

Live

From waterside condos to downtown Victorians, lifestyle choices abound.

Modern Mix in Newport
News, live, eat, and shop at
City Center at Oyster Point.

Navigating Norfolk

Getting around downtown Norfolk is simple with the free Norfolk Electric Transit (NET) bus. And commuting to and from the city will get easier next year when The Tide, a 7.4-mile light-rail transit system, opens for business, connecting people to activity hubs such as Chrysler Hall—the region’s premier performing-arts center—and the adjacent Scope arena. norfolk.gov

FOUR YEARS AGO, Amber Rhodes and her pilot husband Matt transferred to Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach. As with many military families, putting down roots in a new town is a familiar exercise.

“You learn that the best way to become part of the community is to dive in,” Amber says. “The city lines seem borderless, and everything is so accessible. We appreciate that, as our commute has us leaving home in Chesapeake, working in Norfolk and Virginia Beach, and, with a new baby, shopping at The Williamsburg Outlet Mall.”

Such is Hampton Roads: big enough to have everything you want, but without many of the hassles of larger metropolitan areas. “Hampton Roads offers affordable living, wonderful educational options, and countless ways to enjoy the outdoors,” says James B. Ricketts, director of the Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Hampton Roads is divided into two regions: the Peninsula and, to its south, Southside (see map, p. 112). But thanks to tunnel bridges, every part of the area is easy to reach. In recent years, convenient mixed-use developments have popped up, such as Virginia Beach’s Town Center, where residents can shop, play, and dine in the same

neighborhood where they live. City slickers also appreciate the mix of restaurants and retailers at the villages at Port Warwick, and at the City Center at Oyster Point—both in Newport News—as well as High Street and New Town in Williamsburg.

Downtown Norfolk hums with activity, with luxury lofts amid fine dining, upscale shopping, and entertainment. The Rotunda, an office building dating to the 1960s, was renovated into prime condominium living.

Other impressive Southside options include everything from beach houses to modest bungalows on the North End of Virginia Beach. Head farther south, and inland, to Pungo for a more laid-back lifestyle surrounded by strawberry patches.

The downtown areas of both Hampton (on the Peninsula) and Portsmouth (Southside) offer charming waterfront properties and restored Victorian homes. For more affordable housing, check out Chesapeake and Suffolk. Or head to the rural counties of Mathews, Gloucester, Surry, and Isle of Wight for antique shops and family eateries in small towns such as Smithfield and Franklin.

Though it may not seem like it, you’re never very far from a bustling city, an idyllic slice of suburbia, or a quiet stretch of waterfront.

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