JAMES RIVER PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN FOR THE RICHMOND REGION

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PART I
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The James River Public Access Plan for the Richmond Region is intended to address a number of perceived problems, deficiencies and unrealized opportunities with public river access in the region. The James River, which either bisects or forms the border of the five jurisdictions in this plan—Chesterfield, Goochland, Henrico, and Powhatan Counties and the City of Richmond—is the most important natural resource in the region and is historically, culturally, and geographically significant. It runs nearly 90 miles through the region while serving nearly 800,000 residents in the study area and hundreds of thousands more from outside the region. Most importantly, in terms of this plan, it offers visitors a multitude of recreation opportunities, from bird-watching to whitewater rafting.

The vision for this plan is as follows: *The James River is a destination and a centerpiece in the Richmond region. The growing number of residents and tourists seek out the abundant opportunities for both passive and active recreation offered along the river, take in the river's rich and vibrant natural landscape, and appreciate the river's enduring heritage. The river's vital role as the region's most valuable natural resource is highlighted and celebrated, and continued efforts are made to improve and ensure the excellence of both the visual and physical public access to the James River.*

A comprehensive data collection and analysis process was undertaken to identify problems and potential opportunities for improvement. The region’s existing public river access sites were visited and documented during January and February 2005, and special attention was paid to each access site’s facilities, viewshed, signage, recreational options, and most importantly, conditions. This information was then compiled into a guide for the Richmond region’s James River public access and each site was rated based on its conditions, viewsheds, and overall quality. Based on this analysis, five specific problems were identified. They are:

1. The lack of comprehensive information on regional public access to the James River;
2. The insufficiency of signage to designate the James River’s presence, highlighting its designation as a scenic river where appropriate, or indicating the locations of public river access sites;
3. The many unrealized opportunities for new public river access points;
4. The poor to moderate condition of many existing public river access sites;
5. The lack of defined connections or trails between sites in close proximity to each other or that would otherwise be logically linked.

The aforementioned problems provided the basis for the goals, objectives and strategies developed as the main piece of the James River Public Access Plan for the Richmond Region. Each goal was designed to specifically address one of the five aforementioned problems and specific actions were recommended to achieve those goals. In order, those actions are:

1. The creation of a regional body responsible for the collection and analysis of James River data and for facilitating the creation and maintenance of public access in the region;
2. The attainment of new or expanded scenic river designations for the region, and the adoption of scenic river signage and comprehensive directional signage for existing and proposed sites;
3. The addition of nine new public access sites along the river spread throughout the five jurisdictions;
4. The enhancement of all existing access sites with standard improvements and the improvement of several existing sites with site-specific modifications;
5. The creation of greenways and trails between existing and proposed sites that increase connectivity along the river.

The actions summarized above are to be completed within a ten-year time frame by a number of organizations, including, but not limited to: the newly-created regional body, the recreation and parks departments of the jurisdictions, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and a number of other organizations involved directly with the welfare of the James River. The plan is meant not only to highlight the James River as the important resource it is in the region, but also to provide current and future residents with a higher standard of living. This plan promotes a regional, cooperative and systematic approach to the creation and maintenance of public river access, the administration of river-related data, and the cultivation of a certain, safe and natural environment for all types of river-related recreation throughout the Richmond region.
PART II
EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT
Section A: Introduction

The James River meanders through Central Virginia from its headwaters in the Blue Ridge Mountains down to the Chesapeake Bay. Its significance in terms of history, geology, and industry cannot be overstated. The first permanent European settlement in the United States was founded on its banks nearly 400 years ago, and the river served as a strategic resource for both Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War. Through the City of Richmond, the James River is particularly special because the stark transition between the western and eastern segments of the river is so apparent. Moreover, the James River offers one of the only chances in the world to kayak or raft several classes of whitewater rapids against the backdrop of skyscrapers and government buildings. The rapids are created by the Fall Line, a rock formation that extends from New Jersey to Georgia and that separates the hard rocks of the Piedmont from the soft soil of the Coastal Plain. As the river encounters this “cliff,” the result is swift-moving water and rocky outcroppings that create rapids and make the river impassable for large boats.

Virginia Historical Society president Dr. Charles F. Bryan, Jr. considers the falls of the James River “the most important factor in the history of Richmond” because their existence dictated the siting of the settlement that would become Richmond.¹ Further, the falls created the need for a transportation mode switch—goods transported by ship had to be moved to ground transportation. To address this issue and to link the James River (and ultimately the Atlantic Ocean) with the Mississippi River (via the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers), a canal system was established along parts of the north and south banks of the James. George Washington undertook early canal construction efforts, and remnants of his eighteenth century canal system still exist in Richmond. The Kanawha Canal was established along the north shore of the river in the 1800’s and was a major

project along the James between Richmond and Buchanan, Virginia. The Kanawha Canal was never finished, however, due to the ascension of the railroad as the primary mode of transportation in the eighteenth century. The riverfront in Richmond has since been dominated by rail lines on both sides of the river, but especially on the north side, where a line runs along the bank for most of the river’s course in the region.

Railroads aided the expansion of industry through the Richmond region, which served as a transportation hub because of its access to the Chesapeake Bay and because of a relatively expansive network of roads. Flour mills and paper plants sprung up on both sides of the river early on in the eighteenth century. Before the Civil War, Richmond rose to become the third richest city in the nation and during the war, Tredegar Iron Works, on the banks of the Kanawha Canal, was the primary producer of sheet iron and armor plating for the Confederate Army. Like most cities on the East Coast, Richmond used its river intensively for power, building multiple dams across the James through the city. Consequently, the combination of heavy industry, overuse, and disinterest left the James River in poor condition, and a lack of regulation made riverfront locations attractive to companies looking for easy ways to dispose of waste.

The James River has benefited, though, from the rise of the environmental movement and the resulting legislation, such as the Clean Water Act of 1972. It has also benefited from the decline of heavy industry, which has left sections of its banks free from intensive use, and which has given the river a chance to recuperate. Today, the James River through the Richmond region is marked by contrasts. Private land ownership still dominates much of the river outside of the City of Richmond, particularly in the western rural counties of Goochland and Powhatan. East of the city, heavy industry still rules in parts alongside large tracts of protected lands and parks. Within the city, there are large areas of public open space, most of which are part of Richmond’s James River

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Park System. The river through Richmond—from the western city limits to a point just past Ancarrow’s Landing—is also designated as a Virginia State Scenic River.³

This plan primarily seeks to address the issues of physical and visual public river access, and to demonstrate ways in which the City of Richmond and many of the counties that comprise its region—Chesterfield, Goochland, Henrico, and Powhatan—can improve their existing network of public access sites. In the wake of an increased interest in environmental issues, recreation, personal health, and the concept of sustainable cities, the health of urban rivers is one of the focal points of many urban areas’ planning efforts. Offering a wide range of river access options to the public is often an effective way to ensure that there will be consistent support for continuing efforts to promote a healthy relationship between people and natural areas in the urban setting. For the purpose of this data collection effort and for the resultant plan, public access includes both physical and visual access. That is, river access is not only the ability to touch and interact with the river (for swimming, paddling, fishing, and so on) but also the ability to see the river from other public spaces (for passive recreation). Public access to riverfronts is an important aspect of urban life, and is often overlooked when cities and their surrounding communities discuss recreation possibilities.

The Study Area

This plan is for the counties of Chesterfield, Goochland, Henrico, and Powhatan, and the City of Richmond, which will be referred to from this point forward as the Richmond region.⁴ The study area stretches along both the northern and southern banks of the James River from the Goochland County – Fluvanna County border in the west to the confluence of the James River with the Appomattox River at the Chesterfield County – City of Hopewell border in the east (see Map A). The river runs through this study area for approximately 90 miles.

⁴ Note: For the purposes of this plan, the terms “north”, “south”, “east”, and “west” are used to refer to the river and the region in a general sense and may not be entirely accurate at any given point along the James River.
(SEE MAP A)
Section B: Methodology and Limitations

The first step in the data collection process for this plan was to catalogue the existing public access sites in the Richmond region. Upon clearly defining the Richmond region, and after consulting various sources, including guides, books, and river users, a significant decision was made with regard to how sites would be visited, described, and presented. Specifically, an assumption was made early on in the process that current river users would not benefit as much from this plan as those who were not as familiar with the river (including tourists and residents alike). Thus, data for each site were collected as if the site had never been visited. The second step, then, was to visit and inventory each of the sites as follows:

- the location of the site, how easy the site was to access, and the existence and quality of the signage leading users to the site;
- site rules, including hours, restrictions on types of recreation, and safety indications;
- information regarding maintenance, park facilities, and history of the park;
- facilities available, such as parking, bathrooms, telephones, information kiosks, and recreation infrastructure;
- the types of recreation encouraged or prohibited;
- any historical or cultural resources present at the site;
- any existing connectivity between one site to another nearby site and the possibility of creating connections;
- the view from each site from various points, and what structures were found in that viewshed;
- the conditions of the site in general terms;
- and any ways in which the site could be improved or expanded to accommodate better, safer, or more public access.

Photographs of each site were taken to document this data visually. This information was then synthesized into an access guide and a site information matrix, both of which are explained in the “Existing James River Public Access Sites” section that follows. After the existing site information was collected, 2000 Census data, land use and parcel data, and related plans were gathered and analyzed for relevant information. Census
data were important in discussing basic population data for the region, while land use and parcel data helped determine the future land use plans for some of the jurisdictions and the full extent and acreage of each site. Each county’s comprehensive plan and related plans were examined for information and data relating to public access on the James River. Other plans were researched for their relevance and guidance for the scope of this plan.

A number of limitations arose when collecting data. Perhaps the most challenging obstacle to overcome was the lack of data for many jurisdictions. While every community was deficient in some form or another with data, Powhatan lacked even basic spatial data, which prevented the creation of any maps for that locality, and which prevented the accurate collection of other forms of data. Complete land use data were also unavailable for the counties of Goochland or Powhatan, and Richmond’s parcel data were missing information, such as ownership and land use, on certain parcels, which prevented complete, trustworthy data from being collected for the city. Furthermore, there was a shortage of recent, reliable park visitation data and user data for all of the access points. The popularity of many sites was communicated via word of mouth by several sources familiar with the sites. The lack of a central source of information, while a catalyst in the formulation of this plan, hindered the data collection process in many ways.

There are two further limitations that are important to note: one is the time of year in which the information about each site was collected, and the other is how “unofficial” sites and trails were handled. Because data were gathered during the months of January and February, full use of each river site was impossible and the number of users on any given day was much lower than that it would be during warmer months. Finally, there are a number of unofficial access sites and unofficial trails, some of which are on private property and others that are not sanctioned by an official organization, government or otherwise. While some of these sites and trails may be well-known, they are not included in the inventory and existing conditions report.
Section C: Existing James River Public Access Sites

The region can be separated into three sections in locating public access sites. The first section includes sites west of the City of Richmond (see Map B), and is bounded in the west by the Powhatan County – Cumberland County border and in the east by Chesterfield County – City of Richmond border. Included in this section are sites in northwestern Chesterfield County, western Henrico County, Goochland County, and Powhatan County. The second section runs from the City of Richmond – Chesterfield County border in the west to the City of Richmond – Henrico County border in the east (see Map C). The final section includes sites east of the City of Richmond, and runs from the Pocahontas Parkway Bridge (VA 895) east to Turkey Island in eastern Chesterfield County (see Map D). Sites in this section lie in Chesterfield County or in Henrico County.

Twenty-eight different public access sites were visited, researched, and documented during this data collection effort. The sites ranged from small, historical parks, to regional boat ramps, to massive conservation areas, each with a variety of facilities, viewsheds, and conditions. Of the 28 sites, 17 are in the City of Richmond, five are in Chesterfield County, four are in Henrico County, two are in Powhatan County, and only one is in Goochland County (see Maps B through D). Citie of Henricus and the Dutch Gap Conservation Area were counted as a single site, and are shared between Chesterfield and Henrico Counties. Certain sites were grouped together when it made sense to do so, such as the aforementioned Citie of Henricus Historical Park with the Dutch Gap Conservation Area and Browns Island with the facilities along Tredegar Street. In other instances, it made more sense to take one site and split it into two separate sites for this report. For example, while The Wetlands is a small part of the larger Pony Pasture, the two points
(SEE MAP B)
(SEE MAP C)
(SEE MAP D)
have separate parking areas and differ enough that it made more sense to consider them separately. The following is an inventory of sites, listed west to east by jurisdiction, included in this report:

**Chesterfield County**
- Robious Landing
- Drewry’s Bluff (Richmond National Battlefield Park)
- Dutch Gap Public Boat Landing
- Citie of Henricus Historical Park and Dutch Gap Conservation Area (in Henrico County, too)
- Battery Dantzler Park

**Goochland County**
- West View Landing

**Henrico County**
- Osborne Pike Boat Landing
- Fort Brady (Richmond National Battlefield Park)
- Citie of Henricus Historical Park and Dutch Gap Conservation Area (in Chesterfield County, too)
- Deep Bottom Boat Landing

**Powhatan County**
- Maidens Landing
- Watkins Landing

**City of Richmond**
- Huguenot Flatwater (James River Park System)
- Riverside Meadow (James River Park System)
- Pony Pasture (James River Park System)
- The Wetlands (James River Park System)
- 42nd Street (James River Park System)
- Northbank (James River Park System)
- Reedy Creek (James River Park System)
- Hollywood Cemetery
- 22nd Street (James River Park System)
- Belle Isle (James River Park System)
- Oregon Hill Park
- Virginia War Memorial
- Browns Island / Tredegar Street
- Richmond Flood Wall
- Great Shiplock Park (James River Park System)
- Libby Hill Park
- Ancarrow’s Landing (James River Park System)

From the data collected at each of these points, two ratings were established to measure the quality of the sites’ conditions and the quality of their viewsheds. A third overall rating was simply an average of the other two ratings. The site conditions rating measured the cleanliness of the site, the condition of its facilities and infrastructure, the extent of noticeable storm damage, and other factors that had an effect on the site’s quality. The scale for these ratings was 1 – 10, 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent. While there was no strict weight given to any of these factors, some were considered more important than others, and the importance of each factor depended on the site. For instance, a site with poorly maintained facilities that are free from trash might get a better score than one with brand new infrastructure that is covered with litter. The cleanliness of a site may not matter if a bridge leading to the river over the railroad tracks is unsafe. These ratings do not reflect the types or number of recreation possibilities at each site, but they do reflect the quality of those opportunities. It is also important to note that site conditions ratings are as of February 2005, and may include conditions that are due to relatively recent events (periods of high water, for instance) or construction that would not ordinarily be present. These factors were considered when scoring each site.
The viewshed rating is simply a subjective measure of the aesthetic quality of a site’s view, including the extent of the James River visible from the site, the extent to which one could see an appreciable distance in any given direction, the type of landscape visible, the quantity and type of obstructions present, and the number of man-made structures present in the viewshed (see figure to the right). Again, no specific weight was given to one aspect over another and each site’s viewshed rating depended upon the nature of the site. For instance, a site where the view is almost fully obstructed by trees may have a higher viewshed rating than a site where the river is only partially blocked by abandoned factory buildings. At the same time, a view of the James against the backdrop of Richmond’s skyscrapers may end up with a better rating than a view of the James with only trees in the background.

An example of a good viewshed at Watkins Landing in Powhatan County.

It is important to note that while the site conditions and viewshed ratings are not meant to be compared to other sites’, the final rating may be used as a rough guide to the overall quality of a site in relation to another. The James River flows through many different environments through the Richmond region and each site may capture the river and its surroundings in a different way. But given all factors considered and rated, the overall rating, while only an average, may give an indication that one site is more enjoyable than another.

For a complete list of the sites, their facilities, recreation possibilities, and ratings, please see the James River Richmond Region Public Access Site Guide in the Appendix.
**Section D: Population**

The total population of five jurisdictions represented in this plan is 758,676 (see Table 1 below). Chesterfield and Henrico Counties are the most populous with over 250,000 people each. The City of Richmond is third among the five with just under 200,000 and Goochland and Powhatan Counties are the least populous with fewer than 25,000 each. Of the over 750,000 people in the region, 4.21 percent live in Census blocks within one-half mile of the James River and 8.20 percent live in Census block groups within one-half mile of the river. Notably, approximately 15 percent of Goochland’s population lives within blocks one-half mile from the river, and over half live in block groups one-half mile away.

![Table 1](image)

With only 32,000 people living in blocks one-half mile from the river—just over four percent of the region’s population—it appears that residential uses along the river may be uncommon. However, this figure belies the true situation along much of the James River. Many of the residents who live along the riverfront, especially in the rural areas, occupy larger tracts of land. Therefore, population numbers will be comparatively low for any geographic area. Since the 2000 Census, there has been an increase in residential development, especially in northwestern Chesterfield and in eastern Powhatan along the river. There has also been an increase in the number of apartments and lofts along the James River in the City of Richmond, especially in Old Manchester and in Shockoe Bottom. The downside of this is that there is little room to expand current sites or to create new river access sites with much of the land being private property, unless public access is a requirement of new development or easements are utilized.

Looking at the populations of block groups one-half mile from the river visually, there are a number of concentrations within the region that are worth noting (see Map E). Population within a short distance of the river is important to study because of the difficulties that can arise when dealing with private land ownership. Furthermore, it is
(SEE MAP E)
preferable that all residents in riverside communities and developments have walkable access to the river along which they live. While not all residents of a block group one-half mile from the river are actually living that close to the river, the assumption is that all of them can either walk or drive a short distance to a potential public access point. There is a population concentration (more than 2,500 in a block group) in Powhatan County around Maidens Landing, but the population is skewed by the presence of the Powhatan Correctional Center and the Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center. Another concentration exists in northern Chesterfield County, near its border with the City of Richmond. That concentration is the densely-populated Bon Air community, and nearly all of the riverfront there is privately owned, but there are public access points on either side of the block group within a short distance (Robious Landing and Huguenot Flatwater). Another population concentration is in the City of Richmond, south of the James River, containing the Westover Hills neighborhood. Most of the riverfront in that area is part of the James River Park System. Finally, the easternmost concentration occurs in Chesterfield County, near the James River Old Channel and the Dutch Gap Conservation Area. While much of that block group is industrial in nature, there is a large, riverfront community named River's Bend that accounts for the high population. There are a number of public access sites within a short drive of that neighborhood (including two planned parks), but none of those sites are in the neighborhood itself.
Section E: Land Use in the Richmond Region

The land use plans for three of the jurisdictions in the region are a testimony to the fact that City of Richmond appears to be dedicated to offering public river access while the counties lag noticeably behind. Richmond’s land use plan (see Map F) shows that roughly 75 percent of the riverfront is dedicated to public and open space uses, which include “publicly owned and operated parks, recreated areas, open spaces, schools, libraries, cemeteries, and other government and public service facilities.” Also included are sensitive natural areas where development is not encouraged. There are a number of areas that are planned for public and open space, but that are not currently used that way, including a swath of land down the south bank of the James between Ancarrow’s Landing and the Port of Richmond. Chesterfield County’s land use plan (see Map G) indicates that its border with the James River in the north is all residential and to the southeast, it is a mix of residential, public and open space, and industrial uses, while the latter is the primary use. Notably, there are three areas with a future land use of open and public space that are currently undeveloped, including a site on the James River’s Old Channel, and two sites in the Bermuda Hundred area. Serving as a stark contrast is Henrico County’s land use plan (see Map H), which features only one site on the James River designated as public land use, the current site of Deep Bottom Boat Landing. Noticeably, except for Deep Bottom, all of Henrico’s riverfront has a future land use of “protected area,” which includes uses that have a minimal environmental impact and that provide open space. However, there is no indication that there will be an increase in the number of public access sites in the county.

Comprehensive land use plans for Goochland County and Powhatan County were unavailable, so aside from a proposed state park near Beaumont in Powhatan County, there is no indication of planned future public access.

5 *City of Richmond’s 2020 Master Plan*. Richmond, VA: City of Richmond Department of Community Development, 2000.
(SEE MAP F)
(SEE MAP G)
(SEE MAP H)
Section F: Linkages Between Public River Access Sites

It is important to reference the concept of linkages, as they will play an important role in the formulation of this plan. There are three sets of sites that are presently linked by trails, bridges, or some other clearly defined method (see Maps B through D). Pony Pasture and The Wetlands are considered two pieces of the same site, but during data collection they were researched separately. The sites are linked by a pathway that is clearly designated at both sites and that provides a loop to view wildlife and to walk along the river. The second set of linked access sites is close to downtown and provides an excellent greenway stretching from one side of the river to another. Starting in the west, a system of trails (including a mountain biking trail and pedestrian trail) connects 42nd Street, Reedy Creek, 22nd Street. An emergency access bridge, open to pedestrians, connects those sites with Belle Isle, which is connected to Tredegar Street via a pedestrian bridge suspended from the Lee Bridge. From Tredegar Street, Browns Island is accessible and so is Oregon Hill Park, from a trail that begins near the parking lot and winds its way up to the Oregon Hill Park near the top of the hill. The trail is marked from the north and near the bridge over the Kanawha Canal, but not marked from the parking lot. Pedestrians can also walk along the canal down to the Mayo Bridge, cross the river, and access the Richmond Flood Wall walk. From this point, Ancarrow's Landing is accessible via the eastern Flood Wall walk and the historic Slave Trail, and a rough and underdeveloped trail leads from the western Flood Wall walk to the James River Park System's 22nd Street. Finally, the last set of linked sites is in Chesterfield County (and partly in Henrico County). A trail along the Dutch Gap Cutoff connects Dutch Gap Boat Landing to the Citie of Henricus Historical Park. Near the visitor center at Henricus, there is a trail that meanders through the Dutch Gap Conservation Area.
Section G: Previous and Existing Planning Efforts

While this report is specifically focused on the existing public access sites in the community, future sites currently planned are also important to note and describe. The 1996 *Virginia Outdoors Plan* outlines a number of steps that the Richmond region can take in order to increase public access for its citizens, including a recommendation for a state park along the James River. Actions have been taken for the establishment of a state park near the Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center in Powhatan County. The plan also recommends the extension of the James River Park System into Chesterfield and Henrico Counties, especially along the Tuckahoe Creek section of western Henrico County. Furthermore, more public boat ramps between Richmond and Hampton Roads are recommended. In addition to these suggestions, the plan suggests that two portions of the James River in the region be evaluated for their suitability to be included in the Virginia Scenic Rivers program. Those portions stretch from Columbia, at the western edge of Goochland County, to Watkins Landing in Powhatan County, and from Richmond to the James’ confluence with the Chickahominy River in eastern Charles City County.

The Environmental Element of Henrico County’s *2010 Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 1995, includes proposals that would satisfy the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation’s suggestions in the state’s Outdoors Plan. Henrico’s plan proposes two parks, named James River East Park and James River West Park, which would be anywhere from 20 to 100 acres in size. The West Park would be located between Chippenham Parkway and the Henrico County – City of Richmond border, and would be situated along the Kanawha Canal and the James River. The other park, James River East, would be located a short distance south of the city limits, north of the Pocahontas Parkway, and west of Osborne Turnpike. The plan proposes expansion of the Deep Bottom Boat Landing to alleviate heavy boat traffic and recommends an additional boat ramp site near Curles Neck Swamp, across the river from the Presquile National Wildlife Refuge. Henrico County’s Open Space plan also calls for the designation of part of the James as a scenic river.

*The Chesterfield County Riverfront Plan*, adopted in 1997, includes a number of proposals intended to expand access to the James River throughout the county. One
goal, which has been reached in part, is the expansion of the Dutch Gap Conservation Area. A new site along Falling Creek in the eastern half of the county would contain a new boat ramp, marina, trails linking various historical sites, including Drewry’s Bluff, to the Falling Creek Ironworks Site, and a visitor center. Recently, Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation donated 262 acres of riverfront property to Chesterfield County in the Bermuda Hundred area of the county, between Jones Neck and Presquile. There are plans to turn it into a recreation site with fishing opportunities, pedestrian and biking trails, and wildlife loops to the James River. Chesterfield’s land use plan also shows two more riverfront sites—one between Presquile and the James’ confluence with the Appomattox and another at the current location of the Old Stage Corporate Park along the river’s Old Channel.

*The City of Richmond’s 2020 Master Plan* incorporates a number of proposals to expand the city’s James River access. Much of the planned expansion would be added to the James River Park System, including the provision of continuous public access to the James River between Huguenot Flatwater and Pony Pasture, and the addition of the stone quarries along the James River for active recreational use. The James River Park System would also be expanded to include a linear park from Ancarrow’s Landing to the Port of Richmond Terminal, and the extension of the Flood Wall Walk east to Ancarrow’s Landing and west to the James River Park System’s land near Tredegar Street. The plan further calls for the establishment of continuous public access to the James along the Kanawha Canal between the Lee Bridge and Maymont Park. Finally, the plan recommends the addition of Williams Island as a city park. There are a number of other goals that would add to the total amount of public land abutting the river in the form of greenways along creeks and the expansion of current parks. These actions, if they were put into place, would greatly expand the James River Park System and establish much-needed greenways and park links that would stretch nearly the length of the river.
through the city on both shores, and increase the buffer zone in many areas between the dense urban environment and the river.

Powhatan and Goochland lag behind their more urban counterparts, unfortunately. Powhatan’s Comprehensive Plan 1998 – 2018 briefly outlines park and recreation policies, failing to mention the James River once. Goochland’s 2023 Comprehensive Plan briefly mentions the determination of ways to acquire land along the river for public access as a strategy for offering its growing population more park and recreation opportunities. Given that the two counties combine for only three total public access points on the James River, and given that the other three jurisdictions’ plans call for dramatic increases in access, the lack of more specific goals and strategies that address the issue of public river access is unfortunate.

The Virginia Capital Trail, a pedestrian and bike trial intended to link Williamsburg to Richmond primarily along VA 5 (New Market Road), is currently in the planning stages. Rights-of-way for portions of the trail near Williamsburg are currently being purchased and development is underway in the Greensprings area. In Richmond, however, there are no specific plans as to what route the trail will take through the city. Planners with the Virginia Department of Transportation have labeled the two sections in Richmond as the “Richmond Riverfront Phase” and the “Richmond Canal Walk Phase,” so there is a clear emphasis on routing it near the James River. Such a facility will establish a connection between many Richmond public access sites, including Great Shiplock Park, Browns Island, and existing trails will connect the Virginia Capital Trail to Belle Isle and the main section of the James River Park System on the southern banks of the river.

There are other proposals by various organizations, including the Richmond Riverfront Corporation, that look to expand pedestrian trails along the riverfront in downtown Richmond. Plans exist to continue the rehabilitation of the Kanawha Canal along its length in the City of Richmond. A new neighborhood in eastern Henrico County named Wilton Farm has river access included in early plats. Furthermore, the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee is always working to add public access sites within the city. Indeed, public access warrants a great deal of attention, and many communities in the area have taken steps to expand on their current access sites or create new sites. Time will tell if any of the jurisdictions’ plans become reality.
Section H: Summary of Findings

There has been much written detailing the symbiotic relationship between people and the natural environment, and many argue that rivers are particularly significant because they “can be enjoyed in harmony with nature, rather than at nature’s expense.” Fortunately for the citizens of Richmond and for the tourists who visit the city, the James River is such a river than can be enjoyed in a multitude of ways. As documented in the preceding section, the Richmond region suffers from a common problem among communities with urban rivers in regard to its public river access: one jurisdiction bears most of the burden of the region’s access. In this case, the City of Richmond offers over half of the region’s public access sites (17 of the 28 sites), and of the other four jurisdictions, none has more than five sites. Each jurisdiction’s population living within one-half mile of the James River indicates that there should be some imbalance: over 20,000 people live near the river in Richmond, while the numbers in the counties are drastically smaller (see Table 1 on page 20). However, all communities should share in the distribution of public access, especially when there are opportunities to expand access into areas of the James River that are currently not adequately available to the region’s residents.

Recently, there was a major auction of islands in the James River that lie within Goochland County. Of the islands purchased, one of them sold for $56,000, and included deeded access across a railroad line and access from the shore. Other islands sold for as little as $500. There is no indication that Goochland County officials, or even officials from Powhatan County across the river, made any effort to purchase an island in order to establish a new riverfront park. This underscores a perceived lack of effort being made by some of the counties in securing new lands through whatever means possible to allow their citizens to enjoy the river legally. Overall, there seems to be a lack of focus on the James River outside of the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County, even though all counties in the region share major portions of their boundaries with the river.

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Other problems with riverfront access through the Richmond region include the following:

- There is a lack of complete, clear data about existing facilities. As of this writing, there is no published, comprehensive guide to the region’s public river access sites. Instead, residents and tourists must check various sources for a listing of riverfront parks, boat ramps, and other sites. The absence of a singular source for this data manifests itself in maps where some sites are not even listed. A prime example of this is the James River Park System’s Northbank site, which does not appear on many regional or city maps. Despite the fact that this site offers some of the best opportunities to view wildlife within the City of Richmond, and features excellent views of the river in a natural setting, some life-long residents of Richmond have never even heard of it.

- Signage is a problem that may prevent residents from being fully aware of their river access options. While many sites are clearly marked and easy to find, others are unsigned along major corridors and lack reassurance signage on minor routes leading to the sites. In other cases, directional signage is incomplete and confusing. Furthermore, the directional signage standards are inconsistent between sites, even within the same county. There is also no signage to indicate the river’s designation as a Virginia Scenic River at bridge crossings. Many other state scenic rivers throughout Virginia, even minor ones in rural communities, are highlighted with such signage.

- In general, there are opportunities to offer the public more river access that have not been realized. Chesterfield County has two new parks in the development stages, but other jurisdictions have not made public any plans to increase access to the James River for their citizens or for tourists.

- Many parks have moderate to major deficiencies in terms of maintenance and cleanliness. Some parks are in such poor shape that their conditions may discourage visitors from enjoying the river or from participating in recreational activities at that site at all. Great Shiplock Park in the City of Richmond is a prime example of a park with maintenance issues; the
paths leading to the river are in poor condition, and the park itself shows signs of major storm and flood damage. Visitors have mentioned that Kanawha Canal in the park is sometimes populated with dead fish.

- There is a lack of connectivity between neighboring access sites. Rivers, by their very nature, are prime locations for greenways, yet most of Richmond’s sites are not connected to each other. In some cases, the distance between consecutive sites is well over five miles, which precludes easy linkages. In others, the establishment of a trail and directional signs between two points is not only possible with relatively little effort, but it can dramatically improve the quality of the region’s river access.

The summation of these concerns and problems is the background and rationale for the development of this plan. Richmond has a unique natural asset that is not celebrated in the way it could be. There are opportunities for existing access sites to be improved and for new sites to be created in areas that lack public access. There are many simple actions that can be taken to improve the quality of the Richmond region’s river recreation and the visibility of the James River throughout the area. The plan, which follows, seeks to establish the Richmond region as a model for urban rivers in both the number of opportunities and the quality of those opportunities for physical and visual access to the James River.

This plan is intended to benefit all residents of the Richmond region, regardless of whether or not their jurisdiction is included within the study area. The plan is also designed for tourists to the region, so that they may have the chance to enjoy the river without uncertainty or confusion. In general, the people who will most benefit from the plan are those who partake in the various recreational activities that are offered along the James River, which include, but are not limited to: walking, running, biking, fishing,
canoeing, kayaking, boating, swimming, sunbathing, and wildlife-viewing. This plan can also be used by organizations or other parties interested in the welfare of the James River and of the Richmond region as a whole.
PART III

JAMES RIVER PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN FOR THE RICHMOND REGION
Section A: Introduction

The purpose of the James River Public Access Plan is to focus attention on the issue of public access through the Richmond region and to promote a healthy relationship between residents of Richmond and its surrounding counties and the river that bisects the region. The plan is intended for current and future residents of the Richmond region as well as visitors to the region. It is written for those who use the river for active sports and recreation, those who enjoy the river for the natural settings, and those who simply enjoy casual walks along the river during the summer.

The vision of this plan is as follows: The James River is a destination and a centerpiece in the Richmond region. The growing number of residents and tourists seek out the abundant opportunities for both passive and active recreation offered along the river, take in the river's rich and vibrant natural landscape, and appreciate the river's enduring heritage. The river's vital role as the region's most valuable natural resource is highlighted and celebrated, and continued efforts are made to improve and ensure the excellence of both the visual and physical public access to the James River.

The goals, objectives, and strategies for the plan have been categorized by the method by which the action would improve the overall quality of public access in the Richmond region. This plan is intended to be a ten-year plan, though some of the strategies may take longer than ten years to complete, while others are ongoing. Some goals are more administrative in nature, and thus do not require any specific action involving the actual creation of public access. Other goals can be met only through the specific creation of new public access along the James River. All of the goals have the intended effect of addressing the problems outlined in the “Summary of Findings” portion in Part II of this document. This introduction is followed by the plan’s goals, objectives and strategies, and then by a brief explanation of how this plan is to be implemented, with a schedule for doing so.

Overall, as documented within the previous section, there are five major problems with the state of public river access in the region. Briefly, they are: (1) the lack of comprehensive information on public access to the James River; (2) the lack of appropriate signage referencing the James River’s designation as a scenic river and the
locations of existing access sites; (3) a number of unrealized opportunities for public river access in counties where access is limited; (4) a number of existing parks are in poor to moderate condition and need improvements; and (5) parks close in proximity to one another are not connected with greenways or trails when it appears logical to do so.

Problems with Regional Public River Access

The first problem—the lack of comprehensive data on public access—is a significant one. There are many parks that are underutilized, while others exceed their capacity for much of the summer because the underused parks are not easy to find or are relatively unknown. This problem finds its primary roots in the absence of a consistent source of information concerning the region’s public access sites. The only organization that focuses on public access issues is the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee, but that body is only officially concerned with the segment of the river designated as a State Scenic River (roughly, the segment through the City of Richmond). As suggested by this plan, the creation of a regional organization, with duties similar to the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee, would create a clearinghouse for various types of data on each site, including visitation data, usage data, and so on. This organization would also serve as a liaison between the jurisdictions, various levels of government, and other relevant organizations, in an effort to reduce redundancy in river-related planning efforts and to ensure a high level of quality and consistency between public access sites in the region, regardless of their locations or purposes. It is important to note that the new organization is not intended to replace the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee, though the word “create” is indeed used. It is hoped that efforts to expand the segment of the James considered a State Scenic River would be successful, thus broadening the administrative jurisdiction of the Falls of the James. Otherwise, the new committee could be formed through an expansion of the current membership of the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee, creating a

![Dutch Gap Boat Landing in Chesterfield County.](image)
second committee that applies the same administrative practices it uses for the City of Richmond to the entire region.

This second problem addressed by this plan is the lack of attention given both to the James River and to the public access sites along it. There is no mention in the Richmond region of the James River’s status as a State Scenic River. At the same time, some of the access sites are well signed and there is little or no confusion as to where the sites are located. Other sites, on the other hand, are hard to find, poorly “advertised” along major routes, and lack even the basic descriptive data. These problems are relatively easy to fix. This plan addresses the aforementioned problems by recommending that the James River be highlighted and celebrated more than it currently is. Within this recommendation are a number of suggestions concerning the river’s scenic designation, and the possibility of extending existing designations and acquiring new ones. The James River’s history, geology, and recreational qualities are some of the best in the country among urban and suburban rivers. Thus, attention should be called to these qualities actively through the use of federal and state designations, signs, and other means. This plan also recommends a systematic approach to signing public access sites throughout the region. Sites are to be labeled along their closest major routes (i.e. interstates, primary routes, and other major thoroughfares) at the intersections or exits where visitors would turn. What major routes are identified for each site depends on the significance of each site (national park sites are of a greater significance than a rural boat ramp, for instance) and the distance of a given site from a major route. Each site should also have enough directional and reassurance signage to ensure visitors do not get lost along secondary or neighborhood roads. See Appendix A for a complete guide to where existing and proposed access sites should be signed along major routes and secondary routes.
The third problem is perhaps the main impetus for this plan. As previously stated, the City of Richmond bears the load of the region’s public access, with 17 of the 28 sites, despite only having roughly one-fourth of the region’s population. This inequity is even more apparent when studying the spatial distribution of existing access sites (see Maps B through D in Part II). Seventeen sites in the region are within an eight-mile stretch through the city and the other 11 sites are scattered along the remaining 82 miles of the James River. The James River Public Access Plan attempts to remedy that inequity where possible by establishing new parks and river access sites along the river in areas that may not be adequately represented or that may provide opportunities for access. Nine new sites throughout the region are suggested or supported in this plan, with varying degrees of development and varying facilities for river-related recreation. Opportunities for new public access sites are few in number for many reasons, but the amount of privately owned land along the river and the presence of heavy industry in the eastern half of the region are the two most significant reasons for the difficulty. As a result, there are still considerable gaps, both in number and location, in the offerings of public access throughout the region. While three new sites are recommended for the City of Richmond, four new sites are recommended in the counties and two more sites with existing proposals are supported. However, progress is made with this plan as a first step in resolving the region’s public river access imbalance.

The final two problems are addressed in this plan by suggested improvements to the quality of existing river access sites and by the creation of linkages between access points. First of all, some of the existing parks that offer unique access and views of the river are in poor condition and discourage visitation. Other parks have been damaged significantly by hurricanes and flooding over the past two years and are in dire need of maintenance. Few parks are in great condition, and most parks are in moderate to good condition. However, all parks can benefit from improvements that will create a safer, more comfortable, and more convenient visitor experience regardless of the activity in which visitors engage. Improvements to all sites suggested by this plan include new facilities, better informational signage and continued maintenance and clean-up activities. Four sites—West View Landing, Watkins Landing, Oregon Hill Park, and Ancarrow’s Landing—were further singled out for improvements because they are sites with deficiencies that are simply solved. The final problem is addressed with the creation of new park connections. A fair number of the City of Richmond’s public access
sites are connected via trails, but throughout the region, there are very few linkages in general. The difficulty in creating new public access sites—namely, the frequency and size of privately owned land—surfaces in creating connections between parks. The distance between many sites is also a limiting factor, as it is impractical to propose a ten-mile trail linking two different sites when nearly all of the land between the two sites is private. The geography along the James River, especially east of the city, is a factor, too: large bluffs in some areas make linking two sites along the river impossible. However, four connections are proposed, connecting nine different access site, two of which are either proposed parks or parks supported within this plan (see Maps I through K). These park links may be the beginning of a larger greenway system throughout the Richmond region.

Again, this plan is intended to benefit all residents of and visitors to the Richmond region. The only restrictions to visitation may be the operating hours and recreation types in certain locations. The five goals in this plan address the problems found in the Existing Conditions report by using the James River as a resource to unify the region along both of its shores. More importantly, the plan functions to further protect one of the most significant rivers in the United States and to highlight the cultural, historical, and geographical significance of both the river and the growing Richmond region. There are a number of ways to enjoy the river, from picnicking on a hill far from its shores to kayaking through its rapids, and this plan intends to offer more choices and more variety for those who have enjoyed the river for years and for those who have yet to discover the James River.
(SEE MAP I)
(SEE MAP J)
(SEE MAP K)
Section B: Goals, Objectives and Strategies

GOAL 1: Centralize information concerning the James River and its public access sites.

Objective 1.1
Create a regional, centralized organization to administer information about public river access to the James River and to handle other public river access issues.

Strategy 1.1.A
Establish the James of Richmond Committee to maintain data about public access to the river. Members of the committee must represent all jurisdictions of the region and other pertinent James River-related organizations.

- The James River Advisory Council may perform the functions of the James of Richmond Committee.
- If the State Scenic River designation is expanded (see Strategy 2.1.B), the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee may perform these functions or appoint a body to assume the functions.

Strategy 1.1.B
Facilitate through organizational policy ongoing efforts among local jurisdictions to improve existing access sites and to identify opportunities for new sites.

Strategy 1.1.C
Organize and support methods to meet the needs of local communities while promoting the James River, especially through river clean-up events, community festivals, and similar activities that increase awareness of the James River.

Strategy 1.1.D
Collect data on parks and facilities use and identify instances where data is lacking. Such data will include seasonal visitation, visitor activities, injuries or fatalities, and other pertinent statistics that help to identify necessary site improvements.

Strategy 1.1.E
Develop a map to delineate all existing public access sites and their facilities, which will be distributed throughout the region by local governments, tourism and recreation organizations, outdoor and recreation-related businesses, and other similar bodies.
GOAL 2: Highlight, designate and celebrate the James River as a unique and vital resource in the Richmond region.

Objective 2.1
Secure all possible levels of scenic or recreational river designation for the James River.

Strategy 2.1.A
Explore opportunities to designate portions of the James River as a National Scenic or Recreational River through action by local jurisdictions with assistance from the James of Richmond Committee.

Strategy 2.1.B
Identify opportunities for the expansion of the James River’s present designation as a State Scenic River to encompass the river’s entire length between the Goochland County – Fluvanna County border and the Chesterfield County – City of Hopewell border through efforts by local jurisdictions in cooperation with the James of Richmond Committee.

Objective 2.2
Distinguish the James River as a State Scenic River at all river crossings where appropriate.

Strategy 2.2.A
Place standard signs, as shown in Figure 1, at the north and south ends of all bridges that cross the James River within the current designation zone. Crossings include: Powhite Parkway Bridge (VA 76), Nickel Bridge (VA 161), Robert E. Lee Bridge (US 1 and US 301), Manchester Bridge (US 60), Mayo Bridge (US 360), and the I-95 bridge.

Strategy 2.2.B
Place standard signs at any portions of the river that become designated as a State Scenic River. Signs may be located at the north and south ends of the following bridge crossings: the Cartersville Road bridge (VA 45), William Walthall Michaux Bridge (US 522), the World War II
Veterans Memorial Bridge (VA 288), the Edward E. Willey Bridge (VA 150), the Huguenot Bridge (VA 147), the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge (VA 895), and the Varina-Enon Bridge (I-295).

**Objective 2.3**
Clearly designate and sign all James River public access sites in the region.

**Strategy 2.3.A**
Develop standard signs, as illustrated in Figure 2, to mark the existence of public access sites along strategic corridors and heavily trafficked roads and to provide direction to those sites on secondary roads. Signs must be situated in such a way as to be clearly legible from a moving vehicle. See Appendix B for a complete guide as to where access site signage should be placed.

![Figure 2. An example of a directional sign.](image)
GOAL 3: Develop new public access to the James River throughout the Richmond region to meet the increasing demands of the region’s growing population.

Objective 3.1
Research possibilities for new public access sites in Goochland County.

Strategy 3.1.A
Examine the possibility of adding any of the islands purchased by private parties in February 2005 to the county’s roster of public lands. If possible, use the islands to create undeveloped parks with boat access only for small watercraft, fisherman, and bird and wildlife watchers.

Strategy 3.1.B
Consider creating a new riverfront recreation site along the James River to complement West View Landing, the only current public river access site in the county.

Objective 3.2
Create two new James River public access sites in Powhatan County.

Strategy 3.2.A
Lobby state and local legislators and encourage their support of Beaumont State Park in Powhatan County. Also urge legislators to draft legislation that mandates full funding by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to develop the site using donated land from Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Facility for recreational purposes.

Strategy 3.2.B
Promote the purchase of the Malvern property, currently for sale in Powhatan County, for public recreational use on the James River. The property, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of VA 288 and Huguenot Trail Road, contains historical structures that may be used for park facilities or for other pertinent uses. See Map L.
(SEE MAP L)
Objective 3.3
Develop three new James River public access sites in Henrico County.

Strategy 3.3.A
Establish Bosher Park, a riverside recreation area, using the parcel of land adjacent to Bosher Dam on the north side of the river. The park will extend from the CSX railroad line east of the Willey Bridge southeast to the James River and will include trails and a fishing pier. The City of Richmond, which owns the property, and Henrico County will cooperate to develop the site, and will provide for visitor safety by prohibiting access to Bosher Dam, to power line supports on the property, and to the Bosher Dam Fishway. See Map M.

- Access to this site will be provided via an existing maintenance road off of River Road, which must be upgraded to handle increased traffic.

Strategy 3.3.B
Purchase all or a portion of Curles Neck Farm as a public recreation area. The James of Richmond Committee will cooperate with the current owners of Curles Neck Farm, Henrico County, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to establish means to preserve sensitive areas of the site and to develop portions along the James River for recreational uses such as trails and fishing piers.

Strategy 3.3.C
Encourage, as part of the new residential development at Wilton Farm in eastern Henrico County, a riverfront park with trails, small boat launches, and a boat ramp.

Objective 3.4
Create a new James River public access site in Chesterfield County.

Strategy 3.4.A
Continue to develop the Brown & Williamson property in Chesterfield County with the support of the James of Richmond Committee to accommodate passive and active recreation in a regional park.

- The riverfront portion of this site will remain undeveloped except for walking and nature trails.
(SEE MAP M)
Objective 3.5
Establish three new James River public access sites in the City of Richmond.

Strategy 3.5.A
Add Williams Island, near the Henrico County – City of Richmond border, to the James River Park System. The island, accessible by small watercraft only, will provide walking trails.

Strategy 3.5.B
Expand the James River Park System to include an access site near the Old Pumphouse, west of the Nickel Bridge, providing access to the new park via the existing Three-Mile Lock Park. Access to the river will be established by the construction of a staircase down to a path that leads through a culvert under the CSX railroad viaduct to the James River. The path will then head east along the river to a tract of land that is currently part of the James River Park System. See Map N.

➢ To protect pedestrians from train debris, corrugated metal sheets will be fastened to the bottom of the CSX bridge. Fifty feet of fencing will also be erected on both sides of the tracks to prevent illegal crossings. See Appendix B for a sketch of the proposal.
➢ The potential path along the river from the CSX viaduct to the James River Park System land will be placed on top of the new concrete-encased waterline being placed along the river by the City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities.

Strategy 3.5.C
Develop a small watercraft take-out point east of 14th Street on a portion of the City of Richmond’s Department of Public Utilities land, with parking and access to the site provided via an existing access road south of the Richmond Floodwall. See Map O.

➢ If a parcel belonging to Norfolk and Southern, west of the proposed park, should become available, that land should be added to the 14th Street site.
(SEE MAP N)
(SEE MAP O)
GOAL 4: Improve existing James River public access sites to enhance the recreational experience of all visitors to the parks.

Objective 4.1
Enhance all existing public river access sites with standard improvements.

Strategy 4.1.A
Place covered trash and recycling bins at all parks where such bins are not already available, or where litter is rampant, using the types of bins found at Huguenot Flatwater as a model.

Strategy 4.1.B
Construct changing rooms, such as the one seen in Figure 3, at all public river access sites that provide direct water access for activities such as canoeing or swimming for the convenience, comfort and safety of visitors.

Strategy 4.1.C
Post standardized signs in a highly visible area at each access site that provide up-to-date information about the James River and about the access sites, including hours of operation, prohibited activities, safety considerations, and other pertinent information.

Strategy 4.1.D
Remove all remaining debris from major storms and repair all damaged facilities at public access sites to ensure visitor safety and to enhance the aesthetic appeal of each park.

Objective 4.2
Improve the passive and active recreational experience at West View Landing in Goochland County.

Strategy 4.2.A
Separate the riverfront portion of the grassy parking lot at West View from the rest of the site and return it to a setting conducive to passive and active recreation. A picnic area will be created.

Figure 3. An example of a changing room.
along the riverbank for visitors to relax and enjoy the unique and unspoiled view of the James River found at West View Landing.

**Objective 4.3**
Improve the passive and active recreational experience at Watkins Landing in Powhatan County.

*Strategy 4.3.A*
Return the western parking lot at Watkins Landing to a natural setting conducive to passive and active recreation. A picnic area will be created along the riverbank for visitors to relax and enjoy the unspoiled view of the James River.

**Objective 4.4**
Improve the passive and active recreational experience at Oregon Hill Park in the City of Richmond.

*Strategy 4.4.A*
Repair flood-damaged wall along Oregon Hill Parkway to restore it to its previous condition. Create a viewing platform at the eastern edge of the park, between the wall and the trailhead, to allow visitors an expansive view of the James River.

*Strategy 4.4.B*
Situate benches and picnic tables at road level for visitors to relax and enjoy the view of the James River and of Belle Isle.

*Strategy 4.4.C*
Place signs at the ends of Holly Street and of Pine Street, and at the top of Oregon Hill Parkway, to indicate to visitors that they are entering Oregon Hill Park.

*Strategy 4.4.D*
Emphasize Oregon Hill Park’s role within the larger system of public access sites nearby, which includes Browns Island, Tredegar Street, and Belle Isle, by placing descriptive signage at the site along Oregon Hill Parkway.

*Strategy 4.4.E*
Clearly designate parking spaces along Oregon Hill Parkway’s eastern half in order to alleviate any confusion about where visitors may park as the surrounding neighborhood is developed.
Objective 4.5
Improve the passive and active recreational experience at Ancarrow’s Landing in the City of Richmond.

Strategy 4.5.A
Repave and repair Brander Street from Maury Street to the entrance of Ancarrow’s Landing.

Strategy 4.5.B
Add and level a new layer of packed gravel to the parking area at Ancarrow’s Landing to prevent damage to visitors’ vehicles.

Strategy 4.5.C
Enhance the passive recreation experience along the Slave Trail adjacent to Ancarrow’s Landing by adding benches along the waterfront for visitors to stop and reflect on the site’s historical significance and to enjoy the views of the city skyline and of the James River.
GOAL 5: Establish connections between existing and proposed James River public access sites to promote unity among the sites throughout the region.

Objective 5.1
Connect Maidens Landing to the proposed Beaumont State Park in Powhatan County with a riverside trail.

Strategy 5.1.A
Create a packed gravel pathway between Maidens Landing and the proposed site of Beaumont State Park for walking and jogging, fishing, and bird and wildlife watching. See Map I.

Strategy 5.1.B
Designate the path’s presence with a descriptive name, such as “The Beaumont-Maidens Greenway,” which will be clearly signed along the trail and marked with a small symbol to contribute to the trail’s identity.

Objective 5.2
Connect Huguenot Flatwater, Riverside Meadow and Pony Pasture with a riverside trail.

Strategy 5.2.A
Lay a packed gravel path between the James River and Riverside Drive, where land permits, to allow pedestrians to walk safely between Huguenot Flatwater, Riverside Meadow and Pony Pasture. Where path construction is not possible, right-of-way from Riverside Drive may be used. The City of Richmond will obtain right-of-way for the entire pathway using easements from private property owners and the pathway will be maintained as part of the James River Park System. See Map J.

Strategy 5.2.B
Designate the path’s presence with a descriptive name, such as “Riverside Greenway,” which will be clearly signed along the trail and marked with a small symbol to contribute to the trail’s identity.

Strategy 5.2.C
Regulate vehicle traffic speeds on Riverside Drive using speed bumps to ensure pedestrian safety.
**Objective 5.3**

Connect Northbank Park to the proposed river access site adjacent to Three-Mile Lock Park with a riverside trail.

*Strategy 5.3.A*

Create a packed gravel pathway between the James River and the CSX railroad line to allow pedestrians and cyclists to travel safely between Northbank Park and Three-Mile Lock Park. Right-of-way will be obtained by the City of Richmond with easements as necessary, and the path will be maintained as part of the James River Park System. This trail should connect to the trail currently under construction from Oregon Hill to Northbank, linking these parks to existing connections and expanding the current loop along the James River. See Map J.

*Strategy 5.3.B*

Designate the path’s presence with a descriptive name, such as "Northbank Trail," which will be clearly signed along the trail and marked with a small symbol to contribute to the trail’s identity.

**Objective 5.4**

Connect James River Park System sites such as 42nd Street and Reedy Creek to the north side of the river with a riverside trail.

*Strategy 5.4.A*

Extend the current official trail between 42nd Street, Reedy Creek, and 22nd Street westward to the Nickel Bridge, where the trail can cross the river and join the trail proposed above in Strategy 5.3.A. This will extend the loop around the James River further. See Map J.
Section C: Implementation

The framework for a more enjoyable and higher quality recreation experience on the James River will be achieved through the preceding five actions. This is a ten-year plan, thus all of the strategies are either to be underway or fulfilled by 2015. Some elements of the plan require extended time frames because the strategies require work with multiple jurisdictions and organizations. Other elements of the plan are ongoing actions with no real timetable; for instance, data collection is an activity that must be continued into the foreseeable future. While the initiation of some of the strategies is dependent upon the completion of others, most of the goals can be undertaken as individual actions as long as all necessary organizations cooperate.

On the following pages is an implementation schedule that assigns each of the strategies to an organization or organizations, identifies potential funding sources for those strategies, and recommends the year in which the strategy should be started. This schedule should be used as a guideline for the prioritization of strategies. It is presumed that this plan will be adopted and initiated by the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee and that the committee will take steps to either expand into or create the regional body required by the plan. The schedule is not intended to be a complete listing of relevant parties and funding sources. Some leeway is given to the regional committee (referred to in the plan as the James of Richmond Committee) in its decision-making process in regard to organizational involvement and funding. However, the organizations listed are considered to be necessary parties in the completion of any given strategy. Furthermore, the funding sources listed are general sources. For instance, the Commonwealth of Virginia is listed as a potential source for financing for a number of strategies; depending on the nature of the strategy, any number of state departments may play a role. The Virginia Department of Transportation may provide the “State Scenic River” signs recommended, while the state may offer grants for parks...
with a certain level of educational, historical, or cultural importance to the region. The regional committee is tasked with determining the appropriate source and levels of funding for the actions in this plan.

While this plan is intended to give a relatively complete breakdown of the current public river access situation in the Richmond region, there are areas in which further research, studies, and plans may provide further insight. The rural counties of Goochland and Powhatan, while represented in this plan, continue to lag behind their more urban counterparts in terms of offering public access to the James River. The reasons for this, including the high frequency of private land ownership and the comparatively large parcel sizes, lend themselves to a study of river access in exurban localities and how those factors withstand the growing populations that demand a higher quality of life through more recreation opportunities. Future studies could also analyze and recommend changes for the public river access situation in Charles City County and Prince George County, two rural counties to the east of the City of Richmond. A full viewshed analysis, using geographic information systems technology, should also be conducted to determine which sites have viewsheds that are significantly degraded or impaired and how and where they can be improved. Finally, this study could be extended to include sites along the Kanawha Canal and research the potential for creating and expanding blueways along the canal’s entire length.

With the completion of this plan in 2015, the regional committee created to oversee the administration of these goals should make an effort to revisit this plan and update it to reflect the changing community and to reevaluate the processes by which new opportunities for public access to the James are determined and researched. The methods by which potential sites were evaluated for this plan may not apply in ten years, and a new plan with a similar vision and similar focus will call attention to any adjustments necessary to ensure that Richmond remains a model for other urban communities situated along rivers.
### Implementation Schedule

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<th>Strategy</th>
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<th>Funding Sources</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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Section D: Conclusions

Over the next ten years, the strategies outlined in this plan will strengthen the relationship between the James River, the Richmond region, and its residents. This will be accomplished through the enhancement of the river’s identity and the creation and improvement of public access sites in the five Richmond area jurisdictions that share borders along the James. The James River Public Access Plan for the Richmond Region is intended to improve the recreation experience along the river, regardless of the intensity or nature of that recreation, by addressing specific problems that prohibit full enjoyment of the river through the region. The plan also enhances the parkgoer experience by establishing a systematic approach to the improvement of signage, facilities, information, and maintenance of each site.

It is believed that the James River warrants a regional administrative body to oversee the aforementioned changes and to actively and vigorously pursue opportunities for future public access regardless of the sites’ locations or recreational and developmental potential. The strategies set forth in this plan are to be carried out by the new regional administrative body, the local jurisdictions, and the many organizations that maintain an active interest in the health of Richmond’s relationship with its river. The Richmond region must cultivate a stronger relationship with the James River, and one of the easiest ways to do so is by ensuring that the growing population has physical and visual access to the river. By doing so, the region also ensures that its riverfront is properly developed and preserved for future generations, and that the historically, culturally, and geologically significant centerpiece for the self-described River City is healthy for years to come.
Works Referenced


City of Richmond’s *Master Plan 2000-2020*. Richmond, VA: City of Richmond Department of Community Development, City of Richmond, 2000.

*The Chesterfield County Riverfront Plan*. Chesterfield, VA: Chesterfield County Planning Department, Chesterfield County, 1997.


List of Appendices

Appendix A: James River Richmond Region Public Access Sites Guide
Appendix B: Recommended Signage Locations for Public Access Sites
Appendix C: Sketch of Proposed Three-Mile Lock Park River Access