

**To:** Honorable Mayor Dr. Kenneth C. Alexander  
Honorable Vice Mayor and Councilman Martin A. Thomas Jr.  
Honorable Councilman Thomas R. Smigiel  
Honorable Councilman Jeremy D. McGee  
Honorable Councilwoman Courtney R. Doyle  
Honorable Councilwoman Mamie B. Johnson  
Honorable Councilman John E. Paige  
Honorable Councilman Carlos J. Clanton  
Honorable City Manager Patrick Roberts

**From:**

The Ocean View (OV) community, comprised of the Civic Leagues for East Ocean View, Cottage Line, Bayview, Pinewell, Ocean View, Willoughby and the Ocean View Business Association.

**Purpose of this Paper:**

The OV community is a significant tourist-based, revenue producing asset for the City of Norfolk and has the potential for exponential future tourist-based revenue growth. While our Ward 1, Ward 5 and Super Ward 6 Council Members are aware of and support achieving this potential, we the Civic League and Business Leaders in the OV community seek to inform and gain the support of the entirety of City Council and City Leaders of this potential tourist based growth that will benefit all of Norfolk. To make this growth a reality we request that City Council and City Leaders provide the appropriate focus and resources to enable OV to become a Premier Coastal Community that is a Safe, Family Friendly destination.

**Our vision for Ocean View:**

- A Premier Coastal Community that is a Safe, Family Friendly destination for tourists as well as to all OV and Norfolk residents.
- We see specific commercial areas such as downtown OV and to a certain extent East Beach along East Ocean View Avenue and Shore Drive that are lined with street-front quaint shops and restaurants. (think of Riverview, Colley Avenue and Richmond's West Cary Street in the Carytown District)
- We seek the continuation of residential zoning for the single family and multi-family residences in the majority of the remaining blocks within OV in order to preserve OV's coastal town character. We do not want OV to take on the character of the Virginia Beach Oceanfront that is over commercialized with endless Hotels and Motels.
- The majority of the Ocean View Civic Leagues, their members and residents and the Ocean View Business Association and its members share a vision that is commensurate with the results of the 2022 Comprehensive Ocean View Avenue Transportation Study where it showed that there is strong support for multi-purpose / bike lanes on both sides of **East** Ocean View Avenue for the entirety of East Ocean View Avenue combined with reducing the vehicular lanes to one lane in each direction.
- Conversely, the Study also showed that the Willoughby Civic League, its members and residents of Willoughby did not support the installation or widening of multi-purpose / bike lanes on **West** Ocean View Avenue in Willoughby. This is because **West** Ocean View Avenue in Willoughby has a different road design that includes center islands. The center islands combined with severe traffic congestion from vehicles trying to enter I64 at the end of Willoughby result in frequent, if not daily, traffic congestion and backups. For these reasons, the Willoughby Civic League does not support the installation or widening of multi-purpose / bike lanes on **West** Ocean View Avenue in Willoughby until the traffic congestion problem is alleviated. Additionally, for similar reasons, the Ocean View Civic League does not support the installation or widening of multi-purpose / bike lanes on East Ocean View Avenue between Chesapeake Blvd. and Fourth View Street given the regular high volume of traffic during peak hours and periodic congestion, especially when there are events at Ocean View Beach Park and traffic issues on the HRBT that significantly increase the traffic volume on Ocean View Avenue.

- We envision a higher-end Hotel with shops and restaurants serving as an anchor for Downtown OV.
- We see the potential for OV and Downtown Norfolk to be cross-marketed especially given the recent announcement that the Cruise Terminal will have improvements to better welcome Cruise Ship Passengers. Advertising for Downtown Norfolk should also include the attractions that OV has to offer. A free or minimal cost trolley or bus running at specific intervals between the Cruise Terminal, Downtown and OV would offer visitors the unique experience of seeing all that Norfolk has to offer.
- We seek to achieve this overall vision by working with City Council and City Leaders through a comprehensive plan to market the assets and attractions that OV has to offer while concurrently addressing certain aspects of OV that are in need of serious improvement.

### **What Ocean View has to offer that should be marketed to potential tourists:**

OV has a tremendous amount of natural and man-made assets that are very attractive to vacationing families some of which, but not all inclusive, are listed below:

- OV has 7.5 miles of **calm**, minimal wave waters on the Chesapeake Bay that is attractive to families with young children.
- OV has over 300 licensed Short Term Rental Rooms and several Motels
- OV has 6 marinas offering Boating, Fishing & Sailing and a Dry Storage Boat Motel
- OV has the longest Fishing Pier on the East Coast
- OV has 3 Public Beaches
- OV has a Golf Course
- OV has 2 Public Boat Ramps giving access to the Chesapeake Bay
- OV has a variety of Seafood, Mexican, Puerto Rican and other unique restaurants

### **Aspects of OV that need serious improvement:**

- **There is a significant concern in OV regarding Pedestrian safety.**
  - There is a need for extensive vehicular calming measures to improve pedestrian safety for visitors and residents alike. Numerous vehicular traffic and speed studies in both Willoughby and Ocean View have shown that vehicles are traveling at speeds that exceed 50 mph and sometimes as high as 70 mph in the 30 mph speed limit zone for Willoughby and in the 35 mph speed limit zone for the rest of OV.
  - The 2022 Comprehensive Ocean View Avenue Transportation Study<sup>1</sup> addressed a number of objectives related to vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety while transiting Ocean View Avenue. One of the priority recommendations the Study cited was the installation of traffic signal and pedestrian cross walk at 21<sup>st</sup> Bay Street and East OV Avenue.
  - Another priority recommendation was to convert the entirety of East Ocean View Avenue to one vehicular lane of traffic in each direction and the 2<sup>nd</sup> lane in each direction converted to a multi-purpose lane. We have witnessed too many close calls where families with children have barely avoided being hit trying to cross East Ocean View Avenue because of the current design of dual lanes in each direction. Unfortunately, there was a pedestrian fatality at the intersection of East Ocean View Avenue and Hammett Parkway this past year.
  - Both East and West Ocean View Avenue should have crosswalks complete with yellow flashing lights at every Beach Access. As an existing and future family friendly vacation destination, pedestrian safety is mandatory from both an ethical and public relations perspective.
- **In order to have a Beach Community, there needs to be beaches**
  - It is common knowledge that East Beach and Willoughby have major issues with sand erosion. While an ancillary benefit of the beach is recreational for tourists and residents alike, the stated purpose of the beach is to maintain the dune system to protect property from damage and keep

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<sup>1</sup> 2022 Comprehensive Ocean View Avenue Transportation Study conducted on behalf of the City of Norfolk  
<https://www.norfolk.gov/documentcenter/view/74622>

residents safe. If the beaches are to be the major tourism draw, then there are a number of changes that need to be made and funded to the sand renourishment schedule for both the US Army Corps of Engineers and Norfolk City Departments. The current sand erosion issue is serious and needs to be addressed in both the immediate short term and long term.

- **OV's retail, commercial and residential areas need to be clearly identified**
  - There does not appear to be a comprehensive zoning plan for OV. There are several blocks that have a mix of residential, active businesses, abandoned businesses and vacant lots (perhaps NRHA owned) in the same block. Many blocks are a mix of single-family residences, multi-family residences and apartments. Certain blocks, especially in downtown OV and in East Beach along East Ocean View Avenue and Shore drive, are mostly retail / commercial but yet contain residential structures as well.
  - Certain areas such as East Ocean View and Willoughby are reaching an unhealthy saturation point regarding STRs. Any new NRHA residential development should place restrictions on using the residential development for STR purposes.
  - Those properties that have had Commercial development plans approved or currently in a prolonged application process should be accelerated to where permits and construction can be completed. (i.e. EO:V: 7911-7915 and 8180 Shore Drive, and 4110 E Ocean View Ave.)
  - A plan is needed for new zoning requests to identify which blocks should remain residential and which blocks or areas should be zoned as retail / commercial or motel zones.
  - We suggest and encourage Norfolk's City Council, City Leaders and the Economic Development Department to meet with retail and commercial owners to share this OV vision with them and solicit their help in making the vision a reality. They need to understand that this OV vision will benefit, in the form of increased tourism revenue, the retail and commercial property owners along with the City.
  
- **OV needs funding for structural and aesthetic improvements.**
  - We estimate that OV has 90% (over 300) of the City's Short Term Registered Rental Rooms (STRs) within its boundaries.
  - Exact revenue numbers have not been made available to date, so we had to estimate that about \$1.2M in tax revenue is generated from these STRs, however we believe that this is a low-end estimate. The City receives additional tax revenues come from the OV Marinas, Fishing Pier and Golf Course.
  - OV receives very little if any of this tax revenue back for its own infrastructure and aesthetic improvements by way of City Services and Capital Improvement Project funding (See Attachment 1).
  
- **OV needs additional restaurants in beachside locations for formal and informal dining**
  - The additional restaurants needed should be multi-functional to include walk-up beach bars and casual dining in addition to formal dining. While there is limited availability for beachside dining, there are existing sites such as the old Ship's Cabin Site, the old Surf Rider site, the old Greenies site and the old Thirsty Camel site. The City needs to take an active role in attracting additional restaurants to OV particularly to these existing locations.
  - We suggest that perhaps the OV Park Boardwalk be expanded to provide walking access to future restaurant and commercial / retail development.
  
- **OV needs sufficient parking for tourists and visitors to its 3 Public Beaches.**
  - Currently there are 417 parking spaces (less 56 spaces that are off limit for Official / Emergency Parking) for the 3 Public Beaches.
  - Ocean View Park, which has a Pavilion overlooking the Bay and is used for Summer Concerts and other events, has only 63 direct parking spaces. This park attracts hundreds of residents and

visitors for each of the Concerts or special events. Much worse, the direct parking spaces are on a “T” driveway that forces vehicles to make “U” turns in the tight parking area to exit because there is not a separate entrance and exit.

- Both Sarah Constant Park and Community Beach Park need more parking spots and need to be reconfigured to offer more open space for recreation.
- If additional parking space at these Parks is not feasible, perhaps the City should offer a free Trolley dedicated to run the length of Willoughby, OV and East Beach during the summer season of May through September. This would serve to reduce vehicular traffic and provide visitors safe and efficient transportation to explore all of the amenities OV has to offer.
- **The overall aesthetics of OV reflects badly on the City**
  - A family-friendly destination not only needs to be safe, but it also needs to be well kept and clean and well landscaped.
  - OV needs a comprehensive landscaping plan. The sidewalks throughout OV are in disrepair and overgrown with weeds and grass.
  - There are vacant lots, many owned or controlled by NRHA, that are overgrown, not well kept and many times have abandoned cars or trailers on them.
  - The street center medians and areas between the curb and sidewalks are in need of a comprehensive landscaping plan that is comprised of vegetation that is resistant to salt air and salt water but yet aesthetically pleasing and easy to maintain.
  - The use of banner flags in certain locations would create a welcoming feeling among visitors.
- **OV needs Branding and an Advertising / Marketing Campaign**
  - The Council members from Ward 1, Ward 5 and Super Ward 6 recently conducted a special session of the Ocean View Advisory Council where the focus was on Branding and Marketing OV. We thank them for that effort. During the meeting, the participants offered the following suggestions toward a comprehensive Branding and Marketing effort:
    - The City needs to create aesthetically pleasing “Gateways” into the OV area to include entrances at East Beach, Willoughby, Central Ocean View and any other major vehicular entrance to the area that serves to welcome visitors.
    - There needs to be a common theme for Willoughby and OV such as the Norfolk Mermaid, Beach Chairs or some other Coastal Community related symbol or saying.
    - The marketing needs to include the OV Assets and Attractions listed prior in this letter along with cross-marketing the additional attractions that Downtown Norfolk has to offer.

### **Summary:**

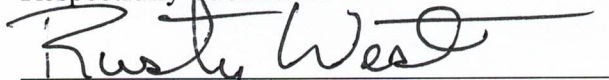
The communities that make up OV have the potential to be a premier Coastal Community that the City of Norfolk can not only be proud of but realize significant economic gain from this underdeveloped and underutilized tourist based, revenue producing asset. OV can become one of the City of Norfolk’s top tourist based, revenue producing areas that can be cross-marketed along with the Downtown Area. The City will see a Return on Investment (ROI) of many fold over during the subsequent years much like the Downtown ROI and East Beach ROI.

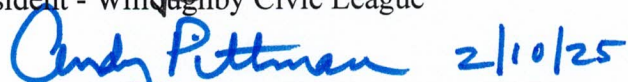
We appreciate our Council Representatives and City Leaders efforts to date in providing funding for ongoing improvement projects such as the 1<sup>st</sup> View development project and the Ward 5 Fire Station replacement project among others. To achieve the vision of Ocean View becoming a Premier Coastal Community that is a Safe, Family-Friendly destination for tourists as well as to all OV and Norfolk residents, OV will need the City to provide additional focus, resources and funding.

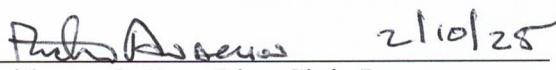
It is hoped that our City Leaders will give serious consideration to our requests and forward-looking vision as outlined in this paper. We realize that overall funding is limited however we believe that the OV Communities have been neglected in terms of infrastructure investment and comprehensive planning regardless of the tourist-

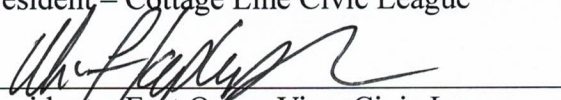
based revenue contributions to date and the potential for future significantly greater amounts of tourist-based revenue contributions to the City. We remain available to discuss further and answer any questions that you may have.

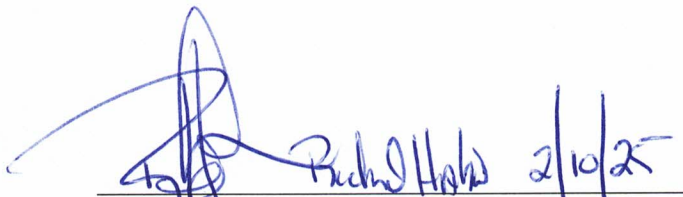
Respectfully Submitted:

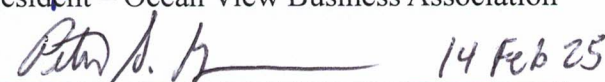
  
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President - Willoughby Civic League

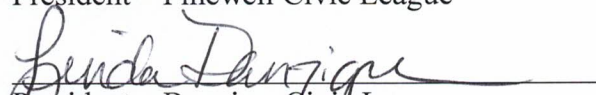
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President - Ocean View Civic League

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President - Cottage Line Civic League

  
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President - East Ocean View Civic League

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President - Ocean View Business Association

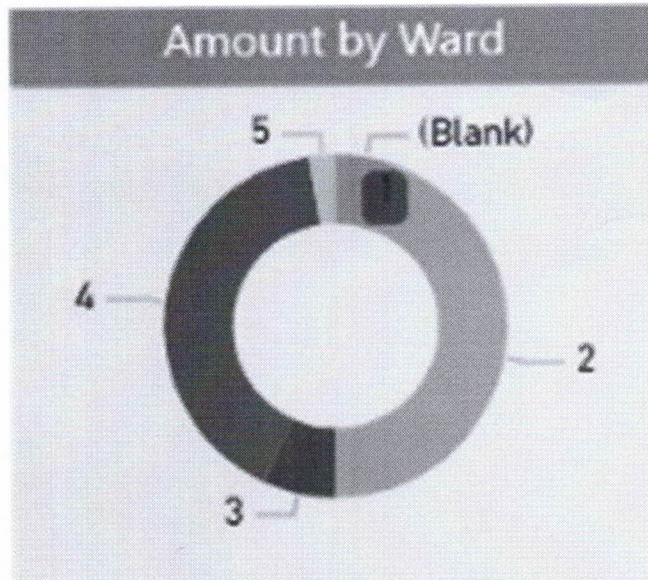
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President - Pinewell Civic League

  
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President - Bayview Civic League

**Attachment #1**

From a Presentation given East Ocean View Civic League by:  
Pamela Marino – Interim Director – Department of Budget and Strategic Planning &  
Jason Beasley – Manager – Division of Budget and Policy  
Date: January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025

**Ocean View = Ward 5 (please note the minimal share of funding)**



**\$140,552,262**  
Amount

