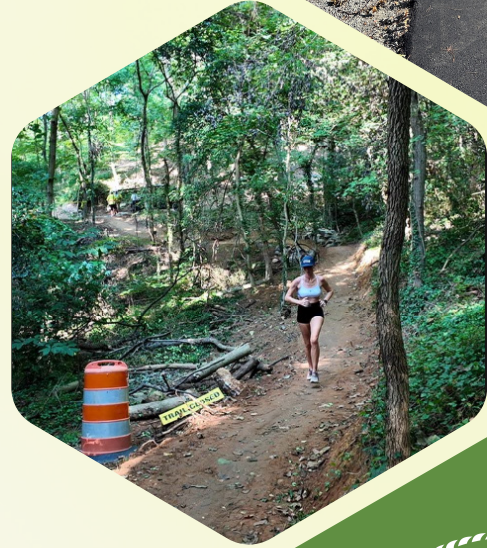


RICHMOND TRAILS

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

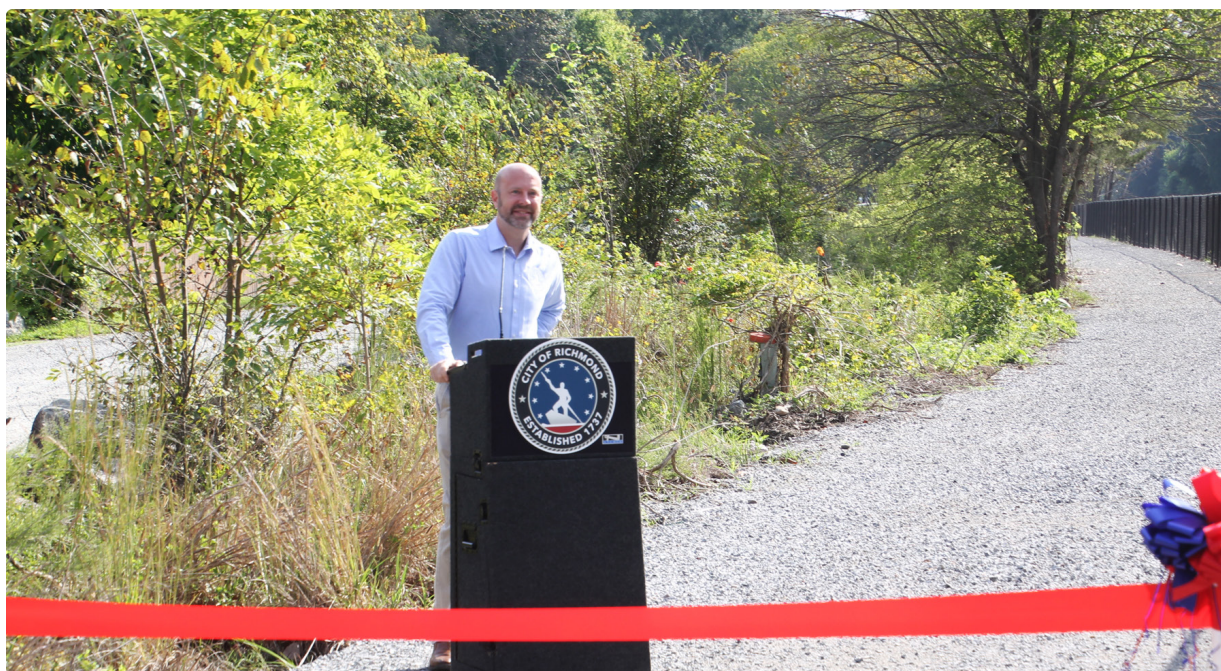


Department of Parks, Recreation &
Community Facilities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From the inception of the James River Park System in 1972, to the construction of broad regional greenway systems today, trails have always played an integral part within the Richmond park experience. Trails not only serve as a safe connection to navigate the city; they also provide a unique experience themselves, enveloping one in nature as they meander the rich landscape of Richmond. Connectivity is the top priority when it comes to our future developmental goals. Providing quality, equitable, and safe access to park spaces aligns within our “10 minute walkability”, Richmond Inspire, and the broader Richmond connectivity goals as outlined in the “Richmond 300” plan. The ever-growing greenway system including the Virginia Capital Trail, Fall Line Trail, James River Branch trail, and Gillies Creek Greenway will play an integral role in connecting people to Richmond park spaces.

It is important to acknowledge the different trail types within our parks and their specialized characteristics:



Reedy Creek Trail Extension

“Single-Track” trail- A natural surface trail at the width to service one user along it’s corridor. This is the most basic type of trail and is highly popular with mountain bikers and hikers, as these trails tend to offer topographical variety and unique challenges. The popular Buttermilk Trail within the James River Park System falls within the single-track trail category.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Greenway”- This type of trail has become synonymous with the term “shared use path”. These types of trails are designed to service bi-directional traffic and are typically constructed with compacted gravel or asphalt. These corridors are often routed through corridors of established canopy/vegetation and serve as an extension of the traditional park experience. Greenways serve as critical routes to safely connect people to park spaces while also providing practical corridors for commuting through town. The existing Virginia Capital Trail, and the upcoming James River Branch trail are both examples of greenway trails.

“Vita Courses”- This type of trail is a greenway subset, designed specifically for exercise. Vita courses often have exercise equipment along their corridors.



Vita Course at Byrd Park

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Before the inception of the James River Park System, the majority of city single-track trails were legacy “social trails”. These are trails that are formed over time from people making their way to specific destinations without any design considerations. These social trails often take the path of least resistance, which in most cases makes for an unsustainable trail. Ralph White, the first JRPS Superintendent initiated the first purpose-built single-track trails, which established the first portion of the Buttermilk Trail. It was during Ralph White’s tenure that a group of local mountain bikers received permission to construct the remaining portions of Buttermilk, as well as North Bank and Forest Hill Trails. These initial trails quickly grew in popularity, eventually informing the need for a full-time trails manager. Over the years PRCF has been able to slowly build a trails maintenance team which is responsible for maintaining an ever-growing system of single-track and shared use path system. As popularity of our trail systems continue to grow, trail sustainability and maintenance is key to ensure they can endure the high traffic. The crew has adapted sustainable maintenance and design standards that align with standards of care adapted by the broader trail industry.

In parallel, the department has seen have seen exponential increases in greenway trail development within our region. These greenways often provide unique perspectives of the city and serve as places of reprieve and exploration. Beyond providing safe travel corridors for pedestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities, greenways have become a destination themselves. The Richmond Vision Zero initiative aims to eliminate traffic-based fatalities/injuries through the implementation robust bike/pedestrian infrastructure.

Maintenance responsibilities of the Trail Team include:

- Daily Maintenance of all trail infrastructure including tread repair, bridge, boardwalk, stair repair
- Clearing trails of downed trees, debris, litter
- Maintain trailheads, kiosks, wayfinding/emergency marker signage
- Monitoring and responding to city 311 Reports
- Performing periodical inspections on assets
- Coordinating volunteer trail work events

KEY METRICS

STAFFING

The current Trails Management team is comprised 3 full time and one seasonal position supported by the James River Park/Trails and Greenways Superintendent.

SCOPE

- ~52 miles single-track trail
- 20 miles of existing/under construction Greenway trail
- 2 Regionally Connected Greenways
- 12 Vita Courses

USERS

There is an estimated 300,000 annual trail users in the James River Park System alone.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The James River Park Economic Impact Study conducted in 2019 sites an annual economic impact of an estimated \$33 million dollars a year. One of the highest rated amenities within the city has continuously been surveyed to be our trails. With the continued expansion of our trail systems and increasing visitation numbers, we can expect that current economic impact numbers for the city has grown significantly since this last study.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Parks continues to explore further connectivity objectives as outlined in the new **Richmond Inspire Plan**. The many benefits to community access to quality park spaces has been well documented, and trail connectivity will always serve as the first step to this mission.

As our trail portfolio continues to expand, it is imperative that the proper resources to maintain these spaces are considered within the city's broader development plans.

