

Chapter 1. Introduction and History

Purpose of a Comprehensive Plan

Virginia law requires all localities within the Commonwealth to prepare a comprehensive plan setting forth the government's long-range policies for general development.

A comprehensive plan is a long-range, community plan that covers a period of twenty to thirty years; however, many of the strategies contained within this plan may be targeted for implementation much sooner. A comprehensive plan considers a community's existing and future needs for housing, the economy, public facilities, environmental protection and transportation.

Planning Process

The existing comprehensive plan for the City of Colonial Heights is called the Master Plan. It provides a basis for decision making by the City Council and Planning Commission, as well as the City Manager and his administration, in daily operations. This plan was adopted in 1997, and although it has been amended through the years, it was in need of a comprehensive update.

In the spring of 2011, a City-wide Visioning Meeting was held in which attendees worked in groups to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the City. Additionally, in the summer of the same year, the City conducted a citizen survey.

During that summer, City Council, with the recommendation of the City's Planning Commission, appointed a Citizen Planning Committee to help guide the planning process. The committee was made up of neighborhood leaders from around the City, members of the business community, and civic organizations.

The Citizen Planning Committee reviewed the results of both the visioning meeting and the survey and, through a series of exercises, identified areas of community consensus that were ultimately used to articulate a Vision Statement for this plan.

Over a series of three years, this committee worked with City staff to examine existing conditions and demographic trends and met with department representatives. After careful consideration, the committee put forth this document.

In March 2014, the City of Colonial Heights hosted three open house workshops for residents to learn about and contribute to the comprehensive plan update process. At each open house, a brief presentation was given, and residents were able to come and go at any time to view the displays and talk to City staff. Comments received at these meetings were recorded as part of the public record and shared with the Planning Commission.

Prior to formal adoption, two public hearings will be held one by the City Planning Commission and one by City Council. In addition to meeting the Virginia requirements for a public hearing notice, the City will mail a flyer to each property in the City with the date of the Planning Commission public hearing along with a narrative about what encompasses a comprehensive plan.

History

Colonial Heights, located in southeastern Virginia and originally a part of Chesterfield County, became a town in 1926 and an incorporated city in 1948. Its current charter as a fully-independent city was granted in 1960. Colonial Heights' history goes back much further, however, as it was the site of significant battles during both the American Revolution and the Civil War.

The name Colonial Heights results from an incident during the American Revolutionary War. In 1781, the French troops of Lafayette, known as the Colonials, set up artillery on the heights overlooking the Appomattox River and Petersburg, where British forces were located. Legend indicates that an English soldier stationed in Petersburg, upon seeing Lafayette's troops across the river, exclaimed, "Look! There are the Colonials, up on the Heights!" Hence, the name Colonial Heights was born. The area came to be known as Colonial Heights and the name was given to a subdivision of the Oak Hill tract in 1906.

The earliest people to inhabit the area were members of the Algonquin Indian tribe, who apparently roamed along the Appomattox River. Several areas in present day Colonial Heights still retain their Indian names.

British colonists first settled in the area in 1620, approximately two weeks prior to the settlement of Plymouth, Massachusetts. A small group sailed up the Appomattox River looking for clear land, and they finally settled in Conjuror's Field, an area named by the Indians after one of their magicians who was thought to have cast spells over the confluences of the waters. Shortly thereafter, Charles Magnor registered the first land patent in the area for 650 acres, which he later developed into a plantation before selling it in 1634.

Brick House

During the period 1677-1685, one of the area's historic landmarks was constructed with the building of the Brick House, now thought to be the oldest permanent structure in Colonial Heights. One wall of the house survived a disastrous fire in 1879.

Violet Bank

The first recorded settlement in Colonial Heights was by Thomas Shore. In 1775, he purchased 144 acres of land along the northern bank of the Appomattox River, across from Petersburg. There he built his mansion and called it Violet Bank.

Later, in 1864, during the Civil War, the mansion and grounds of Violet Bank became headquarters for General Robert E. Lee. Lee was camped at Violet Bank from June through September of 1864 during the siege of Petersburg.

Today, Violet Bank, owned by the City of Colonial Heights, serves as a Civil War museum and is a registered Virginia Historic Landmark

Regional Setting

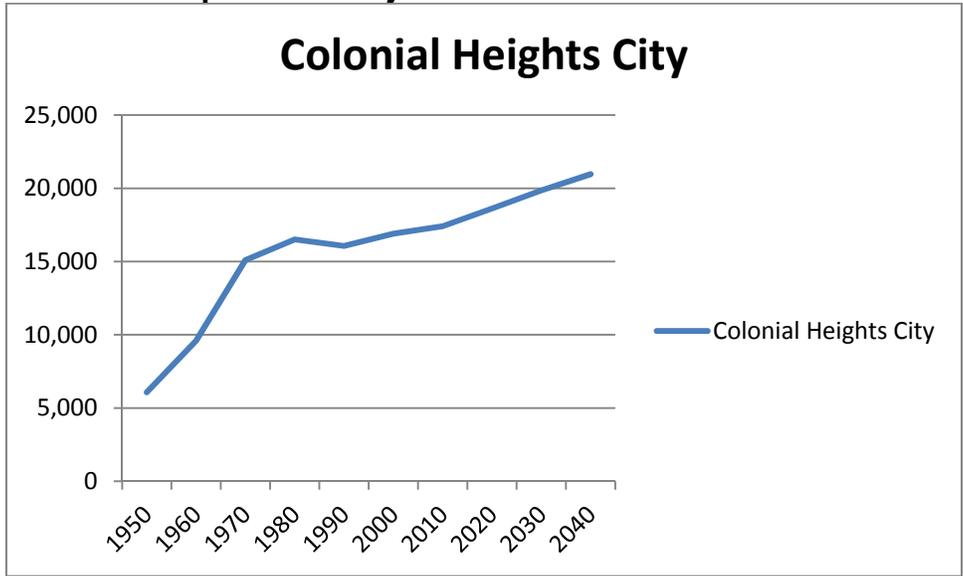
The City of Colonial Heights is located 20 miles south of Richmond, Virginia's state capital, and 120 miles south of the nation's capital. The City of Petersburg lies directly across the Appomattox River. Colonial Heights is located where the Tidewater plain meets the Piedmont plateau. The City is bordered to the south by Petersburg, to the east by the Appomattox River, and by Chesterfield County to the north. Colonial Heights has a land area of 8.15 square miles or 5,216 acres. Altitudes range from sea level to about 95 feet. Mean temperature is about 40 degrees Fahrenheit in January and 78 degrees Fahrenheit in July. The annual precipitation is about 40 inches.

The City's location, as part of the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area, provides the City with access to the area's dynamic business complex. In addition to serving as a manufacturing, distribution, and trade center, Richmond is also the financial center of the Mid-Atlantic region. Government is a major employer in the immediate Tri-Cities area (Colonial Heights, Petersburg, and Hopewell) with its proximity to Fort Lee. The City is also the site of a regional shopping mall, Southpark, which opened in the spring of 1989.

Community Profile Demographics

Colonial Heights is a small, independent city of approximately 17,411. Most of the eight square miles of Colonial Heights is developed into a mix of residential and neighborhood level business uses, with the exception of the Southpark Mall, a regional commercial district on the east side of Interstate 95. Colonial Heights is included as part of the Richmond Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Nearby Ft. Lee is an active duty, multi-services training facility that creates significant impact on the local economy.

Exhibit 1: Population Projections



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Population

The City of Colonial Heights has experienced continued growth for more than 50 years. The most significant growth period for the City was between 1950 and 1960. This was due, in part, to the 1954 and 1957 annexations. The City continued to grow at a relatively fast pace until the 1980s when the population stabilized. With the exception of a slight decrease in population in the 1990s, the City’s population has continued to grow, although at a slightly slower pace. It is estimated that the City will continue to grow over the next 30 years.

Exhibit 2: Population Projections

	Colonial Heights City	% Change
1950	6,077	
1960	9,587	58
1970	15,097	57
1980	16,509	9
1990	16,064	-3
2000	16,897	5
2010	17,411	3
2020	18,620	7
2030	19,855	7
2040	20,960	6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Population and Race

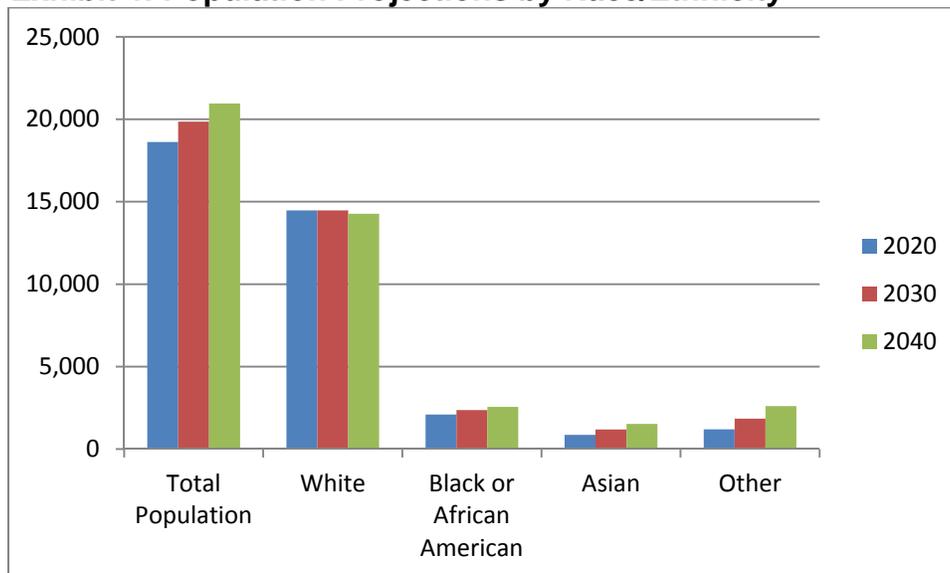
When looking at population and race between 2000 and 2010, the City's population has increased slightly and the racial makeup of the city has become slightly more diverse. The white population experienced a 7% decrease between 2000 and 2010. The African American population increased 6% and the Asian population 2%. The Hispanic population, although increasing in numbers, remained at 2% of the total population.

Exhibit 3: Population and Race

	2000 Total	2000 Percent	2010 Total	2010 Percent
TOTAL POPULATION	16,897	100	17,411	100
White	15,052	89	14,326	82
Black or African American	1,059	6	1,783	10
Asian	459	3	578	3
Other	327	2	724	4
Total Hispanic or Latino	274	2	374	2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Exhibit 4: Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity



Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

The City is expected to become more racially diverse over the next thirty years. The African American population is expected to increase from 783 people in 2010 to 2,557 in 2040. This is a 226% change. The Asian population is estimated to increase from 578 in 2010 to 1,523 in 2040, or a 163% change. This is not a trend that is exclusive to Colonial Heights; according to the U.S. Census Bureau, it is estimated that by 2060 the non-Hispanic white population is projected to peak in 2024, at 199.6 million, up from

197.8 million in 2012. Unlike other race or ethnic groups, however, its population is projected to slowly decrease, falling by nearly 20.6 million from 2024 to 2060.

Meanwhile, the Hispanic population would more than double, from 53.3 million in 2012 to 128.8 million in 2060. Consequently, by the end of the period, nearly one in three U.S. residents would be Hispanic, up from about one in six today.

The black population is expected to increase from 41.2 million to 61.8 million over the same period. Its share of the total population would rise slightly, from 13.1% in 2012 to 14.7% in 2060.

The Asian population is projected to more than double, from 15.9 million in 2012 to 34.4 million in 2060, with its share of the nation's total population climbing from 5.1% to 8.2% in the same period.

Exhibit 5: Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity

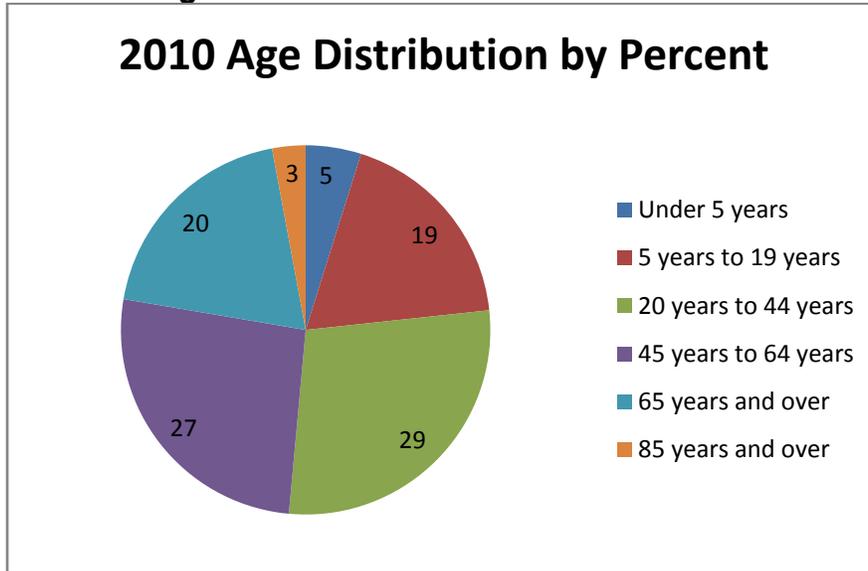
	2020	2030	2040
Total Population	18,620	19,855	20,960
Race			
White	14,473	14,471	14,275
Black or African American	2,093	2,361	2,557
Asian	858	1,184	1,523
Other	1,197	1,839	2,606
Ethnicity			
Not Hispanic or Latino of any race	17,349	17,776	17,945
Hispanic or Latino of any race	1,271	2,079	3,015

Source: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

Age Distribution

As is the trend nationally with baby-boomers reaching retirement age, the City's population is aging. Between 2000 and 2010, there has been an increase in every age group older than 45 years old. Notably, the number of people over 85 increased nearly two-fold between 2000 and 2010. This is perhaps due to the advances in medical sciences. Conversely, there has been a slight decrease in school aged children. The median age for the City has also increased.

Exhibit 6: Age Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Gender

Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of the female population has increased slightly. This is a national trend as women, for now, continue to live longer than men.

Exhibit 7: Gender

	2000 Total	2000 Percent	2010 Total	2010 Percent
	16,897	100	17,411	100
Male	7,901	47	8,062	46
Female	8,996	53	9,349	54

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Poverty Level

According to an estimate done by the US Census Bureau, there was an increase in both families and individuals living below the poverty level. As the poverty levels in the City increase, social services will need to be added to assist this changing population.

Exhibit 8: Poverty Level

	2000 Total	2000 Percent	2006-2010 Estimated Percent
Families living below poverty level	161	3.4	4.2
Individuals living below poverty level	913	5.5	7.5

Source: U. S. Census Bureau 2000 Decennial Census and the 2006 American Community Survey