

8-20-2016

# Climate Change Is the Reason We Need for Resiliency

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## Repository Citation

Allen, Michael, "Climate Change Is the Reason We Need for Resiliency" (2016). *News Items*. 24.  
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## GUEST COLUMNIST

# Michael Allen: Climate change is the reason we need for resiliency

Aug 20, 2016



Jane Harper | The Virginian-Pilot

Rising water overflows the Hague in downtown Norfolk, Va. At high tide Saturday afternoon, Oct. 3, 2015.



Michael Allen

**ON THURSDAY**, Jeremy Sharp of the Norfolk Planning Department and other city officials unveiled the latest draft of Norfolk Vision 2100. Developed with community partnerships over the past several months, the city of Norfolk should be applauded for their inclusive and comprehensive plan.

Based on flooding risk and present/future assets, the plan considers design solutions to address sea-level rise.

It proposes modified zoning policies, evaluates the role of short-term development weighed against long-term planning, and prioritizes assets of economic, cultural, and community significance.

Building on initiatives such as the 100 Resilient Cities and Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, the plan considers the current city and the opportunities over the next 80 years to address sea-level rise and recurrent flooding. The frameworks will help guide future decisions and aid in making Norfolk a 21st century resilient city.

Despite the detailed plan and the look forward, the elephant in the room was not mentioned: climate change.

Norfolk Vision 2100 team failed to acknowledge, even in passing, the causes of our ongoing problem or provide a scientific context to our challenges.

Yes, sea levels are rising and flooding has becoming more common over the last 80 years. Yes, we may adapt, respond, and learn to live with the water, but the Norfolk Vision 2100 could have been used as a platform to enhance our community's understanding of climate science – to further educate people of the reason behind the plan.

Why are we planning for 2100? Why is our future away from the waterfront? Why do we need to learn to live with the water? These are questions that should be directly addressed and not pawned off as learning to live with the water. We are doing this because anthropogenic, human-enhanced climate change is directly affecting our region. Our economy. Our infrastructure. Our health. Our national security.

Carbon dioxide has enhanced our greenhouse effect and led to a rapid increase in global land and sea surface temperature over the past 150 years.

According to NASA, July 2016 temperatures were the world's hottest since records began. In combination with geological subsidence in Hampton Roads, this elevated temperature has led to melting ice and higher sea levels – forever linking insurance, national security, regional economy and environmental policy to climate science.

In addition to providing solutions to the consequences of climate change, the 2100 Vision could have served as a call to action.

We cannot only be reactive and consider the opportunities presented by sea-level rise, but we must also boldly confront the realities of climate change. Yes, it will be hard and tedious, but I venture to guess the Norfolk Vision 2100 was also difficult. We must #ActOnClimate – regionally, across the commonwealth of Virginia and beyond.

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