



# James River Park System Master Plan

*A plan for the protection, access, and enhancement of Richmond's premier asset*

## What is the James River Park?

The 600-acre James River Park System is the Richmond region's premier public park. The Park extends from Huguenot Flatwater to Ancarrow's Landing and encompasses the scenic Falls of the James River. Seen as a unifying force for our region, the park brings together residents of all ages, ethnicity and socio-economic circumstance from the City and all surrounding counties.

Lauded as one of the major assets of the city for economic development, the Park provides over \$33.5 million in economic impact per year to the City as reported by a study released by researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2017. The Richmond Tourism Corporation uses the River to attract tourists. The Chamber of Commerce uses the James River Park to help attract young people to the workforce, and the Park has won numerous awards. Additionally, the James River is counted as one of the eight regional priorities of the Capital Regional Collaborative. The park has been recognized in the following ways:

- “Best Urban Park” Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine 2016
- “Best SUP spot” Blue Ridge Outdoor Magazine 2016
- Voted one of top Six River Parks in the Nation by REI 2015
- “Best Outdoor Adventure” Virginia Living Magazine 2015
- “Best River City” by Outside Magazine, 2012
- “Best in Dirt” South East Region by Trail Runner Magazine, 2010
- “Best Urban Park” by Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine, 2004 and 2005

The James River Park System is owned and operated by The City of Richmond's Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department. It is managed by a small dedicated group of nine full time employees making up three distinct divisions: 1) Park Operations oversees all areas of park maintenance and cleanliness. 2) The Trails Division maintains over 42 miles of single track trails and Greenways 3) The Park Programming Division oversees the development and delivery of Environmental and Adventure Recreation programming. Park staff also work closely with many supporting organizations to provide a wide variety of volunteer experiences within the park. In 2017, volunteers donated 7,042 hours to the park creating everything from new park benches and trail bridges to general trash pick clean-ups and Invasive Species Management.

## The Need for a Master Plan

Today the James River Park System is seen as a crown jewel of the region. With 1.7 million visitors in 2017, and more than 2 million visitors projected in 2018, the James River Park accommodates more than any other park in the region. Continued increases in visitation, along with extremely limited options for development due to Park easements predicate the need for a Master Plan in addition to the following:

- Need for multi-modal transportation routes to the Park to spread out the usage.
- Lack of funding to fully staff the Park to meet current and future visitor needs
- Derelict and underutilized park infrastructure

- No long-term plan for infrastructure enhancements or improvements to meet current and future needs.
- Minimal access for underserved populations.

A master plan will help to maintain the quality of the experience for users, the health of the river and the wildlife; prioritize Park improvements for highest and best use for the City and region (hydroelectric plants. Boat and user access points, Pumphouse).

## **What is the Process for Creating a Master Plan?**

The master planning process will be an inclusive one, resulting in a shared vision of what we all want our Park to be. The Friends of James River Park and the City Of Richmond's Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Department will use this document as a road map to work with all vested individuals, public and private organizations to implement this long-term community vision.

The Board of Directors of Friends of the James River has approved raising funds for a joint proposal from local firm VHB in partnership with Hargreaves, the firm that created the Riverfront Master plan. This plan will take into account existing conditions, previous planning documents and results from facilitated public and neighborhood meetings. The whole process will take about 9-12 months from the time that funding is secured.

## **How much will it Cost?**

\$250,000 (Riverfront Master Plan - \$650,000)

## **Master Plan Funding**

Funders of the Master Plan will be recognized at every public meeting and in press releases. They will have a prominent position as foundational donors on our capital campaign wall when it is designed. FOJRP is seeking \$25,000- \$50,000 lead gifts for this legacy project to protect the James River Park System.

## **What Will the Master Plan Include?**

The master plan will span 10-years and will include recommendations for trails and greenway connectivity, river-based activities, multi-modal transportation access, natural resources protection, accessibility, cultural and historical resources, park buildings, infrastructure; and concept plans for underutilized infrastructure within the park.

Friends of the James River and supporting organizations believe this master plan is an essential tool needed to protect one of the region's most valuable assets; maintain the quality of the user experience and the natural environment ; and provide access for all. The Board of FOJRP is dedicated to the development of this plan and continued stewardship of its long-term implementation.

## **Organizations Who Support the James River Park System and The Development of the Park Master Plan**

The Friends of the James River Park (FOJRP) is a 501(c)3 that takes a leadership role in strategy, advocacy, communication, marketing, education, and stewardship for the James River Park System. This organization is coordinating the effort to develop and implement a Park Master Plan in partnership with the 6 supporting organizations listed with support from the CRC and the City of Richmond.

**Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee** – This Advisory Committee is comprised of state appointed members who oversee and advise on the stretch of the James River as it flows through Richmond that has been given General Assembly designation as a “State Scenic River”. This designation recognizes the exceptional and unique historic, scenic and recreational qualities on this portion of the

**James River Association (JRA)** The James River Association is a member-supported nonprofit organization founded in 1976 to serve as a guardian and voice for the James River. Throughout the James River’s 10,000-square mile watershed, the James River Association works toward its vision of a fully healthy James River supporting thriving communities.

**RVAMORE** – Is a Regional volunteer non-profit volunteer group that assist the City Of Richmond and other Regional Partners in maintenance and development of single track trails and other Mountain Bike focused facilities.

**James River Outdoor Coalition (JROC)** - James River Outdoor Coalition improves access to the park (foot traffic, boat access and climbing). They raise funds, find manpower, and advocate for improved park and river access.

**James River Advisory Council (JRAC)** – is a Regional Advisory group that coordinates and collaborates around events focused on the James River in the Capital Region.

James River Hikers recreational meet up group, rebuild trail structures and boardwalks

**James River Work Group of the Capital Region Collaborative**

## **Existing Plans Involving the James River**

The creation of the James River Park Master Plan will complement existing plans by supporting and building on recommendations contained within each plan.

*Richmond Riverfront Plan (2012)* is vision document for Richmond’s riverfront from the Eastern end of Belle Isle to Ancarrow’s Landing. The plan features recommendations for the creation of new public spaces and improved connections to the riverfront. The T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge, one of the featured projects in the plan, opened in December 2016.

*Regional Rivers Plan (2017)* was created to guide the expansion of the recreational access network on the rivers of the Richmond region. Recommendations for new public access sites, economic development, and tourism are features of the plan. The James River Action Team of The Capital Region Collaborative is charged with implementing the plan.

*Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth* is the official update to the citywide master plan. process commenced in 2017.