Young People Tend To Meet And Recreate.**

When a person enters a neighborhood or public place and initially feels uncomfortable or unsafe, this is a lack of perception of safety. If a certain place is generally associated with crime this is also a lack of perception of safety. The Youth Friendly Guidebook used to evaluate businesses and service organizations lists safety as one of its vital criteria.

In Hampton, some of the following areas may be labeled as having a lack of perception of safety:

- Neighborhoods that statistically have high crime rates.
- Recreational areas that attract mainly teens and young adults, a place to “hang out” (ex. basketball courts, nightclubs, movie theaters, etc).

The reason this is an issue is that young people want to be with their friends regardless of the perceived safety of the area in which they are meeting. The responsibility falls on the community to increase safety through partnerships with various sources such as:

- Police.
- Legislators (on both a local and state level).
- Neighborhood safety organizations (such as Neighborhood Watch).

**Conclusion:**

The caring relationships in our City are a building block for the development of healthy and successful young people. Making sure that developmental assets are present in the lives of our youth is fundamental to shaping a well rounded individual with knowledge of, and involvement in, their community. All the situations stated previously are excellent examples of successful youth/adult relationships in our City. All of these examples draw on both the involvement of young people and their adult counterparts to successfully carry out the task at hand, and sometimes the responsibility and leadership must be shared by both parties. Caring relationships must be carried out throughout the entire community, meaning that neighborhood organizations, businesses, civic organizations, and school related programs must all work to increase these caring relationships. The perception of safety in our neighborhoods and our city as a whole is important to not only safeguarding the well-being of our young people, but also insuring that they grow up and develop in an

environment that is caring and safe, so that they may carry on that value to their children.

**Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Relationships and youth/adult partnerships should have a meaningful and definite purpose.
- Partnerships should be developed between neighborhoods and schools.
- Develop a method to assess the relative strength of school/community and youth/business connections.

## **Goal Y-02: Youth Share Leadership**

Youth sharing leadership is another one of the six goals that youth believe needs to be met. Youth sharing leadership means that youth should have the ability to participate in decisions that affect them. One day, these same youth will assume leadership positions throughout the community. It is never too early to get involved in civic activities and to learn how to interact on the business and city management level. Youth should be able to help decide what their future is going to look like. Young people are able to offer a different perspective because, while adults can only guess as to what the young people are passionate or concerned about, youth sharing the leadership can bridge that gap by acting as the voice of all their peers to those who make the decisions. When given a chance to take action and gain these vital leadership skills, most people feel empowered. Young people tell the Youth Planners that they care more about their community because they were more involved.

### **Objective Y2.1: Enable Youth to Participate Fully in Decisions Involving Them.**

In order for young people to become the leaders of tomorrow, the community must offer opportunities for young people to learn about leadership allowing them to later become successful members of the community. On the other hand, adults who make decisions affecting youth are not often keyed into the issues that are important to young people; the obvious solution to this problem is the involvement of young people alongside the adults to create a more inclusive outcome.

The Hampton Youth Commission is an excellent example of how the youth voice can fully impact decisions that affect young people. The Commission's mission statement is:

*"To provide an opportunity for youth to have a formal role in the City's decision-making through a representative Commission that addresses youth issues."*

The Hampton Youth Commission has risen to a level in the City government where they are closely listened to by City officials, and are the obvious liaisons of the youth issues within the government.

Other opportunities to share leadership on the local level can be found in the Planning Department where two young people are hired as Youth Planners, or on any committee/board where young people are not a separate entity from the adult group, and their vote weighs equally with adults. Recently, the School Investment Panel was created to come up with a recommendation for capital expenditures related to schools. Young people were commissioned to help advise and steer the committee towards the issues that young people find to be important.

The School Board is a panel of adults that makes decisions about schools in the City of Hampton. The adults on the School Board are all members of the community,

though they are not students within the local school system. The Superintendent's Advisory Group was formed to involve students in the School Board's decisions. The group is composed of young people who inform the Superintendent on what is going on and what needs to be addressed in schools. The Superintendent's Advisory Group is not an example of shared leadership, but is an example of civic activity. Full participation in decisions that affect them would mean that the youth vote would not be an optional thing that adults can ignore. It means that youth would be treated the same as adults as far as the decisions go. This should not just happen at the local level, but should also occur regionally. Who knows, maybe one day there will be a Youth Advisor for the Governor of Virginia!

### **Objective Y2.2: Increase Youth Engagement in Civic Activities.**

Civic activities can be broadly defined as the interaction of citizens with their community and government. They can also be described as activities which reinvigorate the public purpose and civic mission, such as developing civic skills, inspiring engaged citizenship, promoting a civil society, and working closer with the government and the government working closer with the community.

The idea of civic engagement centered on youth has been broken down into an easy-to-understand visual created by young people in Hampton, referred to as the "Youth Engagement Triangle." The triangle that follows is divided into three pathways of youth engagement:

#### *-Pathway I: Project, Tasks, and Service Learning*

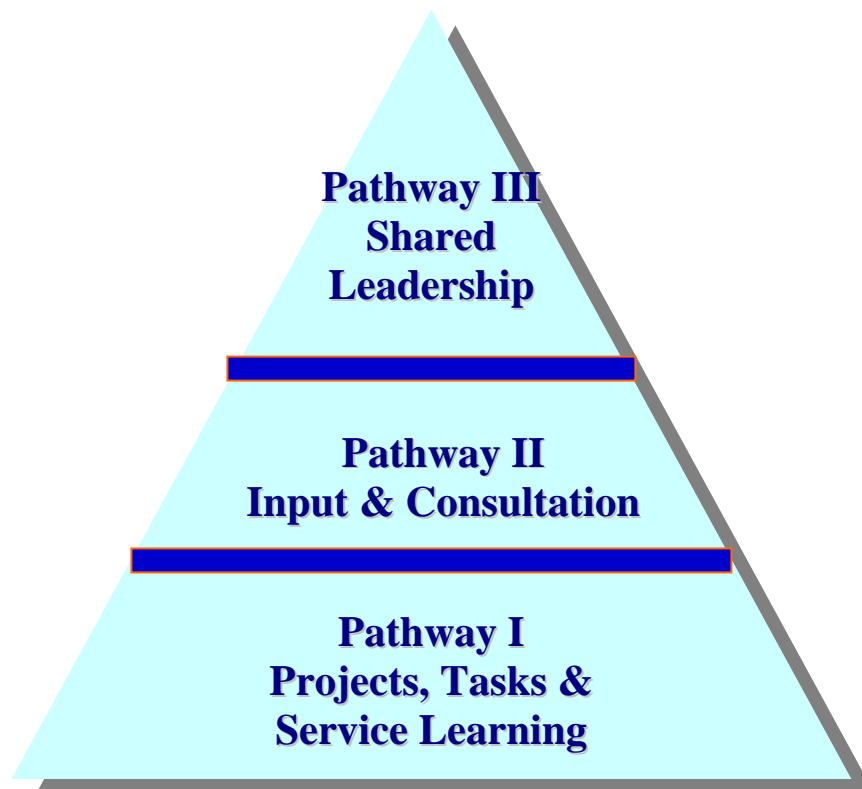
This pathway is integral to the creation of a successful youth engagement system because it is used to begin involving young people in their community, even in small ways, such as in a road cleanup or working at a local food shelter. The first pathway is appealing because it is a short-term project; adults often organize the entire event, and young people take away a positive experience when they are finished.

#### *-Pathway II: Input and Consultation*

In the second pathway, the young person begins to enter into more complicated partnerships and requires more training to work effectively with adults or other young people. This is an opportunity for the young people to influence the decisions that affect them. The defining factor of the second pathway however, is that the youth are utilized strictly in an advisory role; while their opinion is valued, the adult will ultimately make the decision.

*-Pathway III: Shared Leadership*

In the third pathway, young people work alongside adults and hold the same amount of responsibility as their adult counterparts, as well as the same rights. This pathway of the triangle usually requires greater amounts of training for the task of working side by side with adults to create a better solution for the community.



While there are obviously many opportunities for youth to participate in civic activities, they are not presented this way. It is not always that the groups are not there, but often youth do not know of the group or do not have a reasonable grasp of the purpose of the group. Youth are interested; they just do not have access or knowledge about these activities.

**Objective Y2.3 and 2.4: Explore Opportunities and Vehicles for Youth to Contact Other Youth and Share Leadership on a Regional Basis.**

The City of Hampton is one of 15 localities considered to be part of the Hampton Roads region. At such a close proximity, one would assume that communication between these cities would be very active, especially between the young people, as there are specific advantages that attract youth in all the cities. There is the beach and boardwalk in Virginia Beach, the theme parks in Williamsburg, the mall and music venues in Norfolk, and many others. Unfortunately, this communication does not exist.

*Adopted by City Council February 8, 2006*



In terms of shared leadership, the young people in Hampton are very out of touch with members of similar organizations in other cities within the region.

The benefits of an open line of communication among young people within the region are numerous. First, different ideas could spread among the cities, helping to improve the overall aspects of youth involvement. Also, the combination of different ideas brought to a meeting between these organizations would bring about even better solutions. Different cities have young people with different interests, and the diversity resulting from such a conglomeration of young people would be very desirable. The strength and bonding between cities in the region, both civically and economically, would be increased. When the youth of the cities meet and recreate, it is a sure sign of a partnership between the government officials and business leaders, leading to an increase of the overall economic stability of the region.

While young people involved in leadership opportunities in a city benefits that city only, it is another matter to create regional opportunities for young people to share leadership. These types of opportunities would help young people branch out from their city and interact with peers from other areas in the region, perhaps exchanging ideas or creating new ones for youth engagement.

### **Conclusion:**

The concept of youth sharing leadership is not a new one to the City of Hampton, but it has by no means reached its full potential. It is important for both the development of young people and the future of the community that teens feel they are connected to their community. Young people need opportunities presented to them on a local and a regional level so they can experience all their community has to offer, while simultaneously offering a unique perspective to community leaders. It is also important that young people from all around Hampton Roads are aware of each others' initiatives and ideas, in order to create a larger pool of youth engagement possibilities for the future of the entire region.

### **Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Host a region-wide youth conference to discuss methods of youth engagement and possible coordination between multiple cities
- Publicize youth engagement opportunities more effectively in places where young people are prominent: schools, malls, movie theaters, etc.
- Continue to increase the number of youth engagement opportunities throughout all three pathways of the youth engagement triangle.

### **Goal Y-03: Youth Acquire Essential Life Skills**

The time when a person is young is the time in which that person should be preparing to enter the "real world." From things such as balancing a checkbook to interviewing for a job, these practical life skills are just as important as a young person's formal education. However, oftentimes the opportunities to learn these essential skills are overlooked or are not readily available to all young people. Young people have a need to know how to manage themselves in the future. Life skills like these are often not learned through what we call "traditional education," and must be obtained in other places. Sometimes parents have the resources and the time to teach their children these valuable skills, but regrettably, sometimes they do not, and that is where it becomes the responsibility of the community to offer these skills to young people.

#### **Objective Y3.1: Youth Have Access to Educational, Social, Civic, and Recreational Opportunities That Provide Opportunities for the Development of Strong Life Skills.**

Life skills do not have to be found in a seminar or book entitled "How to Succeed in Life." Many times life skills can be acquired simply by participating in activities or attending after-school programs. Along with everyday life education (such as balancing a checkbook) there is also teamwork, leadership, and innovation. Life skills such as these are important for young people because they are necessary in the real world, such as when applying for a job or assuming a leadership position. It is essential for young people to learn the basics of survival outside of their parent's home, but it is also important to learn about and develop personal skills that will help youth thrive and become successful.

Educational opportunities can present themselves in the form of educational programs that encourage the development of life skills within a curriculum, or education that reaches outside the bounds of traditional subjects. A good example of this non-traditional education can be found at New Horizons Regional Education Center, a facility created to train a skilled workforce and offer technical courses to students. Some of the classes offered at New Horizons are Auto Painter, Nursing Assistant, and Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement. The New Horizons Center is located in Hampton with a branch campus in Newport News; it is open to students from any of the nearby cities provided that their respective school system will offer transportation should it be needed. However, nearly a half day is needed out of the regular school day to participate fully in a class at the New Horizons Center. Many students' schedules do not permit such a long time away from their traditional education.

Civic opportunities are numerous in the City of Hampton because of its long-standing support of youth engagement. The involvement of young people in civic organizations offers them insights into the workings of a community, and allows them to make partnerships with adults in the community as well. There are many commissions and organizations in the City that utilize young people in an advisory

capacity or in an equal voting member capacity, for example, the School Board with the Superintendent's Advisory Group, and the Citizen's Unity Commission. The Neighborhood Commission has bridged the gap by having both a Neighborhood Youth Advisory Board and two voting members on its Commission. Neighborhoods participate in the engagement process as well; the Farmington Civic Association has a board made up of members of the neighborhood, including two young people, who decide how to better the neighborhood and more efficiently involve the residents in community activities. Unfortunately, space is often limited on boards and commissions, allowing only a few young people to serve, so a very small percentage of the youth population actually experiences this form of civic engagement.

Recreation is an important part of a young person's development, and the inclusion of vital life skills into a recreational activity is an ongoing goal in the City of Hampton. Starting with students in elementary school all the way through high school youth have continuing opportunities to be involved in recreational programs that are beneficial to them in multiple ways. One of the major champions of this type of program is the Hampton Parks and Recreation Department. They offer a variety of programs such as the A+ Academy that focuses on developing young people's academic skills as well as providing fun and enriching recreational activities. Hampton Parks and Recreation also offers enrichment programs that focus on academic excellence (Bookmobile), cultural diversity (African Ballet), creativity (Origami), and physical fitness (Tae Kwon Do).

**Objective Y3.2: Parents Have Access to the Resources That Enable Them To Support Their Children in the Age Of Technology.**

Ever since the onset of the information age, the need for young people and young adults who are computer literate has been in high demand. Many jobs require people to be knowledgeable of computers and/or other technology as minimum requirements for being hired. In this ever more modernized world, the use of technology is fundamental to many careers that young people could choose.

Following the mantra of the community nurturing its young people, it is the responsibility of the community to provide young people with the proper tools to become successful as an adult. However, not all families can afford to buy a computer, so sometimes young people are forced to use the internet and technological resources at other places. The libraries in Hampton all offer computers with internet access and audio visual equipment for use by any citizen who has obtained a library card. Hampton City Schools also provides computers and technological equipment to all of its individual libraries, and these computers are available for student use during school hours. Since the internet is often required for school projects, book reports, etc., this access is crucial to the academic life of many Hampton youth. The only drawback to this scenario is that access to the computers at school is usually restricted solely to class work and not other forms of research or computer learning.

**Conclusion:**

For teenagers, the developmental need for life skills is great. The community is an essential provider of life skills to those young people who can't obtain them anywhere else. One of the jobs of the community is to provide opportunities through educational, civic, and recreational activities/organizations. With the increasing call for technologically fluent individuals in today's workforce, access to technological apparatus such as computers is fundamental for all young people in Hampton. Should more and more young people begin to acquire these essential life skills, there may be a decrease in destructive activities that lead to juvenile detention and/or school suspensions, and an increase in more positive, constructive activities such as community engagement and volunteerism.

**Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Increase opportunities for young people to learn "non-traditional" skills and advertise them in places that young people frequent: movie theaters, malls, restaurants, etc.
- Implement a way to test of computer proficiency of all high school age students to better prepare young people and allow them access to technology.
- Increase the number of opportunities for young people to learn life skills.

## ***Goal Y-04: Every Young Person is Prepared for a Career.***

Young people are members of the community under the supervision of their parent/guardian until they graduate high school, at which point a choice awaits them. Although there are a number of different paths to take, many times the future of a young person comes down to one of two choices. They can continue their education at a higher level or they can immediately enter the workforce and obtain a job. Once out of college or into the workforce, that young adult must be ready to contribute to their community and society as a whole. Either choice inevitably leads to one truth; that young people need to be prepared for a career, and this preparation should occur during their youth. At a 2005 public meeting of the Hampton Youth Commission, most of the participants said they wanted a job, but could not or did not know how to go about obtaining one.

### **Objective Y4.1 and Y4.4: Increase the Level of Formal Education and Training Among Young People/Improve Partnerships with the School Board and a Trade School Outreach.**

Although workforce readiness has become an increasingly necessary asset for young people, the vital importance of a thorough and strong formal education must not be overlooked. While many jobs in the past would not care about the status of their employee's formal education, high school diplomas are now common place in the working world. The Youth Focus Group recognized that while vocational training needed to be addressed, it could not be done at the expense of improvement of the secondary education system in Hampton.

For this reason, the Youth Focus Group specifically identified a partnership with the Hampton City School Board and a trade outreach school (such as New Horizons) as necessary to the eventual accomplishment of the goal of preparing young people for a career.

The School Board has the power and the capacity to effect change on a citywide level from within the schools, definitely the place where young people in Hampton spend the majority of their time. By constantly seeking to increase and improve upon education in the schools, the chance of success in the real world for the students is similarly increased. Along the same line, trade outreach schools such as New Horizons can help young people quickly develop specific skills that interest them, even before they graduate from high school. This way, should a young person not have an interest in continuing their formal education, the community still offers that person a chance early on to become involved in their trade of choice.

## **Objective Y4.2 And Y4.3: Increase and Improve Employment Opportunities That Provide Training/Work-Related Skills And Improve Access to Information About Career and Job Opportunities for Youth.**

In order for young people to have access to the job market in Hampton, they have to know where to start their job search. Employment opportunities are available through many sources such as walk-ins, references, newspaper and/or internet advertisements, and school advertisements. Theoretically, with all these sources, most teens should have no problem finding a place of employment. However, in the same 1998 Teen Employment survey, the question was asked, "Do you feel knowledgeable of job opportunities in your community?" The split was right down the middle, with 50% of those surveyed in the high schools saying they did feel knowledgeable of job opportunities, and 50% saying they did not. This data appears to be slightly inconclusive; therefore the Youth Planners revised the survey to target the following groups of young people, those with jobs and those without jobs. When asked the same question again, 57% of those with jobs responded that they felt knowledgeable about job opportunities, while only 37% of those without jobs said they felt knowledgeable.

Teens sometimes know where and how to look for a job, but employment just can't fit into their schedule. Of the teens surveyed in 1999, 51% said that it was hard to find a job that was flexible enough for their schedule with their priorities being school and extracurricular activities.

At a Youth Commission forum held in 1999, the youth were asked what would make finding a job easier. Below are some of the answers that were given, along with more updated information

- Place a bulletin board in schools and/or the mall with a list of jobs that are of interest to teens.
- Have job fairs (either in the schools or other frequented teen areas) at least twice a year.
- Place an insert in the Daily Press that lists jobs that are of interest to teens, as well as in the school newspapers.
- Utilize the Youth Commission's website to advertise job opportunities.

### **Conclusion:**

This specific goal of the Community Plan has not been researched and studied as in-depth as some of the others have, and, as a result, our concrete information on the subject is sparse. We can acknowledge the fact that young people need more opportunities to look for and obtain jobs, if only to get experience in the work place. We also know that preparation for a career is not only found within part-time jobs, but also within the school system as formal education and a high school diploma. The schools are just as important for nurturing a successful young person as is their place of employment. However, in spite of the lack of youth statistics and data,

recommendations are still stand and are being made to set a well-defined course for this goal in the updated Community Plan.

**Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Conduct research (surveys, polls, etc.) to gather data on how prepared young people in Hampton feel they are for a career.
- Have the Youth Commission host public speak-outs to allow young people to voice their opinion on this issue.
- Conduct surveys at local businesses to determine the capabilities of working teenagers today and the employers' opinion of them.

## ***Goal Y-05: Places To Go and Things To Do for Youth.***

This issue, more commonly referred to as Youth Space, has been an issue in Hampton for over a decade. Young people desire a place or group of places to go where they can be among other young people, peers from their schools or neighborhoods, and other community members to whom they can relate.

### **Objective Y5.1 and Y5.4: Create More Public Spaces Dedicated To Youth/Increase Adult Awareness And Support For Youth Space.**

This is the main issue under the topic of Youth Space because it addresses the most basic definition of Youth Space: A place specifically for teens. This issue has been addressed for the past 10 years and is still a hot topic on the youth agenda.

A 1998 Youth Space survey conducted by the Hampton Coalition for Youth indicates that young people would like a facility to call their own. The survey asked 1,099 young people such questions as: "Where do you go? Would you go to different places if new ones were available? Where should those places be located?" Some of the results from the survey were:

- Most teens spend their time at home or at a friend's house. Other than sports, few are involved on a regular basis in positive extra-curricular activities.
- Most young people do not believe that there is a place in their neighborhood where they can go after school. (One might point out the community centers located in various neighborhoods, but their activities are mainly geared towards elementary and middle school age children, not teens.)
- Young people have definite opinions about the activities they would like to have in their space and ways to make that space "youth friendly."
- The majority of young people would like a place for youth filled with a variety of activities. Older teens overwhelmingly prefer a centralized location, accessible to all teenagers. Teens also stress the need for safety.

The most favorable solution for addressing a portion of the problem of Youth Space seems to be the creation of a Teen Center. This Teen Center would be a facility used not only for music and dance parties, but also for other activities that are youth oriented such as sports, a "coffee house" type atmosphere, job training, computer and internet availability, and a recording studio, just to name a few. The Hampton Teen Center would be fully staffed by young people and youth-friendly adults, and young people would also drive its program development and site improvement.

However, the initial problem encountered by the architects of the Teen Center concept was the lack of adult awareness, not to mention support of the issue of Youth Space. When the Teen Center idea was first conceived, the youth engagement initiative in Hampton was still in its beginning, so many weren't even concerned with giving youth a voice, much less a center of their own.



The task was given to the Hampton Youth Commission, who created a Teen Center subcommittee, and charged them with the task of getting the idea of a Teen Center out to the community. The Teen Center committee utilized presentations to identify and inform “key stakeholders,” or members of the community that would be able to help make the Teen Center a reality, as to the benefits of having a Teen Center.

After nearly a decade of work and presentations, the City has purchased the Sentara Health and Fitness Center at Butler Farm Road and Magruder Boulevard which will be renovated and transformed into a Teen Center. Through newly created youth and adult partnerships, the Hampton Teen Center will begin to take its shape over the course of the next two years, supported by the hard work and dedication of those who have gone before.

**Objective Y5.2: Enhance the Number And Breadth of Age Appropriate Activities in Every Neighborhood.**

Neighborhoods are usually communities that house all different ages of people - young, middle-aged, and elderly. However, many neighborhoods do not offer many activities that lend themselves to the interests of the teenage generation. There are currently four community centers throughout several of the neighborhoods in Hampton, but most of their programs are geared towards younger children, such as day care, arts and crafts, and sports camps for those young ages. While these community centers do employ teenagers to help staff the centers, there are little to no recreational opportunities for teenagers in the neighborhoods. While working in their neighborhood is an admirable job, and an excellent way to begin making money, teens need a place to “hang out” with their own peers, without judgmental adults and/or fear of being accused of loitering.

A 1998 survey on Youth Space asked students at four pairs of schools, a high school and a corresponding middle school, respectively, if there was a place to go after school. Three of the pairs answered “no” for the majority, while the other pair, Phoebus High School and Spratley Middle School, had 58% answer “yes.” However, when broken down by age brackets, only two of the age groups answered “yes” more than “no,” and that was the under 12 and over 18 age groups. From this survey we can deduce that the teenage population of the 8 schools felt that there was no place to go after school.

The same survey asked young people where new facilities for youth should be located. Mostly younger youth answered “in a neighborhood area,” while mostly high school-aged youth answered “in the Coliseum area.”

**Objective Y5.3: Encourage And Support The Creation Of Places And Activities Which Entice Teens And Young Adults To Choose Hampton As A Place To Live.**

Many of Hampton's young people leave the City and find employment in other communities. In order for a community to thrive, it's best possibility is to successfully mold young people to go into the world, and then return to where they started, raise a family, and therefore help add to the city's population of good leaders and civic-minded citizens. Bringing young people back provides the community with an educated and passionate group of citizens willing to contribute to the wellbeing of Hampton.

The aforementioned trend seems to be stemming in part from a lack of stimulating places and activities that are interesting and exciting to young adults and teenagers. Richard Florida's book, entitled The Rise of the Creative Class outlines a trend across the country of communities and workforces moving away from a corporate business climate and into what he terms a "people climate." He theorizes that the new generation of workers (and careers for that matter) thrives around creativity and alternative lifestyles, so communities wanting to attract these people should adjust properly.

A board of graduating seniors, college youth, and adults was recently put together in Hampton to try to solve this problem. The "Bring Them Back" committee is tackling questions like: "Why don't young people want to return to our community?" and "What can we do to change this fact?"

**Objective Y5.5: Encourage Affordable Fares for Youth.**

In any city that is geared towards economic momentum, young people often feel left out when confronted by high sales prices and expensive goods. While many young people acquire minimum wage jobs in the city, some young people say that they don't have time to get a job, don't have the transportation, or their parents simply won't let them get a job.

It is unreasonable for a city to set out to lower the price of consumer goods because of the needs of a single constituency, but the Youth Focus Group identified that encouragement of affordable fares for young people in places frequented by young people (movie theaters, skating rinks, the Teen Center) would be a more practical decision.

Along with a rise in youth affordability, this would be an incentive for young people to find something to do in the city instead of "hanging out" or loitering. The young people could no longer say they had nothing to do because everything was too expensive. Thus, a decrease in some fares for young people could help to increase youth involvement in asset-building activities and other positive behaviors.

**Conclusion:**

Youth Space is an extremely important issue to the young people of Hampton, and solving the many obstacles involved is not an easy or quick process. First and foremost, the creation of a true youth space, a Teen Center, will play a vital role in bringing about awareness of Youth Space and City support. A Teen Center will give teenagers a place to call their own, possibly reducing juvenile crime and increasing the amount of dedicated, committed young people in our City. Just as important as satisfying the young people here in Hampton is providing for future young people and those that have already left Hampton. The molding of a city attractive enough to both teens and young adults to make them want to return after college would be an excellent accomplishment for the issue of Youth Space. But even while the City is looked at on a large scale, it must be remembered that Youth Space begins in the neighborhoods, and the creation of more age-appropriate activities, especially for teenagers, will help to solve that problem.

**Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Lobbying for continued public support of the Hampton Teen Center. Continue to engage both youth and adults in the creation of the Teen Center
- Gather information as to why young people are not returning to Hampton after they leave for college and create a local response.
- Create activities for teenagers, not necessarily a new facility, in the neighborhoods.

## **Goal Y-06: Getting Around**

A majority of a young person's life is spent in many places - - at home, at school, at work, or out with friends. All of these places where the young person chooses to go have one thing in common; they require transportation. Most young people are extremely dependent on transportation because of the nature of their schedules; at the very least, they need a way to get to and from school every day, and sometimes they have part time jobs for which they need transportation. Transportation takes many forms, such as a bus, car, bicycle, and even walking. However, other options exist for young people that sometimes are not well known, and transportation accessibility is sometimes not as accessible as it sounds.

### **Objective Y6.1 and Y6.5: Increase and Improve Transportation Accessible to Youth/Increase Knowledge of How to Use Public Transit System.**

The most common form of public transportation in Hampton is the bus system, represented by Hampton Roads Transit, or HRT. Bus routes run throughout Hampton Roads, along both the Peninsula and the South-Side. With approximately 61 routes, the HRT buses are utilized in middle and high schools as transportation for students. These routes provide relatively extensive coverage of the city, yet young people are still hesitant to ride the bus.

Young people may have preconceived views of the bus from TV, friends, and other sources, but many teens have never experienced bus riding. In a survey conducted in the city's high schools, out of 481 students interviewed, 211, nearly half, said that they did not know how to get around Hampton on the bus. In the 1998 Youth Space survey, the students were asked "How do young people get where they want to go?" Only about 11% answered that they used public transportation, while about 34% got rides with either their parents or their friends, and another 23% answered they drove themselves.

Another survey was conducted by the Youth Planners to determine how young people got around. After surveying over 200 students in all four high schools, the results were as follows:

- Most teens do not own their own cars, and many do not know how to use the city bus service.
- Most teens either drive or catch a ride with others when they go to hang out.
- About half the teens think the bus fare is too high, and half think it's about right.
- When teens use alternative transportation, they most often bike to where they want to go.

- Even though many neighborhoods do not have sidewalks, less than half of the teens living in neighborhoods without sidewalks see this as a problem.

This survey confirmed a previous one conducted by the Coalition for Youth. The results of that survey summarized that younger teens used their parents for transportation, while older teens relied on their friend's cars.

**Objective Y6.2: Diversify And Increase Transportation Options Available To The Youth (Middle School Through College) Both Locally And Regionally.**

While the public transportation system created by local bus routes is an accessible one, it is not always the most efficient, and when it is the only practical means of long range public transportation, young people who do not drive are left with little other options. It is important that young people, all the way from middle school age to college age, have a variety of options for transportation. Not only does it make living in Hampton more convenient for these young people, it also makes the City a more attractive place where young people can return.

An example of a more diverse and youth friendly transportation system would be the already established system of bike routes around the City. These bike routes connect to the schools, the major neighborhoods, and the commercial districts. This opportunity gives young people another option for getting around Hampton other than using automobiles or buses.

Hampton is just one part of the larger Hampton Roads region, and as young people grow in the city, their interests branch out into neighboring localities, since the activities offered in cities such as Newport News, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach are all unique. In order to promote intercity cooperation and to help young people utilize Hampton Roads as a region, it is important to look at these transportation options on a regional level as well as a local level.

**Objective Y6.3 and Y6.4: Encourage the Use of Safer, Affordable, and More Convenient Means of Transportation for Teens and Young Adults/Increase Awareness Among Young People to Reduce Car Accidents Among Youth.**

Another concern dealing with the issue of transportation is the safety factor of young people when they or their peers get behind the wheel of an automobile. According to national statistics, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in young people age 15-20. In 2002, 8,278 drivers in the 15-20 year old age bracket were involved in a fatal accident, which was a 12 percent increase from 1992, only ten years earlier.

Tenth graders in the state of Virginia are required to take a full nine week course of Drivers Education, and then are required to pass a 'Behind the Wheel' driving course before being issued their drivers license. However, besides the classroom instruction and the on-the-road training, very little is taught to young drivers about car

safety and awareness. It is one thing for a young person to read a chapter on accident statistics in a book assigned by their teacher; it is a totally different matter for them to hear the same information coming from the mouth of one of their peers. Teenagers often feel as if they are invincible, and that the statistics don't apply to them, but other students may be able to help persuade their peers into taking a more cautious approach to their driving privilege.

There are few or no campaigns or rallies organized in the schools, where nearly 100% of the teenage driving population of Hampton can be found, to help inform and educate young people about the risks involved in driving. It can also be pointed out that the only formal education young people ever get about driving is in that nine weeks of driving instruction in the schools. While some and hopefully many parents will take the initiative to instruct their children in proper driving skills, it is questionable why there is so little time given to something so important.

### **Conclusion:**

Young people often keep very busy schedules that require them to move frequently from place to place. Public transportation, mainly the busing system, is available to them but the majority utilizes other methods. Young people are affected by the stereotypes of buses and often forego riding buses completely based on a simple misconception of bus safety, be it safety while on the bus or waiting at the bus stop.

According to the 2000 Census, young people under the age of 18 make up about a quarter of Hampton's population. Sixteen percent of Hampton's population is made up of high school individuals who can drive. Young people are often ill-informed of the real dangers of driving, and when they are informed in school, they are sometimes less than eager to listen given the environment in which it is taught. Perhaps the only method left to our community is to utilize the peers of these young people to spread the message about accident awareness and car safety.

### **Preliminary Recommendations:**

- Increase the amount of education young people receives relating to car accident awareness, not necessarily through traditional classroom lessons.
- Form a partnership with HRT to include a speak-out for young people to voice some of their opinions of the bus system, and to allow HRT to dispel some of the misconceptions of public transportation.
- Provide an accessible and convenient transportation system that would traverse the region.

## **Section V**

### **Relationship to Other Strategic Issues**

While this Youth Component holds its own section within the Hampton Community Plan, the youth agenda is not confined to these few pages. On the contrary, many of the youth issues mentioned here also permeate other identified strategic City issues. The connection between the Youth Component and the rest of the Community Plan helps to bind the agenda of young people and the agenda of the community together as a whole, creating a better solution for all parties involved. Specific goals within several of the critical issues can be directly related to impacting youth, from Healthy Business Climate to Strong Schools.

### **Customer Delight**

**Goal 4: Services are User Friendly and Readily Available to All Potential Customers.**

#### **CONNECTS TO**

**Objective Y1.3: Improve Business and Other Community Organizations' Relationships With the Youth.**

This goal is worded that “all potential customers” receive equal treatment and service at local businesses. Young people are an invaluable asset to business owners for their tendency to shop or eat somewhere after every paycheck (i.e. Coliseum Mall, clothing stores, local restaurants). Businesses must treat their young customers with the same respect and accessibility with which they treat others.

Currently, the Community Plan Subcommittee of the Hampton Youth Commission is working on evaluating local businesses for their “youth-friendliness.” This evaluation is based on location, overall service, affordability for youth, ambience, etc. The criteria are based on the recently created Youth-Friendly Guidebook, an outline of how a business in Hampton can cater successfully to young people. The eventual evaluation and publication of all of Hampton’s businesses will give young people a road map for where to go and where not to go to spend money, and will give businesses a reason to make sure they are fulfilling their pledge to render user friendly services to all potential customers.

## **Healthy Business Climate**

**Goal 1: Jobs - Hampton will be the Community of Choice for High Wage Jobs in Targeted Industry Segments.**

### **CONNECTS TO**

**Goal Y-04: Every Young Person is Prepared for a Career.**

If Hampton's goal is to prepare young people for a successful career in the working world, it is only logical and practical that Hampton simultaneously sustain a working community that holds lucrative jobs that would hopefully bring back some of the young people who were initially trained here. This situation would be advantageous for industries because through connections with the educational system, they would know exactly what young people are capable of when they enter the workforce, and it would benefit young people, should they return, because they are already familiar with the region and the dynamics of the businesses and communities here.

These two goals are intertwined in that by training a motivated and empowered workforce in Hampton, a powerful group of young adults is created that can return and work to make Hampton and the region a better place to live.

**Goal 2: Retail – Hampton will be a Unique Regional Retail and Entertainment Destination and the First Retail Choice for Hampton Residents.**

### **CONNECTS TO**

**Objective Y5.3: Encourage and Support the Creation of Places and Activities Which Entice Teens and Young Adults to Choose Hampton as a Place to Live.**

Retail in Hampton could potentially benefit greatly from the young people in both the City and in the region, but Hampton is not the only locality in the Hampton Roads region with retail and entertainment activities. Concert venues in Norfolk, the boardwalk in Virginia Beach, and Patrick Henry Mall in Newport News, all pose as competition to Hampton for the attention of youth.

The Youth Component identifies that in order to continue to bring young people and young adults into the City there must be something to draw them in, such as a unique and worthwhile retail/entertainment district.

While some businesses may try to out-do the ventures of neighboring cities in order to gain as much customer base as possible, the Community Plan suggests that Hampton become a "unique destination," focusing more on creativity and values with which young people could identify.



## **Healthy Growth and Development of Children and Youth**

### **Goal 5: Healthy Teens.**

#### ***CONNECTS TO***

#### **The entire Youth Component**

One of the most obvious connections to the spirit of the Youth Component can be found in the fifth goal of the Healthy Growth and Development of Children and Youth strategic issue. The vision of this strategic issue states that “Hampton’s children and youth will thrive and succeed in a caring community.” Much of the Youth Component deals with young people growing up in a caring, supportive, and productive community.

This strategic issue very simply outlines the goals that adults as community leaders are willing to take on to insure that the same goals identified in the Youth Component are being implemented by the community.

## **Healthy Neighborhoods**

**Goal 1: Every Hampton Neighborhood will be Economically Sustainable.**

**and**

**Goal 2: Every Hampton Neighborhood will be Highly Functional.**

**CONNECTS TO**

**Goal Y-01: Caring Relationships Within The Community.**

The neighborhood is a vital part in the development of all young peoples' lives. As the place where youth spend most of their time before entering secondary school, the Community Plan outlines the viability and sustainability of Hampton's neighborhoods as a strategic issue that needs to be addressed.

The Youth Component specifies that Caring Relationships within the Community are necessary to nurture healthy and productive young adults. Caring relationships in the neighborhoods are no exception. A neighborhood that cannot sustain itself economically has little use to young people and cannot possibly offer the full spectrum of caring relationships when compared to a thriving and successful neighborhood. The Youth Component and the Community Plan both agree that neighborhoods are the incubators of strong citizens and cannot be ignored.

**Goal 3: Hampton Neighborhoods will Provide Diverse Choices.**

**CONNECTS TO**

**Objective Y5.2: Enhance the Number and Breadth of Age Appropriate Activities in Every Neighborhood.**

The Healthy Neighborhoods strategic issue also addresses a specific point that is similarly mentioned in the Youth Component. The necessity for a wide array of opportunities for young people in neighborhoods is outlined in both documents, mainly because of the diversity of interests that come with the different ages of youth. What interests a five year old will not interest a seventeen year old, but both are classified as youth.

The Community Plan and Youth Component both say that neighborhoods must offer age-appropriate activities at all levels in order to appeal to the same young people in the neighborhood as they grow older, and not have them lose interest once they become a teenager.

## **Healthy Diverse Community**

**Goal 3: Employers, Service Providers and Community Leaders are Culturally Sensitive, Fair and Just in Education and Neighborhood, Community, and City Services, including Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice.**

### **CONNECTS TO**

**Objective Y1.2: Increase Positive Youth-Adult Relationships.**

The state of youth and adult relationships in the City can often be used to indicate how well initiatives stemming from Youth Component issues are succeeding. While the Healthy Diverse Community strategic issue does not mention any specific target groups in this goal, young people should be, and are, receivers of the “culturally sensitive, fair and just” treatment. The Youth Component seeks to promote and increase positive youth-adult relationships within Hampton, and the Community Plan has outlined that all service providers in the City should have these positive relationships with citizens, so the connection between the documents can be made in this way.

**Goal 5: All Areas of the City are Safe and Welcoming to all People.**

### **CONNECTS TO**

**Objective Y1.4: Improve Perception of Safety in Neighborhoods and Other Public Places in Which Young People Tend to Meet and Recreate.**

Safety is a fundamental perception when it comes to choosing a place to live, work, or recreate, for adults and for young people. It is also a fundamental part of growing up for young people, whether or not their neighborhood and community is a safe place. The Community Plan outlines the desire to see the city perceived as a safe and nurturing place, and young people have the similar desire to feel safe in the places where they recreate and in which they grow. The city’s vision and the youth vision are united in the belief that safety will help to create a flourishing city with young people who are successful and proud to be from Hampton.

## **Strong Schools**

This strategic issue is unique because it focuses on the only place in the City guaranteed to affect young people on a large scale basis. Because of this obvious connection between the schools and the youth agenda, all of the goals of the Strong Schools strategic issue can be correlated to the Youth Component.

### **Goal 1: Exceptional Academic Performance.**

Academics are an age-old value in communities and continue to be an indicator of success in life. While it is unrealistic to expect all young people to excel to the highest point in their academic careers, by continuing to pursue this lofty performance goal, and continuing to improve the school environment and teaching methods, Hampton City Schools can offer the best possible academic opportunities and resources for its young people.

### **Goal 2: High Desirability.**

In order for Hampton City Schools to be the best educational system in the region, they must first attract the best and the brightest teachers, students, and parents. The ever increasing quality of teachers in Hampton City Schools must set a tone for teaching standards across the region, and the involvement of parents and students in school affairs will help to provide a more inclusive and caring educational environment. Young people also have a stake in high desirability because it is their right to be able to take pride in their school and school system. If Hampton City Schools work hard to promote and better the system, then the young people will respond by showing more pride in academics and school spirit.

### **Goal 3: Essential Life Skills.**

While the main purpose of schools is to provide a formal education for young people, the opportunities to acquire other essential life skills must never be overlooked. School systems have unique connections within the community (such as vocational schools, non-profit organizations, volunteer organizations, etc.) to create bridges between the traditional educational system and other life skills that are still necessary for young people to be successful. Young people who are involved in school and other skill building activities will become that much more successful in life.

### **Goal 4: Workforce Readiness.**

The ultimate goal of a secondary school system is to prepare young people to enter the workforce, either through continued higher education, or through immediate entry via a vocational school, etc. Hampton City Schools has identified that the latter is just as important as the former, and that the system must be prepared to present opportunities for young people who are less interested in continuing their education in college. Internships, mentorships, and co-op arrangements are all ways that the

school system can successfully provide young people the option of entering the workforce right out of high school.

## What's Next?!

The City of Hampton is on a journey, and these six goals are only possible destinations for the future of young people in our community.

Six years ago, young people completed the first document that truly outlined the vision and goals of young people in Hampton. This initial Youth Component of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan brought together the work of multiple Youth Planners through surveys, research, collected data, and analysis. While the first Youth Component was a breakthrough concept, it was limited to four expansive issues. Now, six years later, the new Youth Component of the Community Plan is more specific, outlining ways in which we can measure the progress of our goals, and giving young people all over Hampton a vision statement:

“Better Youth, Better Hampton, Better Future”

The new Youth Component was written in the context of a city-wide initiative to reform the planning process, and it was truly a youth/adult relationship. One of the main differences, however, is that much of the writing of the Youth Component of the Community Plan was based on research and surveys gleaned from the earlier Component and Youth Planner files, and it was also based upon 10 years of working experience.

However, both Components have brought about much change within the City regarding youth engagement. The Hampton Youth Commission, the body of young people that has been referred to numerous times in the previous sections, is spearheading the effort to completely engage young people in the community. Given a total of \$40,000 a year by City Council, the Youth Commission is a source for grants to local organizations dedicated to serving and involving young people in innovative and healthy ways. Using the 40 Developmental Assets and the Youth Component of the Community Plan as their guide, the Appropriations Committee of the HYC oversees the distribution of this grant money and also checks on the progress of the recipients of these grants.

In order to further the goals of youth engagement in Hampton's community, it is up to groups like the Hampton Youth Commission and the City's Youth Planners to promote and encourage youth engagement among young people and adults alike. New groups have now become prominent, such as Uth Act, an organization promoting youth activism, and various student-led advisory groups within the school system.

It is especially important to send the message of youth engagement to key stakeholders in the community. While young people's voices are powerful when united, they can only serve to influence those elected officials who engage them as they make the decisions. However, there are some promising highlights:

- Recently, the young people of Hampton were allowed to have a private session with City Council candidates at the 2004 Commission sponsored Candidate's Youth Forum.

*Adopted by City Council February 8, 2006*

- Hampton was one of 6 winners of the 2005 Innovations in American Government Award for its unique approach to youth engagement.
- Most of all, the Hampton City Council has allocated the use of the Sentara Health and Fitness Center (after its purchase by the City) to the young people for their very own Teen Center. .

The goals set within this document are meant to act as a guideline for the path of the young people in Hampton, and to serve as an informative guide for those seeking to learn about and implement youth engagement in Hampton. Youth engagement in Hampton is an ongoing process. It is likely that youth engagement may never fully be complete because as long as young people continue to grow in our community, new challenges and opportunities will continue to arise.