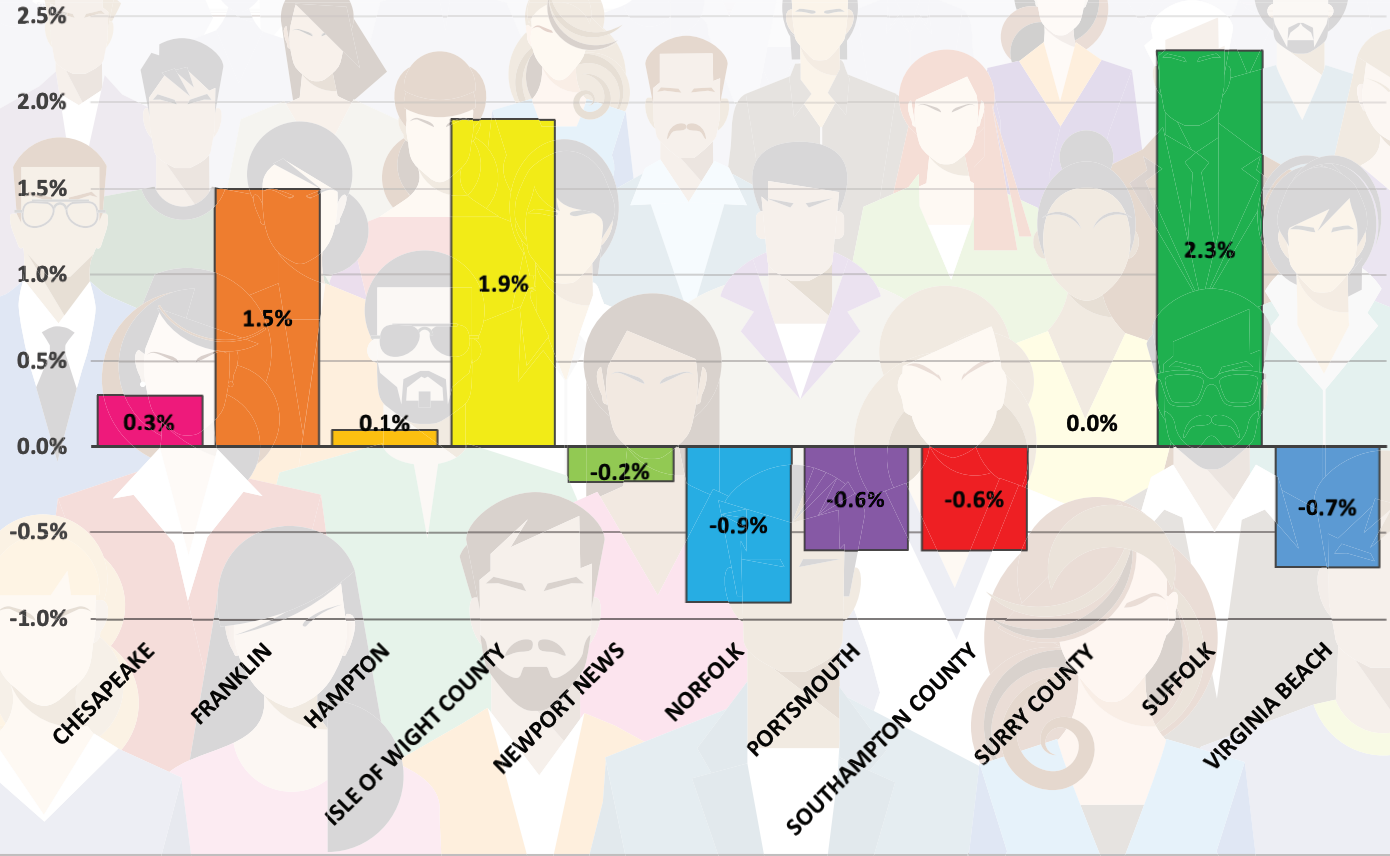


Percentage of Growth



Suffolk sees 4.5% growth since 2020

**BY JEFF MOORE AND
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STAFF WRITERS

Suffolk is a leading city in both Virginia and the nation in growth since the 2020 Census was completed.

Census data shows Suffolk's population grew to 98,537 in 2022, up from the April 1,

2020 census base of 94,326. That's up by 4.5%, with a 4,211 increase over the two years, according to the projections released by the Census Bureau earlier this year.

The data shows the city jumped from the 22nd most populated county/city in the state in both 2020 and 2021, up to 19th in 2022.

Suffolk ranked sixth in growth statewide between 2020 and 2022.

Mayor Michael D. Duman talked about multiple factors that are driving Suffolk's growth.

"It should be noted that growth in our city is not limited solely to an increase in population, but also GDP, num-

ber of businesses and housing units," Duman said.

The mayor also cited Smartasset's 2022 report on the top 100 boomtowns in the U.S., noting the data of Suffolk being placed 78th in the nation.

The study analyzed 500 of the largest cities where 494

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Census: Suffolk growth comes from migration, more births than deaths

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had data available and consisted of a five year period between 2016-2021. The study also considered the one-year change of employment and unemployment rates in September 2022.

Suffolk had a yearly average growth of 7.75% in population, 9.55% in number of businesses and 9.28% in housing units.

The city's Director of Planning and Community Development Kevin Wyne provided perspective on what's driving the city's growth, noting its diverse option of lifestyles to choose from.

"Its proximity to the rest of the region is attractive to residents; however, it is far enough removed from the centralized urban areas of other regional localities," Wyne said. "With 430 square miles, Suffolk has a diverse complement of lifestyles to offer, whether that is a traditional urban environment in our downtown, well plan communities close to Norfolk, Portsmouth, and the Peninsula in North Suffolk, a maturing and vibrant corridor along Godwin Boulevard north of downtown, or the calm rural way of life in our vast agricultural areas."

Director of Economic Development Nicolas C. Langford said there is a population spillover from other Hampton Roads cities.

"I also think the pandemic played a part – suddenly people could live wherever, so why not move somewhere less crowded with a little lower cost of living?" said Langford. "Suffolk has a high quality of life. We have beautiful open spaces, vibrant parks and a thriving economy. It's a great place to live."

The Census data shows that Suffolk has experienced growth through both migration and natural change, which is determined by the number of births and deaths.

In the period between April 1, 2020 and the estimate for 2022, the Census Bureau shows 3,858 people moved to the city — 3,705 of those domestic and 153 international. Additionally, the net population increased by 335 through natural change, as there were 2,599 births and 2,264 deaths in the two year period.

Wyne attributed the growth to the city being a desirable place to live with reasonable proximity to local attractions and urban centers.

"I believe folks within Hampton Roads realize this convenience and appreciate the diverse lifestyle options we have to offer. Looking back at previous Comprehensive Plans, growth was certainly anticipated, and the city has positioned itself with various municipal projects ensuring investment is in place to accommodate anticipated growth," Wyne said. "The amount of land we have within our designated growth areas relative to other localities in the region remains a reason why we continue to see growth."

In the 2020 Census, 57.8% of people in Suffolk were employed and the median household income was \$79,556. There were 1,697 employer owned businesses in the city.

There were 38,364 housing units, with total households at that point of 37,383.

At the time of the 2020 Census, 32.1% of the population had a bachelor's degree or higher. Along with housing, Duman

talked about the difficulties of providing affordable housing to Suffolk residents.

"There is a challenge to provide ample affordable housing. This subject was discussed at our last retreat. We will be addressing incentives and policies to attract affordable housing," Duman said. "Fortunately, there has been no issue attracting home builders to accommodate our growth. However, it is imperative that we manage what and where we allow building to occur."

Duman also discussed three equally important topics of the city — education, infrastructure and healthcare.

He noted that the need for quite a few schools needed to be changed.

"This situation is not uncommon to most localities. It is a challenge to obtain funding to address these issues in a timely manner," Duman said. "Additional funding to replace and repair schools must come from the state and federal level. All options must be considered; including redistricting and consolidation."

On infrastructure, highways and transportation, Duman explained that allowances have been made for increased density in areas with existing infrastructure.

"This has been done to reduce expenditures for new infrastructure that would add debt service to water and sewer budgets," he said. "It is difficult to stay ahead of transportation needs. Unfortunately, the state formula for funding is 43% based on congestion. That means you must have congestion before funds are available. We have made great strides in obtaining funds for road projects, but there is much more to do."

Finally on healthcare, Duman praised the work of the city's healthcare professionals.

"We are fortunate to have an outstanding network of health care providers in our city," he said. "Sentara and Bon Secours have both recently spent millions of dollars on expansion and new facilities."

Adjoining communities

The recent census projections show some neighboring communities growing, while others suffered population declines.

Chesapeake registered growth of 3,073 people in the same period, an increase of 1.2%. Its population rose from a base of 249,415 on April 1, 2020 to 252,488 in the 2022 projections. This placed the city at 17th in growth from 2020 to 2022.

Newport News saw its population decline of 1,937, or 1%, over the period between April 1, 2020 and the 2022 estimates from the Census Bureau. The city was at 186,243 in 2020 and slid to 184,306 in 2022, placing it 104th on cumulative change for that period.

The census projections for 2022 show that Suffolk's population has grown to be larger than Portsmouth.

The City of Portsmouth experienced a decrease in its population between 2020 and 2022, down by 886, a decline of .9%. On April 1, 2020, the census data shows Portsmouth at 97,915, dropping to 97,029 in 2022's estimate. That places the city at 100th in cumulative change of population over the two year period.

Duman talked about the factors for the "exponen-

tial growth" here, while other cities are seeing a reduction.

"Suffolk is blessed with an abundance of natural assets, but what attracts people to Suffolk is our diversity. We have a diverse citizenry and can offer any lifestyle an individual or family is seeking," he said. "Whether you prefer a rural environment, an upscale mixed use development, downtown living in a historic district or suburban residential neighborhood we have it all. Suffolk offers an exceptional quality of life."

Likewise, Langford pointed to the naturalness of a city's ebb and flow.

"Suffolk's growth is largely organic," he said. "We are an attractive market for developers, businesses, renters and homebuyers. It's simply Suffolk's time to shine."

In 2020, Portsmouth was the 20th most populated city/county in Virginia, while Suffolk came in at 22nd. In the 2022 estimates, Suffolk is now 19th most populated, while Portsmouth slipped to 21st.

Isle of Wight County's population grew by 1,521 over the two years, up by 4%, according to the Census reports. The county was at 38,610 on April 1, 2020, jumping to 40,151 in the 2022 estimate. The county ranked 10th statewide in growth over the two-year period.

Southampton County experienced a population decline of 69 over the two year period, dropping from 18,001 on April 1, 2020 to 17,937 in the 2022 estimate. This translates to a .4% decrease in its population. It places the county 84th in the cumulative change from 2020 to 2022.

The independent city inside Southampton's borders did see growth, however. City of Franklin population increased by .8% from 2020 to 2022 estimates, up by 68. Franklin's population in 2020 was 8,179, up to 8,247 in 2022's estimates. This places Franklin 56th on the change between 2020 and 2022.

Virginia's top 10

The Census Bureau's latest reports for Virginia for the two year period, April 1, 2020 to 2022 estimate show the top 10 in growth are spread across the commonwealth.

Here are the top growth communities:

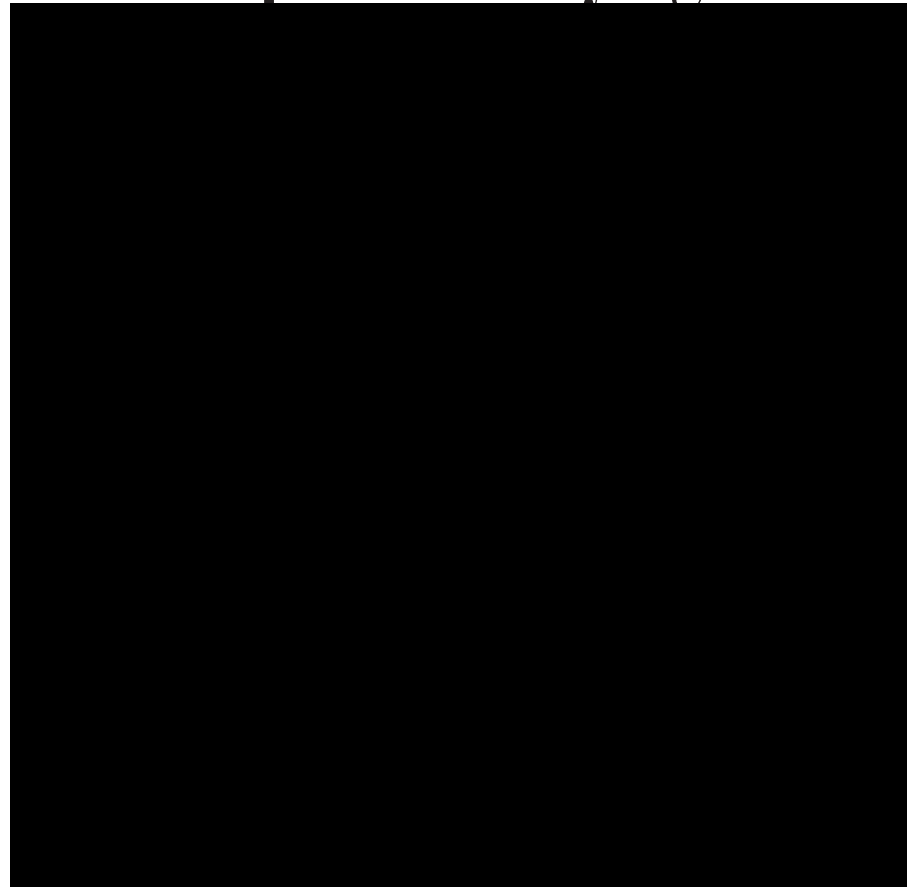
1. New Kent County, 8.9% growth, net increase of 2,044
2. Louisa County, 6.7% growth, net increase of 2,513
3. Goochland County, 5.6% growth, net increase of 1,380
4. Orange County, 5% growth, net increase of 1,807
5. Spotsylvania County, 4.7% growth, net increase of 6,594
6. City of Suffolk, 4.5% growth, net increase of 4,211
7. (tie) King George County, 4.2% growth, net increase of 1,134
7. (tie) City of Radford, 4.2% growth, net increase of 670
9. Stafford County, 4.1% growth, net increase of 6,443
10. Isle of Wight County, 4% growth, net increase of 1,541

Looking to Suffolk's future

Wyne explained how the city is handling growth on the housing and community side.

"The city will continue to enforce the pro-

Percentage of Suffolk Population by age



The latest 2021 estimate of the age population breakdown for the city

visions of the Unified Development Ordinance and evaluate land use applications for compliance against the 2035 Comprehensive Plan," Wyne said. "Additionally, we actively pursue modifications to our development regulations based upon the needs of the community in pursuit of promoting the health, safety or general welfare of the public."

Langford addressed the economic side of Suffolk's growth, noting the city's work in preventing sprawl.

"Suffolk is huge and mostly undeveloped.

The city has been very intentional in its planning process to limit sprawl and encourage development of areas that can be serviced with existing or nearby public utilities and roads," Langford said. "The city does this while also attracting large, impactful projects that boost our local economy and minimize the tax burden on citizens and local businesses."

Duman said the city has planned for substantial growth, but "it has exceeded many expectations."

He went on to say this growth is being used as

the city is working to complete its 2045 comprehensive plan.

"The planning process for the 2045 comprehensive plan development has been one of the most thorough, exhaustive endeavors I can remember. The citizen outreach and engagement has been unparalleled," Duman said. "The number one topic has been managed growth that ensures quality of life and the unique character of our city."



Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study Cities of Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Suffolk

Virtual and In-Person Location Public Hearing

Virtual: Tuesday, August 29, 2023, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Registration Required

In-Person: Wednesday, August 30, 2023, 5-7 p.m.

VDOT Hampton Roads District Office,
7511 Burbage Drive, Suffolk, VA 23435

Find out the results from the environmental study to analyze potential improvements along segments of I-664, I-64, I-264, Route 460, Route 58, Route 13, Jolliff Road (Route 191) and approximately 7 miles of I-664 to College Drive (exit 8A) in Chesapeake, Portsmouth and Suffolk. The purpose of these meetings is to present findings from the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and to solicit comments. The DEIS presents analysis of the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed transportation improvements.

Two public hearings will be offered, one virtually and one in-person. VDOT representatives will share study information and be present to answer questions. The presentation will be available for review throughout the comment period. During the in-person hearing, the meeting will be held in an open-house style format. Visit vdotmeeting.com/bowershill to register for the virtual hearing. The project website, listed below, will include the same information, materials, and presentations as the public hearing. Preliminary noise barrier mapping will also be available at the in-person public hearing for public review and comment. For additional information, please contact Andrew Pike, at 804-786-2360, 1-800-367-7623, or TTY/TDD 711.

Review information about the DEIS and other project exhibits at vdotmeeting.com/bowershill or at VDOT's Hampton Roads District Office located at 7511 Burbage Drive, Suffolk, VA, 23435, 804-786-2360 or 1-800-367-7623, TTY/TDD 711. Please call ahead to ensure the appropriate personnel are available to answer your questions.

In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 and 36 CFR Part 800, information concerning the potential effects of the proposed project on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places is provided in the environmental documentation. Property impact information, relocation assistance policies and tentative construction schedules are available for your review at the above address and will be available at the public hearing.

Give your written or oral comments at the in-person hearing or submit them by **September 11, 2023**, on the study website listed above, via email to bowershill@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or to Andrew Pike, Project Manager, Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study, 11827 Canon Boulevard, Suite 402, Newport News, VA, 23606. Please reference "Bowers Hill Interchange Improvements Study Public Hearing Comments" in the subject line.

VDOT ensures non-discrimination and equal employment in all programs and activities in accordance with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If you need special assistance for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency, contact VDOT Civil Rights at 757-956-3000.

State Project: 0664-131-028, P101 UPC:111427 FHWA Project: NHPP-664-7 (067)

In case of technical issues or inclement weather, the virtual public hearing back-up date is September 5, 5:30-6:30 p.m., the in-person back-up date is September 6, 5-7 p.m.