



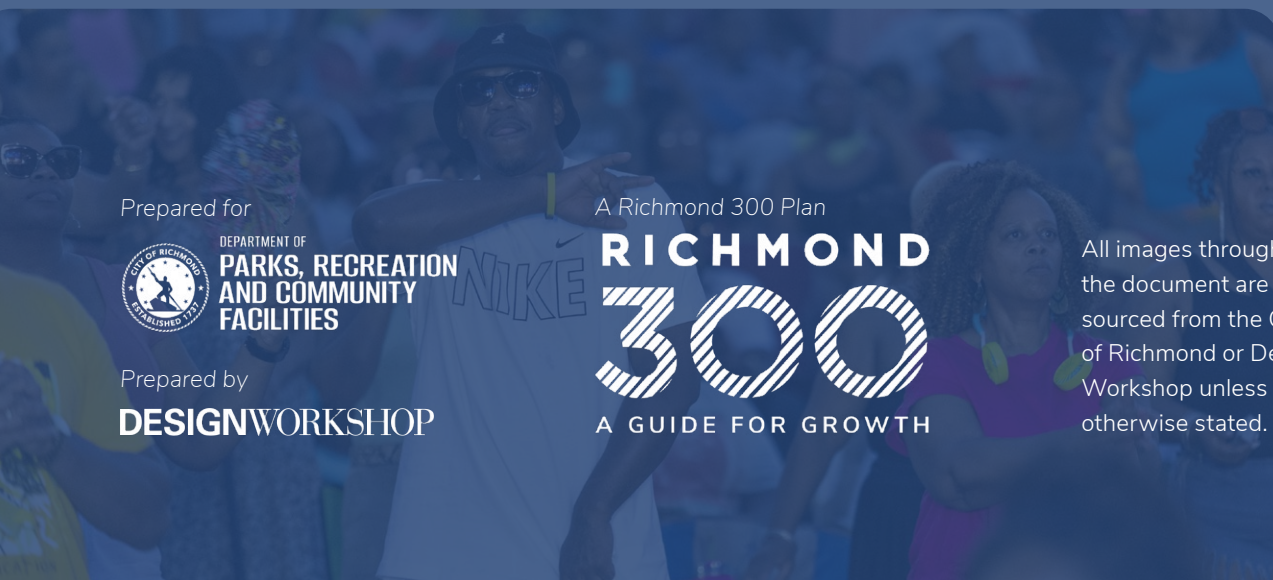
A Citywide Vision Plan for Parks,  
Recreation & Community Facilities



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PARKS, RECREATION  
AND COMMUNITY  
FACILITIES**

**MAY 2026**





Prepared for



DEPARTMENT OF  
**PARKS, RECREATION  
AND COMMUNITY  
FACILITIES**

Prepared by

**DESIGNWORKSHOP**

A Richmond 300 Plan

**RICHMOND**  
**300**

A GUIDE FOR GROWTH

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otherwise stated.







# **RICHMOND INSPIRE:**

## **A CITYWIDE VISION PLAN FOR PARKS, RECREATION, AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**I**MAGINING **N**EIGHBORHOOD-**S**HAPING **P**ARKS AND  
**I**NCLUSIVE **R**ECREATION **E**XPERIENCES

PREPARED MAY 2026



# **Richmond** **INSPIRE** **Summary**

## Vision

Richmond's parks, greenways, and community centers are safe, thoughtfully designed, well-maintained, and loved by all. Our parks strengthen and connect all neighborhoods, inspire healthier lives, and create the fabric of a resilient and beautiful city.

## Driving Principles



### Access

Everyone in Richmond can walk to a great park in 10 minutes or less. Parks are easy to reach using safe, comfortable, and beautiful streets and paths.

34 Action Items, See Chapter 4



### Environment

Richmond's parks help keep the city cooler, greener, healthier, and better prepared for the future. The City leads the way in green design and stewardship of the environment.

43 Action Items, See Chapter 7



### Welcoming

Richmond's parks, trails, and centers use public art, park design, and programs to celebrate Richmond's people and culture. Parks are welcoming and reflect the neighborhoods they serve.

32 Action Items, See Chapter 5



### Quality

Richmond's parks and community centers are built to last, maintained to high standards, and supported by ongoing investment in staff, funding, and partnerships. Staff are encouraged to be lifelong learners and dedicated stewards of the city's parks and recreation system.

54 Action Items, See Chapter 8



### Equity

Richmond's parks and recreation projects are shaped by the community. They make neighborhoods stronger without pushing people out. The City is open about where it spends parks and recreation dollars.

15 Action Items, See Chapter 6



### Community

Richmond's parks and community centers bring people together through diverse and inclusive programming. Recreation centers are engines of social, economic, and environmental resilience.

28 Action Items, See Chapter 9

# 206

Action Items

# 96

New Park and  
Community Center  
Projects

# 82

Existing Site  
Improvement  
Projects



# Sneak Peek into the Plan

A quick look at some of the key topics covered in the plan.

## Connect and Welcome People to Recreation

- Walk, bike, or roll to parks safely
- Expand trails, greenways, and river access
- Create safe and welcoming spaces
- Upgrade and create new parks, playgrounds, and facilities



**Explore more:** Access, Equity, and Welcoming Chapters

## Improve and Care For Places

- Develop plans and partnerships to care for all spaces
- Learn and apply best practices to use available funds effectively while improving spaces
- Keep spaces clean, safe, and well-maintained
- Strengthen maintenance systems and asset management
- Invest in staff, operations, and service quality



**Explore more:** Quality and Environment Chapters

## Bring Our Places to Life

- Provide programs and classes for all ages
- Create spaces for gathering, play, and everyday use
- Support arts, culture, and public expression
- Reflect community identity in parks and facilities through community-driven design
- Activate parks with events and community life
- Make all sites more accessible for all users



**Explore more:** Community and Welcoming Chapters

## Invest Equitably and Sustainably

- Invest where needs are greatest
- Improve stormwater management and green infrastructure
- Support community gardens and food access
- Strengthen funding, partnerships, and long-term planning
- Expand tree canopy, shade, and climate resilience



**Explore more:** Quality, Equity, Environment, and Community Chapters



# LETTER FROM THE MAYOR



## Hey Richmond!

Richmond's parks, community centers, and natural spaces are among our city's greatest assets. They bring neighbors together, support the health and well-being of our residents, and connect us to the natural beauty that makes Richmond such a special place to live. *Richmond INSPIRE* represents an important step forward in strengthening these spaces and ensuring they serve every resident, in every neighborhood, for generations to come.

*Richmond INSPIRE* is our city's first comprehensive parks and recreation vision plan in decades and will provide a 10-year roadmap for improving parks, greenways, recreation programming, and community facilities across the city. Developed through extensive engagement with residents -including workshops, surveys, and community conversations- the plan reflects the voices and priorities of Richmonders and outlines a community-driven vision in which parks and recreation strengthen neighborhoods, promote healthier lives, and contribute to a more resilient and beautiful city.

This work directly aligns with the priorities outlined in my Mayoral Action Plan, particularly our commitment to creating a "Thriving and Sustainable Built Environment". *Richmond INSPIRE* advances this goal by expanding access to green space, protecting natural resources, and integrating sustainability and resilience into the way we design and maintain public spaces. By improving access to parks, strengthening the tree canopy and green infrastructure, and investing in neighborhoods that have historically received fewer resources, this plan helps ensure every Richmonder can benefit from safe, welcoming, and well-maintained public spaces.

The plan also supports broader goals of our administration: strengthening neighborhoods, supporting youth and families through recreation and safe gathering places, and building strong partnerships across government, nonprofits, and community organizations. Parks and Recreation provide the essential infrastructure that supports public health, environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and community connection.

*Richmond INSPIRE* provides a clear roadmap for how we will work together to care for and grow these shared spaces. Implementing this plan will require collaboration across City departments, community organizations, and residents. I am grateful to the Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities team, the steering committee, and the many Richmonders who contributed their ideas and energy to this effort.

Together, we can build a parks and recreation system that reflects the values of our city; one that is equitable, resilient, welcoming, and full of opportunity for all.



Sincerely,

**Dr. Danny Avula**

MAYOR  
CITY OF RICHMOND

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## To My Richmond Neighbors,

I am first and foremost grateful to the many staff, partners, and residents who have shaped this vision for our city and worked together to provide a platform for our continued success. *Richmond INSPIRE* represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to align our community's aspirations with a clear path forward, ensuring that Richmond's parks and recreations system continues to grow, inspire, and serve generations to come.

Richmond is a city that has been on the ascent for over a decade. Across the city our neighborhood parks, community centers, trails, and waterfront spaces along the James River are central to the character, health, and identity of our many neighborhoods. They support healthy and active lifestyles and create a sense of place and belonging for our residents, connecting them to the natural uniqueness that makes the River City such a special place to live.

Since becoming Director of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities in 2017, our team has worked to strengthen and modernize Richmond's parks and recreation system to better serve every neighborhood across the city. During that time, park acreage in the city has grown from 5% to over 7% and over 80% of residents are now within a 10-minute walk to a public access park. We are continuing to address deferred maintenance such as restoring pedestrian access to Texas Beach and making improvements to facilities that residents rely on every day like our community centers and parks.

Through funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), we have made major investments with the addition of Lucks Field and T.B. Smith, the first new community centers in almost 25 years. We completed a major expansion and renovation to Southside and are nearly done renovating Calhoun Community Center as well. Trails and outdoor spaces benefited as well with projects such as the James Branch Trail, Crooked Branch Trail, and multiple new playgrounds resulting from ARPA funding. At the same time, we are continuing enhancements across the park system with projects at Brown's Island, Hotchkiss Field Community Center, Fonticello Park, Mayo Island, and the emerging Fall Line Trail. Every corner of the city has felt the impact of these investments as we work to improve our community spaces.

Richmond has a proud legacy of investing in parks and shared public spaces. The places we enjoy today exist because previous generations chose to invest in them, and it is now our responsibility to build on that foundation. *Richmond INSPIRE* provides the roadmap for the next chapter. Shaped by community input from many of your friends and neighbors, the plan outlines how Richmond can continue expanding and improving parks, recreation programs, trails, and natural areas so that they remain accessible and welcoming. With *Richmond INSPIRE* as our guide, we can continue building a parks and recreation system that strengthens neighborhoods and serves residents and visitors to our city for generations to come.



Sincerely,

*Christopher Frelke*

**Chris Frelke**

DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION,  
AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES



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# Key Terms

Following are the key terms used to describe *Richmond INSPIRE*:

- **Action Items**—Specific tasks that implement each Strategy. Action Items identify what should be completed over time and are used to track progress and accountability.
- **Access**—The ability of individuals and communities to physically reach and use parks and recreational resources. This can refer to both proximity to parks and the presence of transportation options to access them.
- **Big Moves**—Major focus areas that organize the plan and represent the most important priorities identified through community engagement and system analysis.
- **Blueway**—A designated water trail designed with launch points—and occasionally camp sites and other points of interest along the route—for recreational use with canoes, kayaks and paddle boards.
- **Beauty**—The visual character and appearance of a park or facility when it is well-designed and maintained, as perceived by the people who use it.
- **Community-driven**—An approach that centers community input and participation in planning, decision-making, and implementation of parks and recreation improvements.
- **Driving Principles**—The six core themes identified through community engagement that form the framework for *Richmond INSPIRE*. Each strategy chapter is organized around one Driving Principle, which helps connect community priorities to Strategies and Action Items.
- **Framework**—The overall structure of the plan's recommendations, organizing Driving Principles, Big Moves, Strategies, and Action Items into a clear system for decision-making and implementation.
- **Greenway**—Simply stated, a path that connects users across multiple parcels of land, plus the protected corridor within which the path is located, often a natural resource corridor or public right-of-way. Often these paths are considered to be multi-modal or shared-use.
- **Multiple Benefits Approach**—An approach to planning and design that recognizes parks and facilities provide more than recreation by serving multiple purposes at the same time, such as supporting environmental health, improving access, and strengthening community connections.

## DEEPER DIVE



For Additional Definitions  
– refer to the full Glossary  
in Appendix A



- **Non-Functioning**—Parks or facilities that do not adequately serve their intended purpose due to poor condition, lack of amenities, safety concerns, or limited access, as identified through systemwide assessment.
- **Physical Projects**— High-level parks and recreation projects that propose improvements to existing facilities or new parks, greenways, recreation facilities, et cetera. Physical Projects inform the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), but do not specify exactly which improvements should be under-taken due to changing needs, conditions, and community input.
- **Quality**— The condition of a park or facility when it meets expectations for functionality, safety, maintenance, and user experience.
- **Strategies**—Coordinated approaches that support the plan's Big Moves and organize related Action Items.
- **Walkable Access**—As a goal of Richmond 300, all residents should be able to walk within 10-minutes to a park or greenspace. *Richmond INSPIRE*, therefore, uses a 10-minute walkshed to define walkable access.
- **Walkshed**—The area around a destination—such as a park, trailhead, downtown, neighborhood center, transit stop or other location that is reachable on foot, on a connected street or path network, for the average person. Walksheds are often defined as the area covered by a 5-minute or 10-minute walk (¼ to ½ mile).

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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- ➔ About the Plan
- ➔ Plan Vision and Framework
- ➔ A Community-Driven Plan
- ➔ Dream Vision and 10-Year Plan  
Priority Projects





## About the Plan

This plan—*Richmond INSPIRE (Imagining Neighborhood-Shaping Parks and Inclusive Recreation Experiences)*—is a comprehensive 10-year plan and long-term vision for the City of Richmond's parks, public spaces, community centers, natural areas, cemeteries, and recreational programming operated by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF). *Richmond INSPIRE* is the City's first citywide park and recreation plan since the 1970s.

## Why Does Richmond Need a Parks and Recreation Vision Plan?

This plan is needed because:

- Richmond has never had a transparent, community-driven vision for parks and recreation. *Richmond 300*, the City's comprehensive plan adopted in 2020, called for a new parks and recreation vision plan to fill that void.
- The City has a long history of inequitable public investments and exclusionary policy, including within parks and recreation. As with other plans in the *Richmond 300* ecosystem, *Richmond INSPIRE* identifies specific actions the City can take to address these injustices and build a more equitable system.
- Richmond is growing fast, projected to grow as much as 46% by 2037. By offering a rational, community-driven framework for park and recreation investment, this plan allows the City to strike a balance between improving what it has and growing and adapting to meet future needs.

### PLANNING CONNECTION



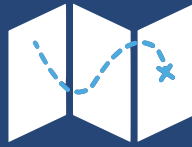
[Read Richmond's Comprehensive Plan: \*Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth's Recommendations\* \[external link\].](#)

### What This Plan Is

- A vision and action plan for Richmond Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (PRCF) Department to implement.
- A tool for City leaders and partners to guide decisions and investments.
- A reflection of community priorities gathered through public input.

### What This Plan Is Not

- Not a design or maintenance manual, but it sets the foundation for both.
- Not static—it will evolve as Richmond grows.
- Not a guarantee that funding will be allocated for any specific project.



## Navigate the Document

### Chapter 1

Introduction

Background, history, and context.

### Chapter 2

Public Process

How community engagement impacted Richmond INSPIRE.

### Chapter 3

Richmond INSPIRE Vision, Framework, and Driving Principles

Introduction to the plan's framework and physical projects.

Richmond INSPIRE Driving Principles, Big Moves, Strategies, and Actions

The plan is organized around six Driving Principles. Each of these chapters outlines the strategies and actions that guide implementation of this plan.

### Chapter 10

Implementation

The nitty-gritty of operations strategies and implementation checklists.

### Chapter 4

'Access' Strategies

### Chapter 5

'Welcoming' Strategies

### Chapter 6

'Equity' Strategies

### Chapter 7

'Environment' Strategies

### Chapter 8

'Quality' Strategies

### Chapter 9

'Community' Strategies



PRCF's Adventures at the River summer camp teaches kids about the James River Watershed through play and exploration

# Introduction

## DEEPER DIVE



[Read the history of parks and recreation in Richmond in Chapter 1 starting on page 8.](#)

Refer to Appendix G to learn more about the functionality and condition analysis.

For more than two centuries, Richmond's parks and recreation system has been built on public service and for public benefit. What began in the late 1770s with Richmond Common along the James River grew into a citywide network that generations have relied on to gather, play, and shape day-to-day life. That legacy continues today through 160 parks and more than 2,600 acres of green space, miles of public access to the James River, and programs that bring residents together. Richmond's parks and recreation are part of the city's identity—a tradition of open spaces and shared experiences that continues to define Richmond City.

Yet these benefits are not shared equally. Decades of uneven investment and the absence of a coordinated, citywide process for improvements have left Richmond with clear gaps in access and quality:

- \$75 million in deferred maintenance is needed to bring all existing amenities to "good condition".
- 73%\* of residents can walk 10 minutes to any PRCF-provided park or recreation facility, but only 59% can walk to a **quality** park or recreation facility—one in good condition with appropriate amenities.
- South of the James River, only 43% of residents live within a 10-minute walk to a quality PRCF-provided park, compared to 70% north of the river.
- Citywide, PRCF provides just 6 quality acres per 1,000 residents. North of the James River has only 4 acres per 1,000

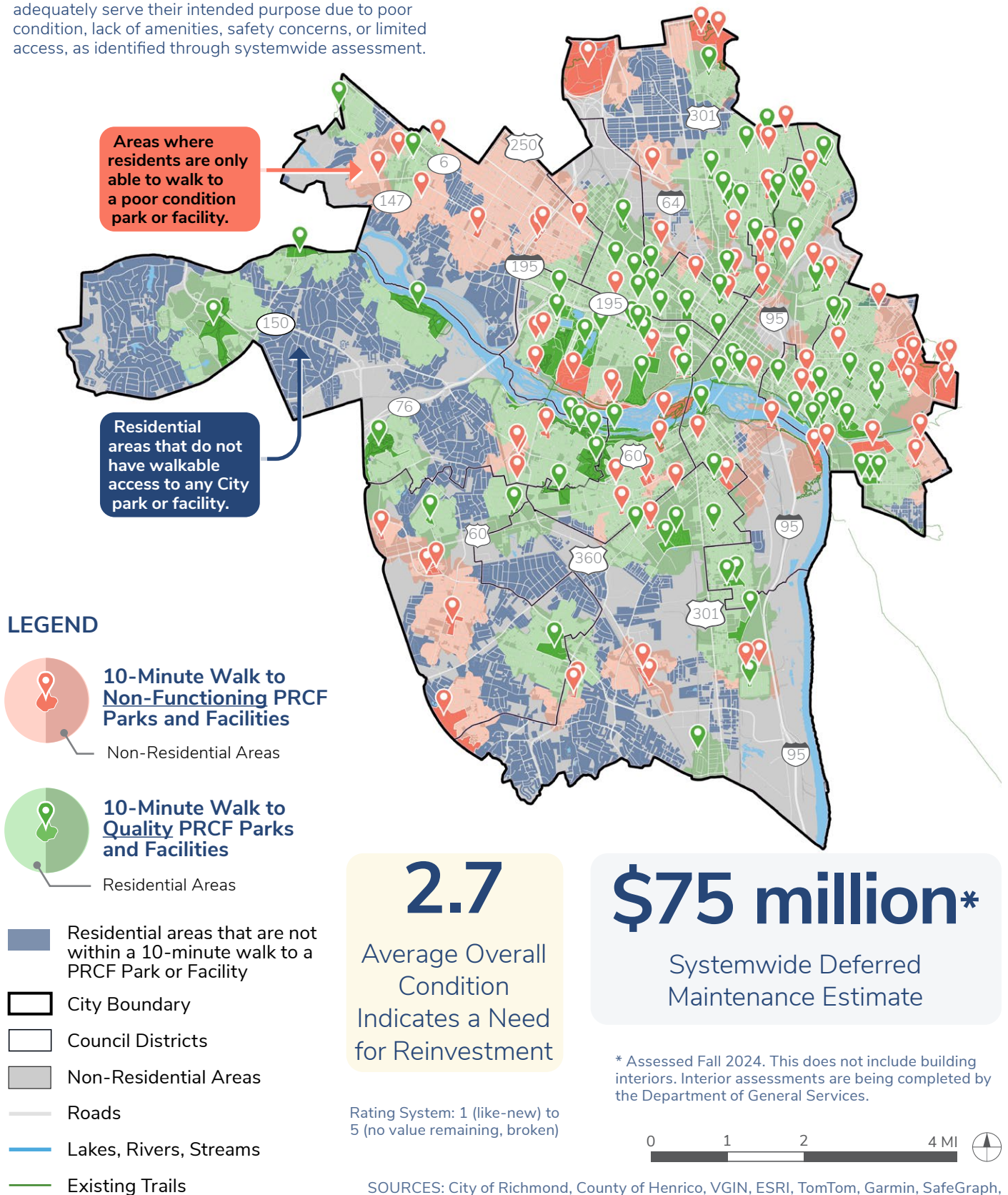
For the first time, *Richmond INSPIRE* offers an equitable, community-driven framework for citywide investments, with project priorities shaped by resident needs and feedback. The urgency is clear: hotter summers, unpredictable weather, and persistent inequities in health, safety, and opportunity demand action. Strategic investments in parks and recreation can cool neighborhoods, create safe gathering spaces, strengthen community connections, and link people with the resources they need—making Richmond greener, healthier, safer, and more connected for generations to come.

\*10-minute walk statistics throughout this document were calculated from the entrances of PRCF-operated public sites unless otherwise stated.



## MAP 1: FUNCTIONALITY OF EXISTING CITY PARKS AND FACILITIES

**Non-Functioning**—Parks or facilities that do not adequately serve their intended purpose due to poor condition, lack of amenities, safety concerns, or limited access, as identified through systemwide assessment.







Kids play tug-o-war at a PRCF summer event

# Richmond *INSPIRE* Vision and Framework

The community's vision for parks and recreation—expressed through the *Richmond INSPIRE* Vision Statement—forms the foundation of the plan's framework and objectives.

## Richmond *INSPIRE* Framework

Through community engagement, Richmonders expressed strong support for a *multiple benefits* approach for the future of parks and recreation. The six key benefits identified—Access, Welcoming, Equity, Quality, Community, and Environment—became the *Richmond INSPIRE* Driving Principles. *Richmond INSPIRE* builds on these principles, incorporating best practices and defining specific actions to realize the community's vision. Together, the Driving Principles create the structure of the plan's framework, shaping every part of the plan. "Figure 1: *Richmond INSPIRE* Framework" on page xxi illustrates how the plan's direction flows from the Vision Statement through the Driving Principles to Action Items.

## What is a Multiple Benefits Approach?

Park agencies in the United States once focused primarily on building amenities and offering basic programs. Over the past two decades, best practices have shifted toward a *multiple benefits* model, where parks serve as essential spaces for health, social connection, and resilience. Cities nationwide are adopting this approach, recognizing parks as vital to infrastructure, the environment, health, education, and the economy. Richmond's community has embraced this vision, strengthening the city's ability to maximize funding and resources through coordinated action among departments and partners.



## Richmond *INSPIRE* Vision Statement



**Richmond's parks, greenways, and community centers are safe, thoughtfully designed, well-maintained, and loved by all. Our parks strengthen and connect all neighborhoods, inspire healthier lives, and create the fabric of a resilient and beautiful city.**



# Richmond INSPIRE Framework

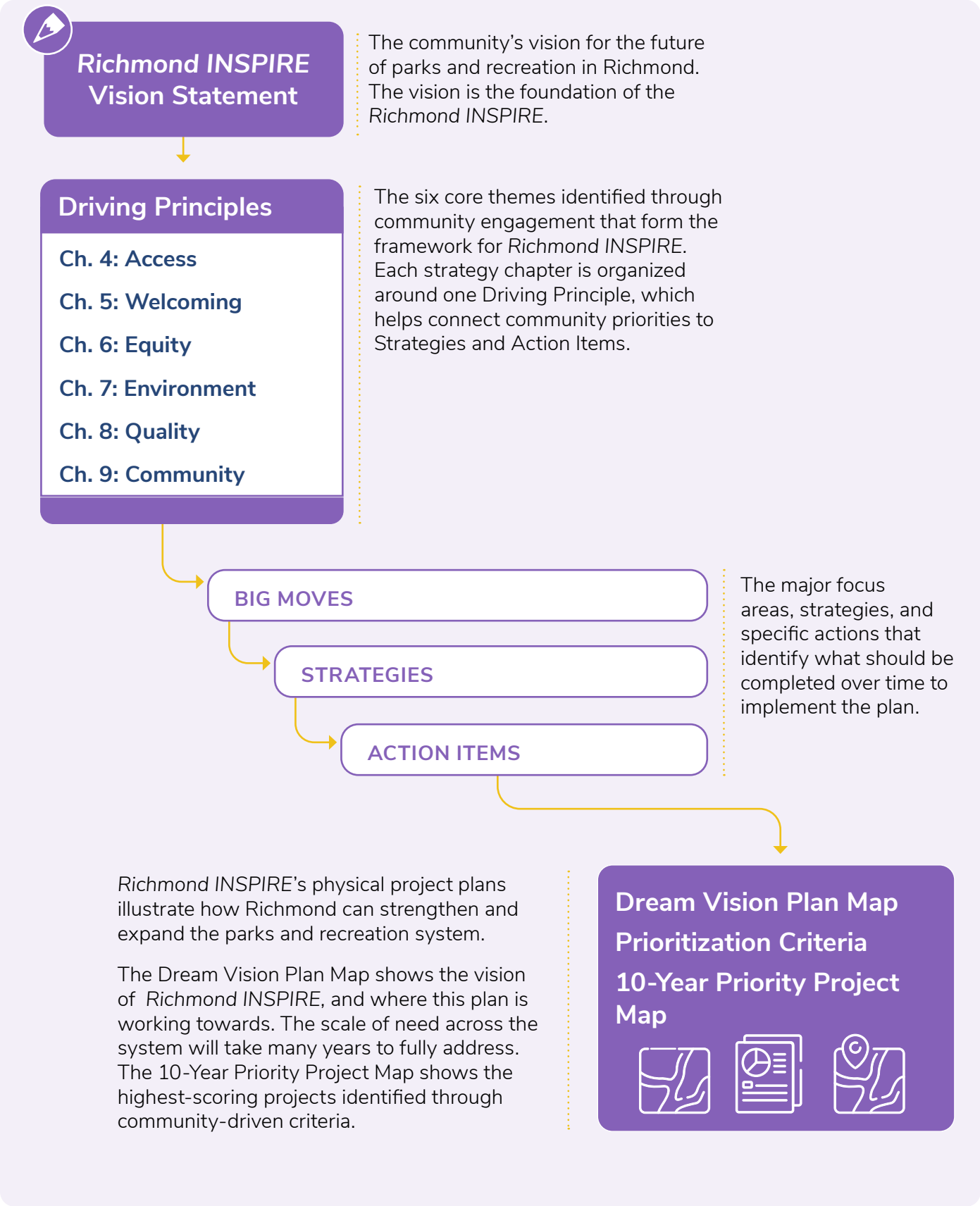


Figure 1: Richmond INSPIRE Framework



# 16,000+

Unique Visits to the Project Website



# 11

Workshops Throughout the City



# 70%



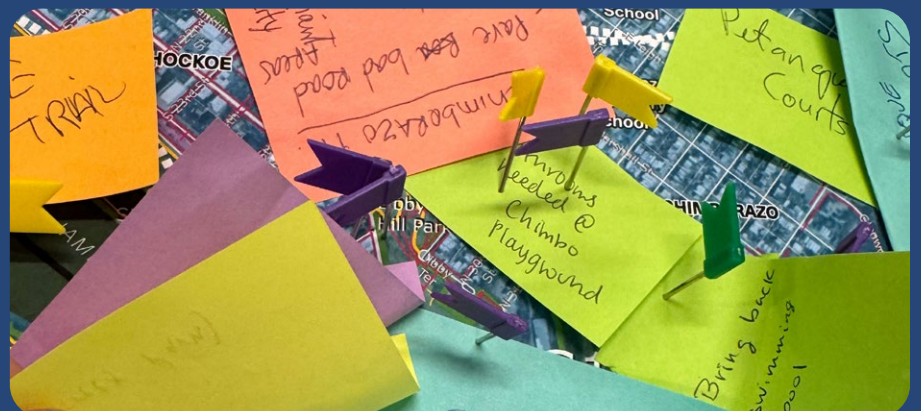
of residents who reviewed the draft plan document reported that they were either somewhat or extremely satisfied with the plan and content

# 30+

Neighborhood Meetings and Pop-Up Events

# 1,500+

People Engaged In-Person





# A Community-Driven Plan

Thousands of Richmonders, stakeholders, and partners helped create *Richmond INSPIRE* over a 16-month process beginning in January 2024. Ideas, priorities, and hopes for the city's parks, greenways, and community centers emerged through workshops, surveys, events, and conversations, guiding every part of the final plan.

The community takeaways shown on the right highlight three of the strongest themes from public input. These takeaways represent major threads woven throughout the plan, while additional ideas—large and small—informed the details of Strategies and Action Items.

The plan's six Driving Principles and supporting Big Moves are outlined in "Figure 2: Richmond INSPIRE Driving Principle Visions and Big Moves" on page xxiv. Each Driving Principle's description and Big Moves intend to document these community-driven themes and the outcomes that the plan seeks to achieve.

## COMMUNITY TAKEAWAYS

- ① Our parks, greenways, and community centers should be beautifully designed and built and maintained to last.

Residents want thoughtful investment—reinvesting in existing facilities, designing new ones with community input, and ensuring long-term care through adequate staffing and resources.

- ② Our parks, greenways, and community centers should make Richmond a more beautiful, more resilient, and more comfortable place to live.

As the city grows hotter, more flood-prone, and less green, residents see PRCF as essential infrastructure—creating green corridors and public oasis that connect and strengthen neighborhoods.

- ③ Community centers should be places where people come together—and where the community can rely on support in times of need.

PRCF community centers have a proud history of serving the recreational and social needs of Richmonders. Those who use them already value them and want more programs. To reach more people, PRCF should expand outreach, diversify programs, and ensure everyone feels welcome, strengthening their role as trusted spaces for both daily life and emergency response.



## Driving Principles → Big Moves

### CH. 4 - ACCESS

Everyone in Richmond can walk to a great park in 10 minutes or less. Parks are easy to reach using safe, comfortable, and beautiful streets and paths.



Walkable Parks For All



Connected System



### CH. 5 - WELCOMING

Richmond's parks, trails, and centers use public art, park design, and programs to celebrate Richmond's people and culture. Parks are welcoming and reflect the neighborhoods they serve.



Safe And Welcoming Parks



Cultural Preservation & Celebration



### CH. 6 - EQUITY

Richmond's parks and recreation projects are shaped by the community. They make neighborhoods stronger without pushing people out. The City is open about where it spends parks and recreation dollars.



Community-Driven System



Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods



### CH. 7 - ENVIRONMENT

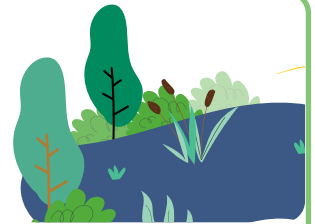
Richmond's parks help keep the city cooler, greener, healthier, and better prepared for the future. The City leads the way in green design and stewardship of the environment.



Cool, Healthy, Resilient City



Green Design, Sustainability, & Stewardship



### CH. 8 - QUALITY

Richmond's parks and community centers are built to last, maintained to high standards, and supported by ongoing investment in staff, funding, and partnerships. Staff are encouraged to be lifelong learners and dedicated stewards of the city's parks and recreation system.



Standard of Excellence



Sustainable Funding And Partnerships



World-Class Staff



### CH. 9 - COMMUNITY

Richmond's parks and community centers bring people together through diverse and inclusive programming. Recreation centers are engines of social, economic, and environmental resilience.



Recreation & Programming For All



Park-Based Urban Agriculture



Community Resilience Hubs



**Figure 2:** Richmond INSPIRE Driving Principle Visions and Big Moves



Residents review a rendering of the new Lucks Field Community Center as a part of community-driven design process

# Dream Vision Plan Map



The *Richmond INSPIRE* Vision Plan looks beyond the next decade, identifying the full range of park and recreation investments needed to create a more equitable and connected system of green spaces.

This long-range map includes both improvements to existing parks, community centers, and greenways, and new facilities that expand access and address unmet needs. It reflects priorities shared by community members and establishes a flexible framework that can evolve as opportunities emerge.

The Vision Plan is intentionally broad—it defines what is needed over time. The next step is to determine what comes first.

**See the “MAP 3: 10-Year Priority Project Map” on page xxxi to explore how projects are prioritized for implementation.**

## RELATED ACTION ITEM



See Chapter 10 for full implementation and funding strategies.

## A New Legacy of Equitable Investment

Richmond’s parks and recreation system still reflects a history of inequitable investment. Guided by the City’s Equity Agenda, *Richmond INSPIRE* recognizes the need—and responsibility—to advance equity in every decision.

In collaboration with other City departments, *Richmond INSPIRE* created *Equity Investment Zones (EIZs)* using criteria tailored to parks and recreation. EIZs are mapped using census block groups, which include all land uses. As a result, non-residential areas appear within EIZs, reinforcing the need to use them alongside other criteria.

Within *Richmond INSPIRE*, EIZs are one of the most heavily weighted factors used alongside other criteria to prioritize parks and recreation projects. EIZs can also be used with other City tools, such as Richmond 300 Priority Neighborhoods and the Climate Equity Index.

## DEEPER DIVE



Review Equity Investment Zone action items in Strategy 5.1 in Chapter 6.



# THE DREAM VISION PLAN MAP

The Richmond *INSPIRE* Dream Vision Plan Map demonstrates physical projects—new and renovated parks, community centers, and greenways—that will realize Richmond's vision for an equitable and connected system of green spaces.

The projects identified in the Vision Plan are not guaranteed or funded. Additional projects may be introduced over time to address evolving community needs and changing conditions.

## LEGEND

### Greenways

- Proposed Greenways^
- Proposed Partner Greenways (Non-PRCF)
- Completion of the 10-year Plan: 10-Minute Walk to Parks and Facilities
- Completion of the Vision Plan: 10-Minute Walk to Parks and Facilities
- Existing Non-PRCF Parks and Facilities (Public & Private)
- Existing PRCF Parks and Facilities Proposed Continued Maintenance
- Proposed Improvement Project

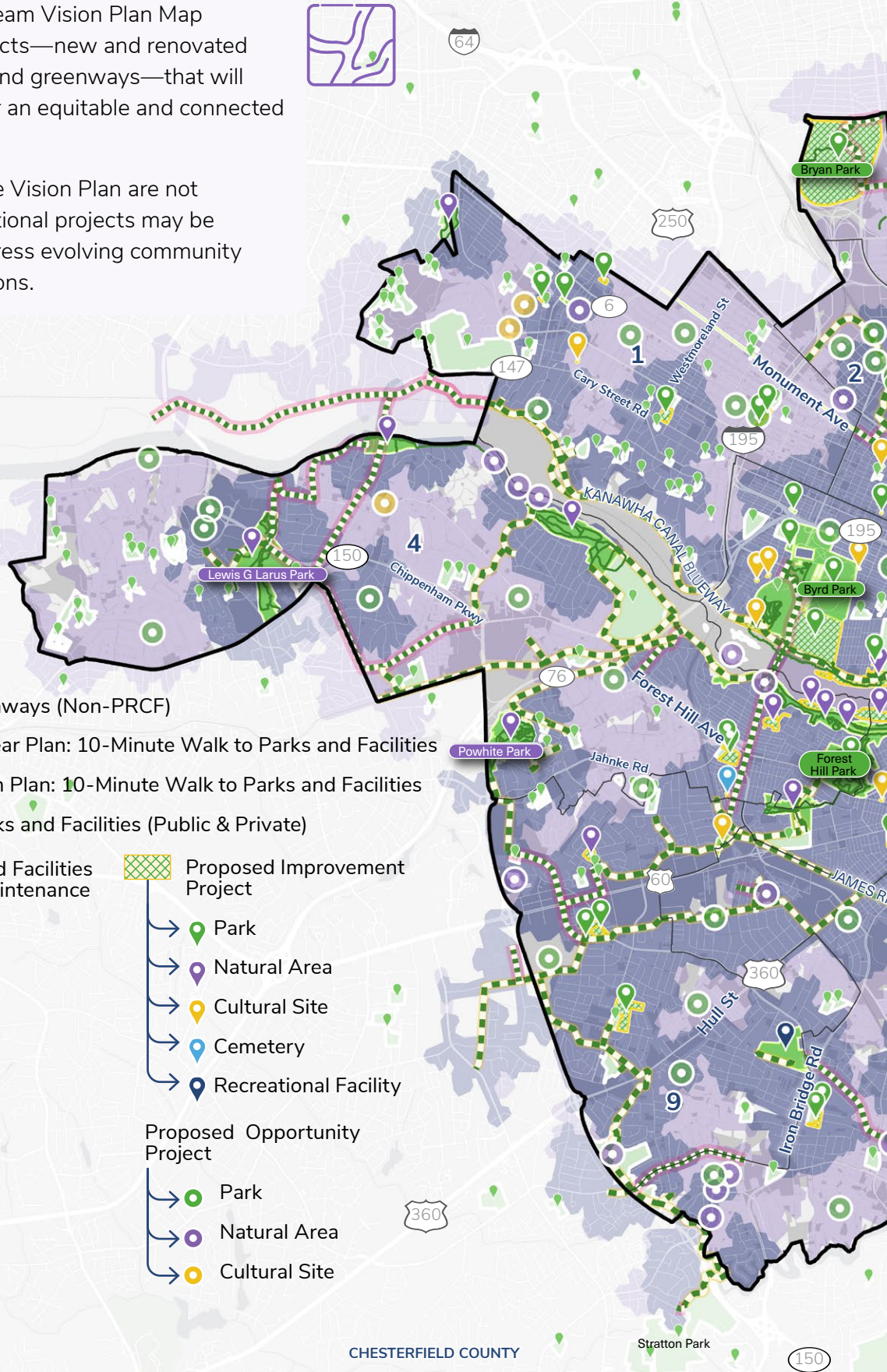
- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- Cemetery
- Recreational Facility

- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Residential Areas
- Non-residential Areas
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams
- Existing Trails

- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- Cemetery
- Recreational Facility

### Proposed Opportunity Project

- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site

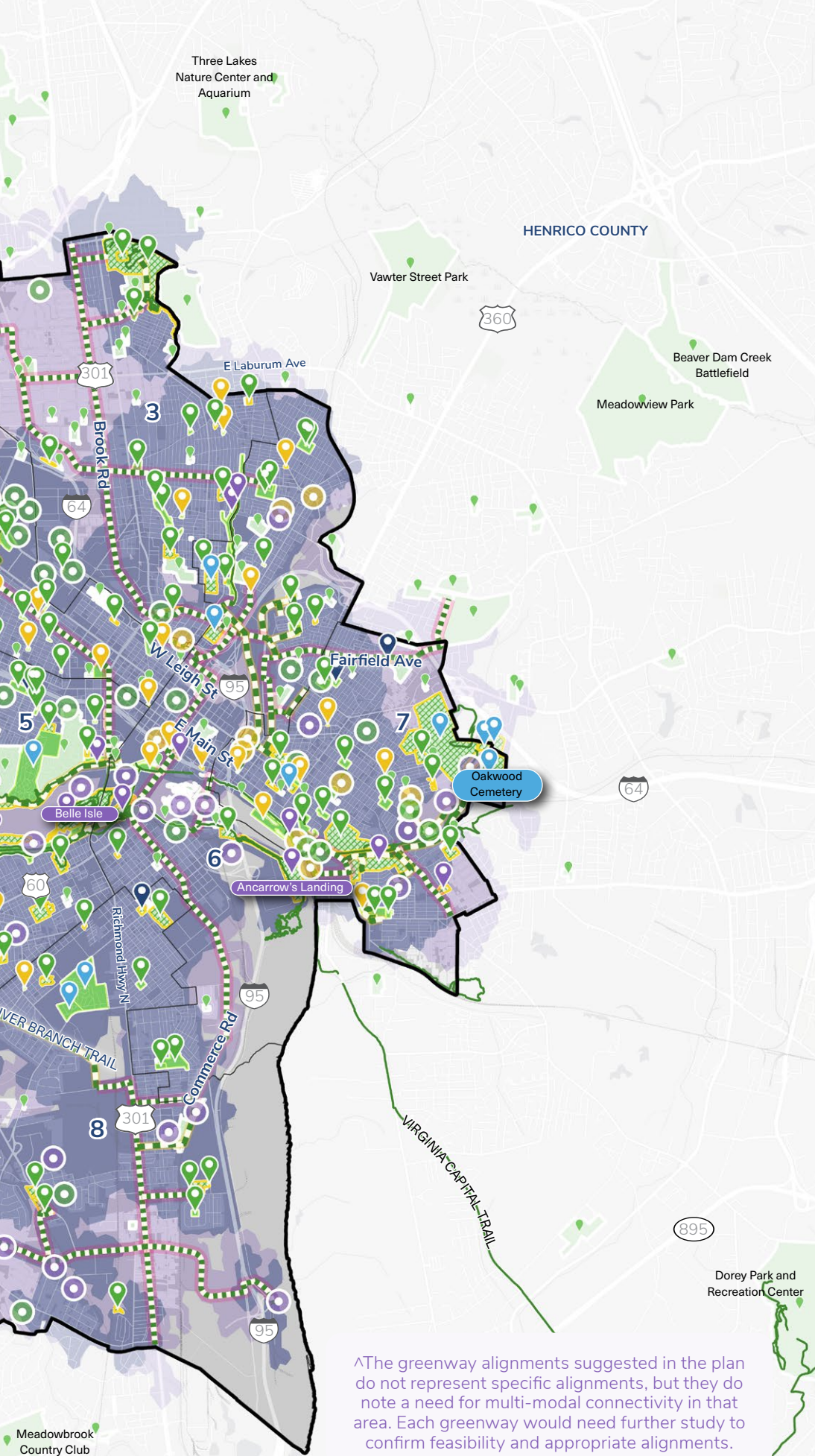


CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

Stratton Park

150





^The greenway alignments suggested in the plan do not represent specific alignments, but they do note a need for multi-modal connectivity in that area. Each greenway would need further study to confirm feasibility and appropriate alignments.

## DREAM VISION OUTCOMES

# 15 acres

of Quality Parkland per  
1,000 Residents

# 100%

of Richmonders  
Live Within Walking  
Distance To A  
Quality Park

# 98 miles

of Proposed Greenways  
(all types)

# 100%

of Parks and Facilities  
Meet Quality Design  
Standards

# 96

New Parks or Facilities

# 850 acres

of Land Newly  
Conserved  
as Natural Area



MAP 2: THE DREAM VISION PLAN MAP

SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop





## 10-Year Plan Priority Project Map

The Vision Plan identifies the full range of park and recreation needs. The 10-Year Plan focuses on what comes first.

Projects from the Vision Plan were evaluated using community-driven criteria to identify the highest priorities for the next decade “Figure 3: 10-Year Prioritization Criteria” on page xxix. Criteria include Equity Investment Zones, along with other priority factors such as access to parks or ‘fixing what we have’. Each proposed physical project, whether a renovation or a new site, is measured using the same criteria and given a score. The projects with the highest scores are part of the 10-Year Plan Priority Project Map.

This approach establishes a clear and transparent process for how the City invests in parks and recreation, including the criteria used to make decisions. The result is a focused list of projects that are high-impact and feasible within the next decade.

### DEEPER DIVE



[Learn more about Classification Standards in Chapter 3.](#)

#### New Physical Project Example:

Greater Scott's Addition Park Search Area

#### What is the project's classification?

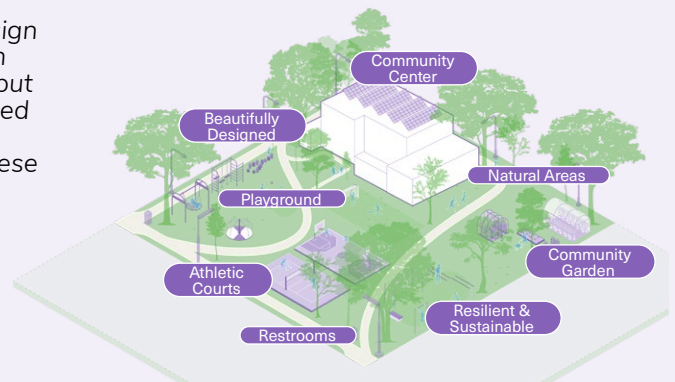
New Community Park

### What will these proposed physical projects look like?

Classification standards define what each classification should include and how it should function, helping translate the 10-Year Plan Priority Project Map into clear expectations on the ground. Each project is tied to a classification, such as a community park, with corresponding standards that outline expected amenities, features, and design elements. This connection clarifies what is appropriate for each site, what should be constructed, and how success is measured, ensuring projects meet quality expectations and function as intended.

### What do the Classification Standards show about this project?

Amenities and design are guided through community input, but it would be expected for this project to include some of these amenities:



### 'PARK' CLASSIFICATION TYPES

Neighborhood



Community



City



# 10-Year Prioritization Criteria



## DEEPER DIVE



Review the criteria and scoring methodology in Appendix G.

## PROJECT LIST



The Full Vision Plan and 10-Year Plan Project List can be reviewed in Chapter 3 which starts on page 49.

Figure 3: 10-Year Prioritization Criteria

# 10-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECT MAP

The 10-Year Plan represents the highest scoring Vision Plan projects using community-driven criteria. These are the projects that PRCF should complete first.



On the map, there are both new and renovation projects. New sites (parks or facilities that do not exist) have a white dot in their pin. Use the legend below to identify each project type. The recommended amenities at each type are defined in Chapter 3, Classification Standards.

Proposed greenways have a dashed line. Richmond INSPIRE identified key routes and missing connections both inside and outside of parks.

## RELATED INFORMATION



[Review the priority project list in Chapter 3](#)

## LEGEND

- Proposed Greenways
- Completion of the 10-year Plan: 10-Minute Walk to Parks and Facilities
- Existing Non-PRCF Parks and Facilities (Public & Private)
- Existing PRCF Parks and Facilities

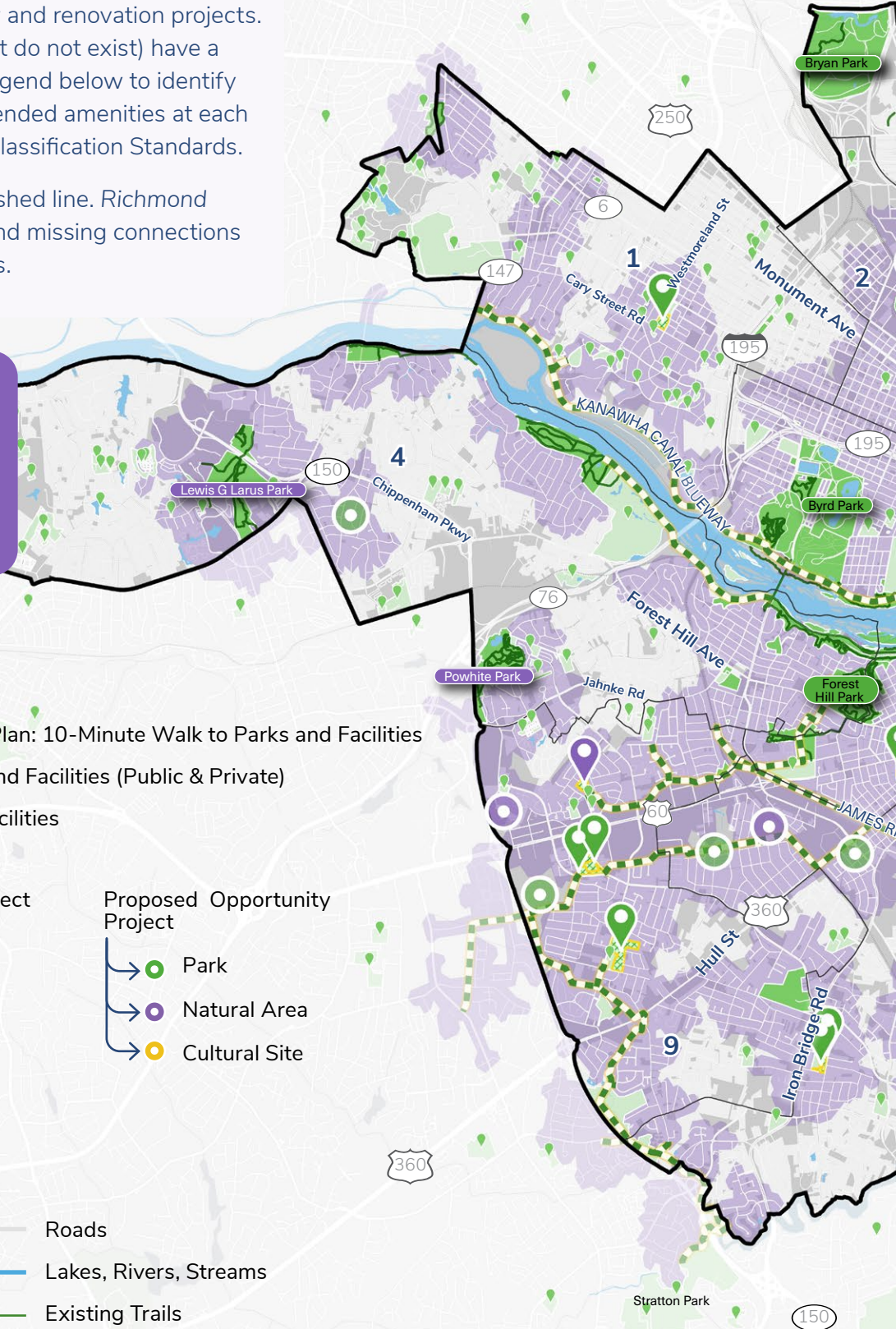
### Proposed Improvement Project

- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- Cemetery
- Recreational Facility

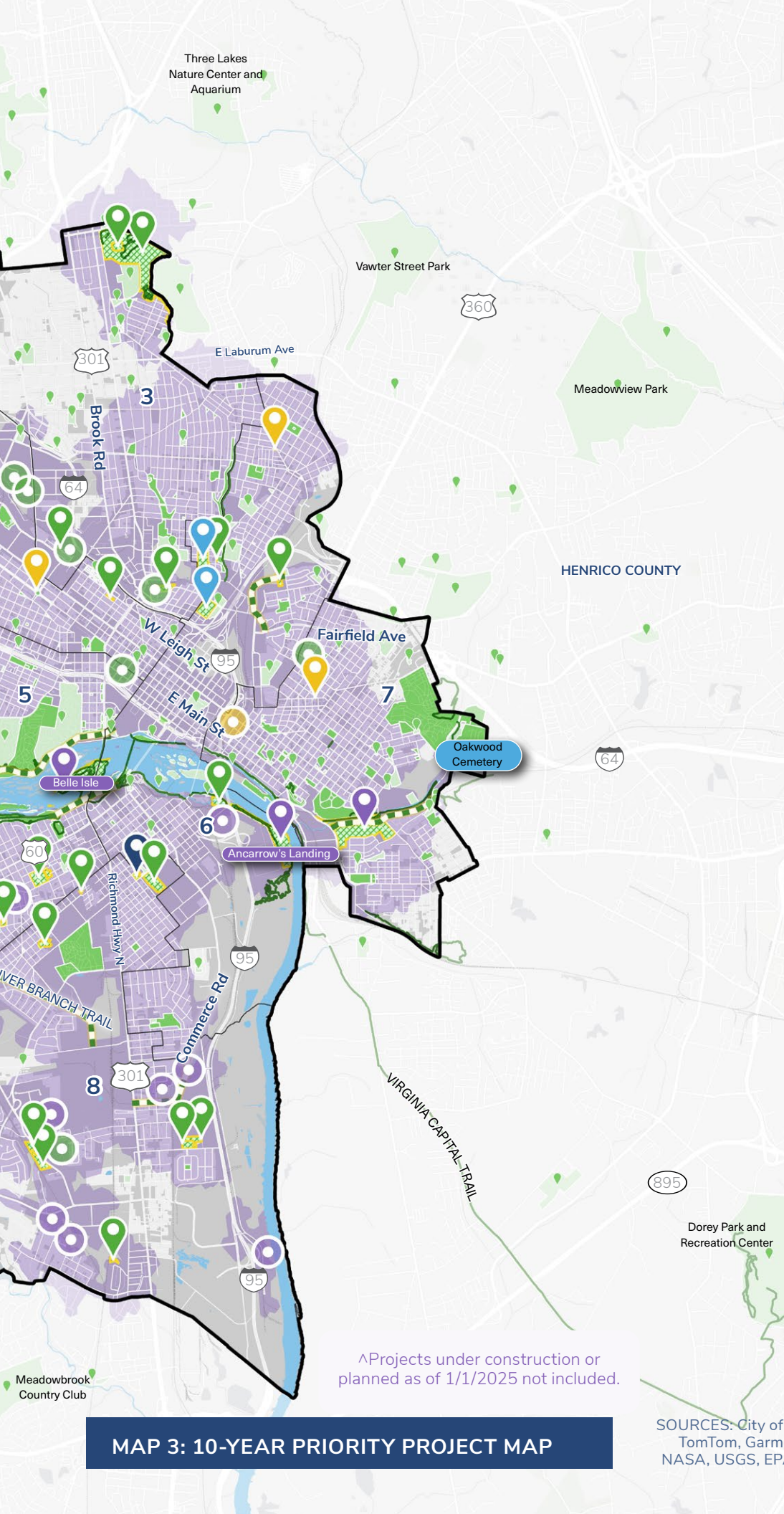
### Proposed Opportunity Project

- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site

- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Residential Areas
- Non-Residential Areas
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams
- Existing Trails







## 10-YEAR PLAN OUTCOMES

# 9 acres

of Quality Parkland per  
1,000 Residents - an  
Increase of 3 acres per  
1,000 Residents

# 74%

of Richmonders Would  
Live Within Walking  
Distance to a Quality  
Park – a 15% Increase

# 27 miles

of New Greenway Trails

# 34 parks

Improved to Meet  
Quality Design  
Standards

# 23

New Parks or Facilities

# 400 acres

of Land Newly  
Conserved  
as Natural Area

^Projects under construction or  
planned as of 1/1/2025 not included.

MAP 3: 10-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECT MAP

SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI,  
TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/  
NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop

# Acknowledgments

Richmond *INSPIRE* is made possible by thousands of community voices who participated in the planning process. In addition to the leaders and team members listed in this section, the City of Richmond would like to extend a sincere thank you to all individuals and organizations who participated. Your effort and voice were greatly appreciated.

## Mayor

Danny Avula, Mayor of Richmond

## City Council

Andrew S. Breton, West End 1st Voter District

Katherine Jordan, North Central 2nd Voter District

Kenya J. Gibson, Northside 3rd Voter District

Sarah M. A. Abubaker, Southwest 4th Voter District

Stephanie A. Lynch, Central 5th Voter District

Ellen F. Robertson, Gateway 6th Voter District

Cynthia I. Newbille, East End 7th Voter District

Reva M. Trammell, Southside 8th Voter District

Nicole Jones South Central 9th Voter District

## Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

Chris Frelke, PRCF Director

Deborah Morton, Deputy Director - Recreation

Nissa Richardson, Deputy Director - CIP

Shamar Young, Deputy Director of Parks and Cemeteries

Ryan Rinn, Capital Projects Planner

Daniel Hazlett, Senior Management Analyst

Andrew Alli, JRPS and Trails Superintendent

Aimee Bushman, Park Ranger Supervisor

JaLisa Elkins, Recreation Services Manager

Tamara Jenkins, Public Information Manager

## Steering Committee

Alexandra Griffin

Amir Elsayed

Betty (B.J.) Northington-Winston

Charlie Williams

Claire Thompson

Dana Sally-Allen

Elaine Odell

Elle Merkle

Jackie McDonnough

Janet Woodka

Jerome Legions

Josh Bearman

Joy Rogers

Justin Doyle

Kelly Chopus

Lisa Mischley

Malique Middleton

Melissa Duval

Shekinah Mitchell

Vilma Seymour

## **Richmond Parks and Recreation Oral History Participants**

Heywood Harrison

Rocky Edwards

Tariq Waajid

Raqiyah Waajid

## **PRCF Staff Richmond *INSPIRE* Ambassadors**

Jerrold Booker

Cameron Booth

Valerie Burton

Glynes Cheatham

Tiffany Concepcion

Penelope Davenport

Giles Garrison

Michael Gee

Anthony Grigsby

Earl Hughes

Yewande Lewis

Qui Nguyen

Colin Owens

Jamal Walker

Trae Wynne

## **Consultant Team**

Design Workshop, Project Lead

Anna Laybourn

Morgan Clutter

Emily Pixberg

Alexandra Pollock

Maya Neal

Kathleen Elliott

Clare Kavanagh

Laura Bachinsky

Ballard King, Operations and Recreation

Darin Barr

Hana Engineers, Physical Assessment

Josh Richmond

Cullen Hennessey

Lindsey Naylor, Planning

Timmons Group, Engagement

Scott Wiley

Shawn Balon

Liz Fabis

Taylor Parker





1



# INTRODUCTION

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- Origin of *Richmond INSPIRE*
- Why this Plan is Important
- What this Plan is Building On
- History of Richmond Parks and Recreation
- Demographic Snapshot
- Equity Lens
- Park and Facility Assessment



A BMX rider uses the skatepark at Southside Community Center

## Origin of Richmond **INSPIRE**

### PLANNING CONNECTION



[Read Richmond's  
Comprehensive Plan:  
Richmond 300: A  
Guide for Growth's  
Recommendations  
\[external link\].](#)

Parks and recreation emerged as an important theme in the City of Richmond's comprehensive plan, *Richmond 300: A Guide to Growth* (2020). The final plan, which outlined Richmond's long term objectives, included dozens of community-driven goals related to growing, improving, and diversifying the citywide parks and recreation system.

Specifically, *Richmond 300* recommends the development of "a parks and community facilities vision plan based within the context of the Future Land Use Plan that seeks to ensure all Richmonders live within a 10-minute walk of a park."

In 2021, the City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF) was awarded \$80 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for park and community center projects. A small portion of the awarded ARPA funding, along with support from the Mayor and City Council, made possible the *Richmond INSPIRE* planning process and this document.



## Why Now?

Richmond has been growing and evolving as a city for almost 300 years. Parks and recreation have been part of the city's fabric since the mid-1700s, when Richmond Common was established along the James River and Shockoe Creek.

*Richmond INSPIRE* is the city's first comprehensive parks and recreation system plan in a generation, and it comes at a time when the city is growing and changing rapidly. Careful planning allows the Richmond community to step back and make important decisions with the bigger picture in mind.

Toward that end, this plan emerged from a process to understand the city's past, examine how the current parks and recreation system operates, and determine how to grow

and evolve to accommodate new growth and community expectations.

*Richmond INSPIRE* documents the community's vision for parks and recreation in Richmond. The plan recommendations, which will guide City and PRCF decision-making for the next 10 years and more, reflect community advocacy for parks and recreation improvements and policy changes.

The plan also helps the City to:

- Identify the impact of decades of deferred maintenance.
- Curate programming to meet the evolving needs and wants of Richmond community members.
- Make decisive and equitable capital investments.
- Connect people to and between parks.

- Prepare for a climate-resilient future.
- Provide better parks and recreation experiences for all Richmonders.

*Richmond INSPIRE* offers a comprehensive 10-year plan that supports a long-term community vision for parks and recreation. *Richmond INSPIRE* should be seen as a living document and a tool for PRCF, the community, and partners as they collaborate, make decisions, and turn the page to a new chapter for parks and recreation in Richmond.



A performer at Jubilation in June



PRCF's Just Keep Moving Senior 2k walking program helps seniors build up their strength and accomplish a 2k walk, while building community and friends

## Why Improving Parks and Recreation is Important

Parks and recreation are more than public amenities—they are vitally important to the social, environmental, physical, mental, and economic health of Richmond communities.

A huge body of research documents the ways that communities are strengthened by plentiful access to parks, nature, and recreation. Some Richmond neighborhoods are already enjoying the life-changing benefits of their high-quality and beloved parks, greenways, and community centers.

But other Richmond neighborhoods have been left behind, particularly those affected by historical racism and long-term public underinvestment. *Richmond INSPIRE* seeks to promote the health and wellbeing of all Richmond communities by correcting for past discrimination and identifying where short-term park and recreation investments are needed most.

The result will be a citywide park and recreation system that is equitable and of lasting quality, which all Richmonders can benefit from.

# The Life-Changing Benefits of Parks and Recreation

## DEEPER DIVE



[See National Recreation and Park Association resources on the health and benefits of parks \[external link\].](#)



Spending **just two hours in nature per week** has been shown to reduce stress and create long-term benefits for mental health and wellbeing.

People who live within walking or rolling distance of parks are **more likely to be physically active** than their neighbors who lack easy park access.

Regular physical activity has huge benefits for **improving heart health, reducing obesity**, and helping people manage their blood pressure and cholesterol levels.



As free and comfortable public spaces where people of all ages and backgrounds can gather, parks and community centers **build community, social cohesion, and resilience**.

These types of social interactions are good for communities, and particularly good for the **mental health of young people and seniors**.



Transforming vacant or under-used lots into community-supported parks has been shown to **lower local crime rates**.



Trees in parks **remove tons of toxins from the air** every year. Their shade can noticeably cool surrounding neighborhoods and **keep people safe during heat waves**.

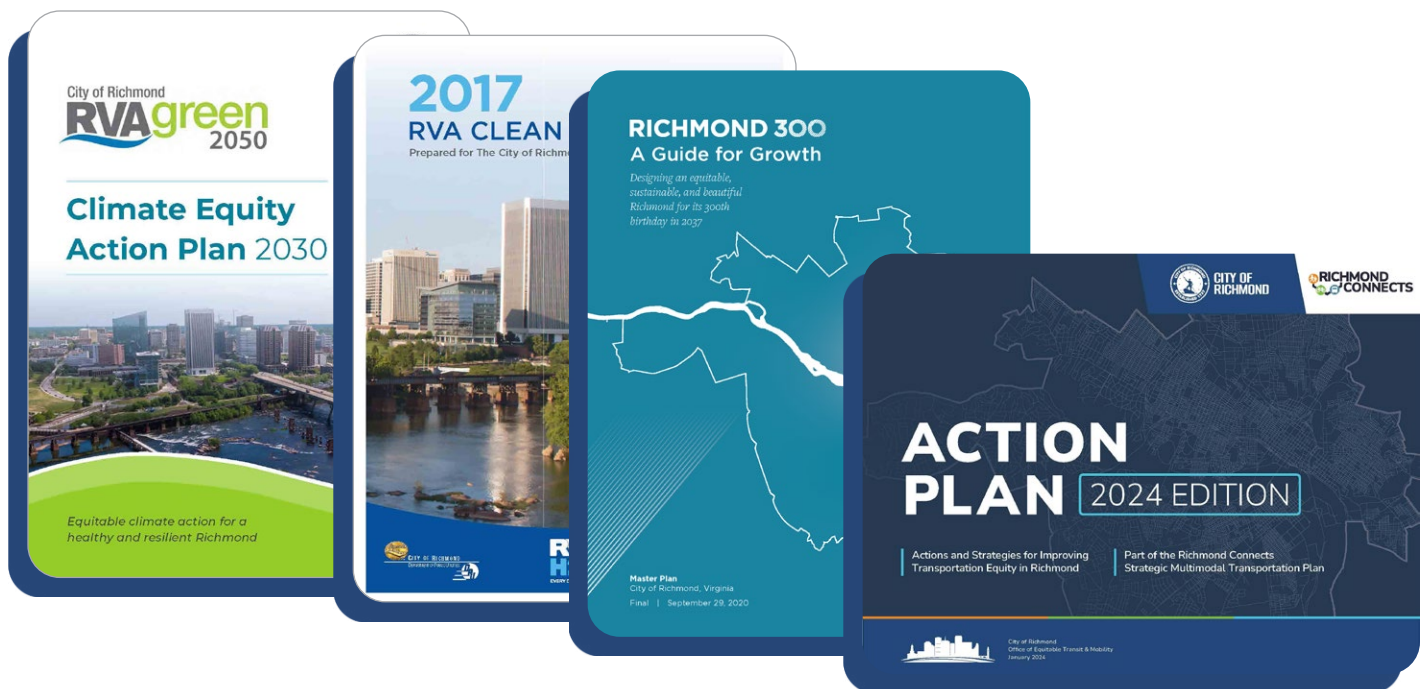


Well-designed parks and green spaces **capture and absorb rainwater** and help to prevent flooding during extreme storms and rain events.



Just a **20-minute walk in a park** or natural area can help a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to focus better.





## What this Plan is Building On

### PLANNING CONNECTION



Visit the websites of other related plans to learn more, a few are linked here.

[Richmond Connects](#)  
[external link]

[RVA Green2050](#)  
[external link]

[James River Park System Masterplan](#) [external link]

### Richmond 300 Planning Ecosystem

Richmond INSPIRE is part of the ecosystem of planning documents that support and implement the strategies of *Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth*, the City Master Plan adopted in 2020.

These plans laid the groundwork for *Richmond INSPIRE* by calling out the importance of high-quality parks in realizing a Richmond that is greener, healthier, more sustainable, more connected, and more liveable for all.

Table 1 lists the City, regional, and statewide plans upon which *Richmond INSPIRE* is built. The *Richmond INSPIRE* Action Items reference each related plan to demonstrate strong connections and to highlight opportunities for interdepartmental and public-private coordination.

Table 1: Richmond INSPIRE Plan Connections

|                 |                                                  | UNIFYING THEMES      |                         |                         |                      |                    |                                     |                                      |                                      |                                     |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                 |                                                  | Greenways and Trails | Access and Connectivity | Open Space Conservation | Community Engagement | Equity and Justice | Park and Recreation Community Needs | Park and Recreation Capital Projects | Implementation and Funding Resources | Environmental Health and Resilience |
| CONNECTED PLANS | Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth                 | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | RVA Green Climate Equity Action Plan 2030        | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   |                                      | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Richmond Connects Strategic Plan                 | ●                    | ●                       |                         | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | James River Park System Master Plan              | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Richmond Riverfront Plan                         | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       |                      |                    | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | RVA Clean Water Plan                             |                      |                         | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  |                                     |                                      | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Mayor's Equity Agenda: Parks                     |                      | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  |                                     | ●                                    |                                      | ●                                   |
|                 | A Community Garden Opportunity Plan for Richmond |                      |                         |                         | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Virginia Outdoors Plan                           | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Revealing Richmond: A Public Art Master Plan     |                      |                         |                         | ●                    | ●                  |                                     |                                      | ●                                    |                                     |
|                 | Richmond Bicycle Master Plan                     | ●                    | ●                       |                         | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Richmond Vision Zero Plan                        | ●                    | ●                       |                         | ●                    | ●                  |                                     | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Greater Scott's Addition Small Area Plan         | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       |                      |                    | ●                                   | ●                                    |                                      | ●                                   |
|                 | Shockoe Small Area Plan                          | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | City Center Innovation District Small Area Plan  | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |
|                 | Pulse Corridor Plan                              |                      | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   |                                      | ●                                    |                                     |
|                 | Richmond INSPIRE                                 | ●                    | ●                       | ●                       | ●                    | ●                  | ●                                   | ●                                    | ●                                    | ●                                   |



Libby Hill Park Historic Post Card (Virginia Commonwealth University, 1916)

# History of Parks and Recreation in Richmond

An understanding of Richmond's long history drives many of *Richmond INSPIRE*'s driving principles—including places to preserve and injustices to correct. Following is an overview of the histories that explain origins of the park and recreation system and how it has served the community over time.

## Establishing Parks and Recreation

### Pre-Colonization

For hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans, the area around Richmond was home to Algonquian-speaking Indians who were part of the Tsenacomoco political alliance. The Tsenacomoco people farmed, hunted, and relied on the rivers for travel and trade.

Powhatan was chief of the 15,000 Tsenacomoco people living in the area between the James and Potomac Rivers when Jamestown was established by English settlers in 1607. Tensions escalated into the Anglo-Powhatan War. After decades of unsuccessful attempts, English settlers secured a permanent presence in the region in 1644 with the establishment of Fort Charles at the Falls of the James River. Richmond would not be officially founded for more than a century.



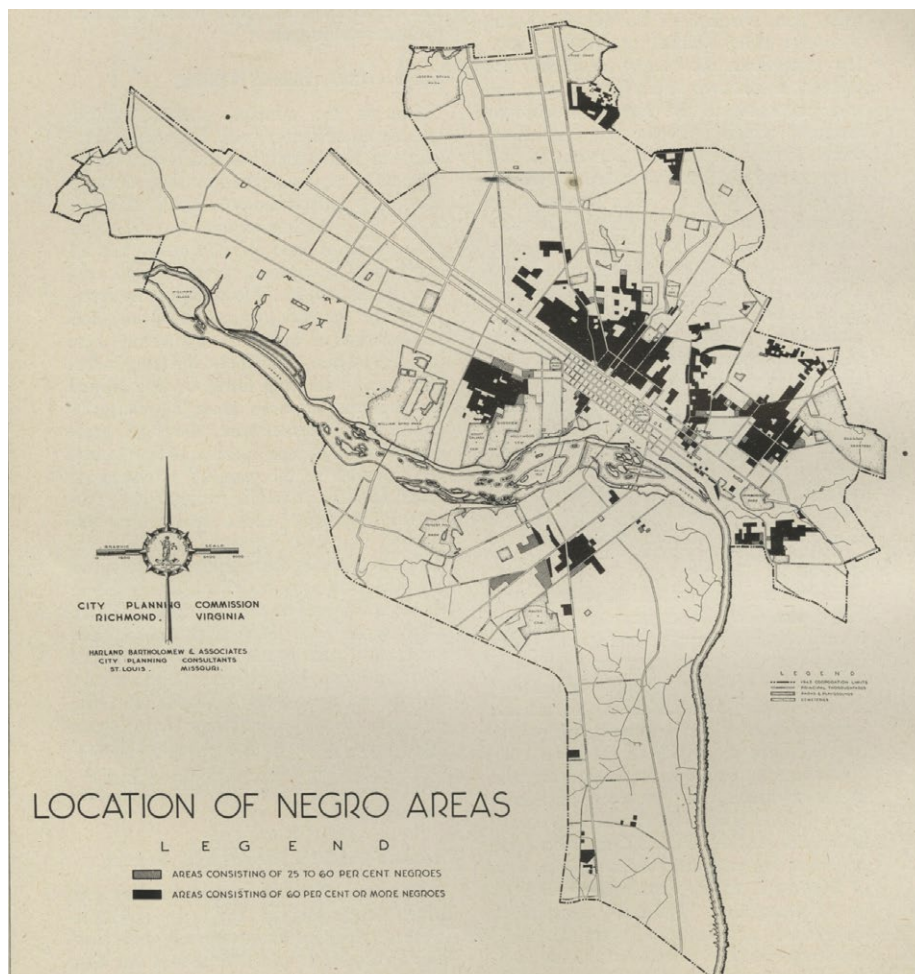
## Early Parks in Richmond

Unlike other colonial cities, Richmond's original plat—by surveyor William Mayo in 1737—did not include parks. Richmond Common, the city's first public ground, wasn't established until almost 40 years later.

Richmond's official park system was created in the 1850s, when the City acquired three public squares: Western Square (now Monroe Park), Marshall Square (now Libby Hill Park), and Gamble's Hill Park (now part of the New Market Corporation property).

By the early 1900s, private recreational programming had emerged. The first public playground was established in the backyard of a Methodist Settlement House with support from local civic leaders and businesses.

Richmond City Council passed a resolution in 1908 to establish a municipal recreation program: "Whereas, it is of the utmost importance to both the morals and health of any community that its children should be afforded opportunity for innocent and healthful recreation in the open air; and for such enjoyment, in every city, a large number must depend upon the generous care of the municipality."



Historic map identifying where Black residents lived in Richmond (Richmond City Planning Commission, 1946)

## Impacts of Historical Racism and Inequity

Like many Southern cities, Richmond has a deep history of racism, segregation, and inequity, especially in access to public services like parks. This legacy remains visible today due to the lingering effects of disinvestment, discriminatory policies, and unequal access to City resources.

Like other City plans within the *Richmond 300* ecosystem, *Richmond INSPIRE* seeks to

confront the legacy of historical racism by understanding its impacts and recommending equitable investments and processes moving forward.

## Enslaved People of Richmond

In the 19th century Richmond became the largest domestic enslaved-person trafficking center in the Upper South. An estimated 350,000 enslaved Black men, women, and children were sold, jailed, or transported through the city. Richmond was the second-largest hub in the country after New Orleans.

By the 1850s, enslaved people performed much of Richmond's hardest labor, including work building the public infrastructure the city still relies on today.

## Jim Crow and Park Segregation

After the Civil War, Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in public spaces. The 1924 Racial Integrity Act further cemented these racial divisions. In the 1930s, redlining maps classified Black neighborhoods like Jackson Ward and Navy Hill "hazardous," cutting them off from home loans and public investment.

As a result:

- Black neighborhoods in Richmond received fewer City resources, including parks and recreational facilities.
- White neighborhoods, particularly in wealthier or suburban areas, were prioritized

for park development and public services.

- Parks such as Byrd Park, Bryan Park, Shield Lake, Forest Hills Park, Monroe Park, Chimborazo Park, and Pine Camp were located in white-only neighborhoods.
- Brook Field Park was built in the Chamberlayne neighborhood (near what is now Virginia Union University). It was the only public Black park and pool during Jim Crow. Professional tennis star Arthur Ashe learned to play tennis there.

## Urban Renewal

In the mid-20th century, discriminatory policies led to the displacement and destruction of Black communities and to further segregation. Low property values in redlined neighborhoods made them easy targets for government-led "urban renewal" projects, which demolished

largely Black communities through eminent domain to build infrastructure:

- Jackson Ward, the city's largest Black neighborhood, was cut in half by the construction of Interstate 95.
- Navy Hill, once a thriving Black business district, was completely destroyed by highway expansion and new government buildings.
- Historic Fulton was cleared for an industrial park that was never built.
- Apostle Town was demolished to make way for Richmond's first public housing project, initially designated for low-income white residents.
- Brook Field Park was torn down in 1968 to make way for a post office.

Many Black residents displaced by these projects were relocated



Historic image of residents recreating on Shields Lake, a segregated recreation area (The Valentine, ca 1920)

to East End public housing communities, where basic public services were often lacking or neglected.

These patterns of displacement and uneven investment continued through the City's expansion in 1970, when Richmond annexed approximately 23 square miles from Chesterfield County. The newly annexed areas significantly increased the city's land area but the new areas had limited public services, including parks and recreation facilities — especially south of the James River.

The annexation was widely understood as an effort to dilute the Black population within the city and to maintain political control. It was later challenged on these grounds, leading to U.S. Department of Justice intervention and a pause in local elections from 1972 to 1976.

## A Lasting Legacy

These historical injustices have had long-lasting effects on the city's infrastructure, including its park system. Marginalized communities experienced years of underinvestment, deferred maintenance, and minimal access to parks and open spaces.

When reviewing data and maps about the state of Richmond's parks, these historically underinvested areas are often found to have:

- Poor park access overall.
- Existing parks in poor condition.



Image of the destruction of Navy Hill and Jackson Ward by highway construction (The Valentine, 1958)

- Limited tree canopy and higher temperatures due to the Urban Heat Island effect.
- Physical barriers that disconnect them from the rest of the city.

## Building Trust and Equity

In the midst of widespread community distrust following decades of discriminatory City policies and actions, the City's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF) often led the way in making amends and providing vital community services.

### PRCF in the Wake of Jim Crow

Oral histories of longtime PRCF staff describe the 1960s and 1970s as an ideal time to be

a “parks and recreation kid” in Richmond.

As the City was desegregating and coming to terms with the nationwide fall of Jim Crow, PRCF established a presence in many of the neighborhoods that had been harmed by Jim Crow policies. The department hired staff from the neighborhoods, and they ran parks and community centers to serve the children and families in their own communities. Children could walk to their neighborhood park or “playground house,” and families knew their children could find meals, play, supervision, and mentorship there outside of school hours. In the words of a long-time staff member: “Back then, parks weren’t just places to play—they were places to grow.”

Staff oral histories describe the practice established during this time of investing in entry-level





Youth learn how to hit a baseball at a PRCF park site (Library of Virginia, 1958)

“I just hope we keep growing and adapting. I hope we keep supporting everyone in our community... So they all have somewhere to go. Something they’re interested in. Somewhere they belong.”

### **PRCF staff oral history interview**

PRCF staff who knew their communities, developed skills and expertise across the park system, and went on to become department leaders and mentors. PRCF also maintained a strong partnership with Richmond Public Schools, including a widespread practice of hiring teachers to run summer PRCF programs and structured after-school programming allowing for year-round support and mentorship of local children.

Though PRCF has changed and grown during the last few decades, this model of community service has remained and defines how the department is seen today by many Richmonders.

## **21st Century**

As Richmond continues to evolve, its public spaces must evolve with it. Parks and public land are shaped by the values and priorities of their time, but they are not static. As communities change, so do expectations for how these spaces serve and support the people around them. At the same time, disparities in historic investment have shaped where parks and facilities are located and how they serve different communities today.

### **Key Modern Events**

- 2020: The COVID-19 pandemic affected park and recreation operations citywide, increasing reliance on parks and open

space while disrupting programming and facility use.

- 2020–2022: After the murder of George Floyd, confederate monuments and pedestals along Monument Avenue were removed, leaving a series of prominent public spaces unused and without a defined future. PRCF played a role in removing the statues.

- 2021: The City adopted The City of Richmond's Equity Agenda, establishing an urgent commitment to promote equity and justice throughout the city.

Across Richmond, the impacts of historic disinvestment appear in different ways. In some areas, there are no parks and facilities, such as many neighborhoods south of the James River. In

others, spaces exist but no longer meet the expectations of the communities they are intended to serve.

Recent significant investments in Lucks Field Community Center, Broad Rock Creek Park, TB Smith Community Center, Calhoun Community Center, and Southside Community Center demonstrate PRCF's commitment to creating an equitable parks and recreation system.

*Richmond INSPIRE* picks up the baton, offering a comprehensive systemwide view of how future City and PRCF actions and investments can promote this equity agenda and stay true to PRCF's legacy of community service.



Dock Street Park ribbon cutting ceremony



A young resident participates in community-driven design for Lucks Field Community Center, funded as a part of the American Rescue Plan Act

## DEEPER DIVE



[Watch PRCF speak about their role in removing the monuments on Monument Avenue in 2020 \[external link\].](#)



# PARKS & RECREATION

1900

1851-54

The City acquires its first park properties: Western Square (Monroe Park), Marshall Square (Libby Hill Park) and Gamble's Hill Park (traded to acquire Brown's Island Park).

The riverfront of the James River is further developed as a result of increased transportation and industry.

The James River becomes too polluted for fishing and recreation.

1829-31

The public park system begins with the development of municipal waterworks.

The James River and Kanawha Canal towpath provide a well-maintained walking surface along the water.

1791

Virginia's first Jewish cemetery is established in Richmond.

1779

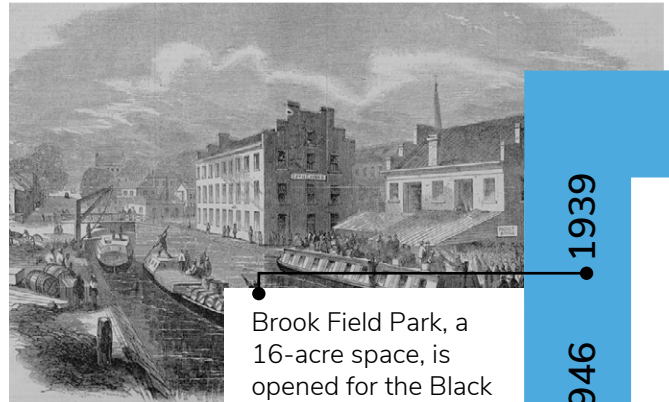
Richmond Common is established along the James River and Shockoe Creek as public common grounds.

1742

The first formal burial space is established at St. John's Church.

1800

Region is occupied by the Powhatan Confederacy. By 1607, 28 to 32 tribes span from the south bank of the James (Powhatan) River to the Potomac River, and from the Fall Line eastward to the Chesapeake Bay.

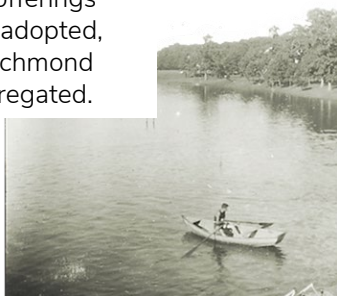
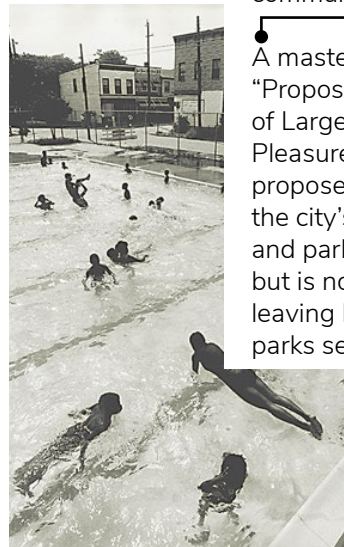


Brook Field Park, a 16-acre space, is opened for the Black community.

1939

1946

A master plan for a "Proposed System of Large Parks and Pleasure Drives" is proposed to improve the city's connectivity and park offerings but is not adopted, leaving Richmond parks segregated.



1600 1700

## RICHMOND

1607

Jamestown is established.

1733

Richmond is founded by Colonel William Byrd.

1742

Town of Richmond is established by General Assembly of Virginia.

1844 - 65

Richmond is the second-largest hub of the domestic slave trade. Between 300,000 and 500,000 men, women, and children are forcibly sold, often enduring inhumane conditions in crowded holding facilities while awaiting sale, with families frequently torn apart in the process.

1871

The creation of the city's sixth voting district, Jackson Ward, concentrates Black Richmonders' votes, diminishing their power in local elections.

1930s

Redlining makes Black neighborhoods targets of "urban renewal" projects, leading to their decline or destruction. The Jackson Ward, Navy Hill, Fulton Bottom, and Apostle Town communities are bisected or destroyed.

1945

Post-WWII "white flight" alters city demographics, prompts urban disinvestment, and eventually leads to the outmigration of the Black community to the suburbs.



## 1900-50s

Active recreation programming and parks begin as a private enterprise, influencing civic leadership to build public recreation facilities.

1919

Richmond's first large public recreation facility, Shield Lake at Byrd Park, is opened to white residents only for swimming.

1930s-40s

Park landscape and facility improvements are made possible through federal Civil Works Administration (CWA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) funding.



Historic Fulton Memorial Park opens honoring the legacy of the once-thriving Black community altered by urban renewal and the devastating 1972 flood.

## 1937

Oakwood playing fields open as the first public space accessible for Black residents.

Shield Lake is closed to swimming to avoid integration.

## 1955

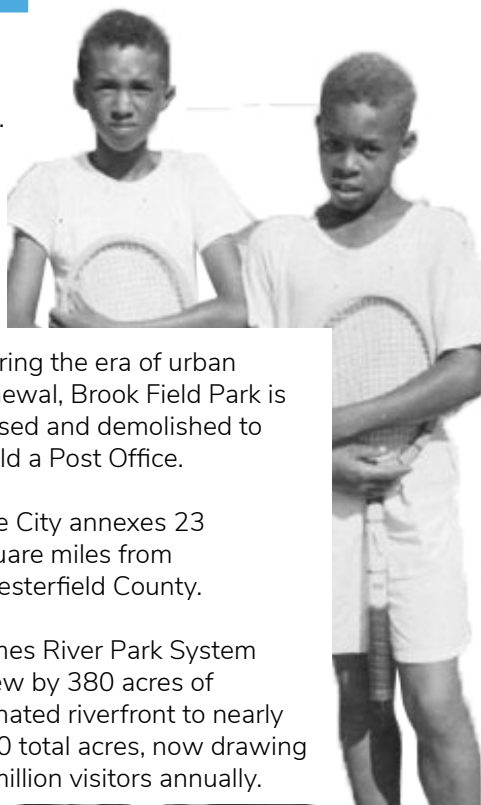
## 1960s

During the era of urban renewal, Brook Field Park is closed and demolished to build a Post Office.

The City annexes 23 square miles from Chesterfield County.

1970  
1972

James River Park System grew by 380 acres of donated riverfront to nearly 600 total acres, now drawing 2 million visitors annually.



## 1950s

Displaced Black community members are relocated to East End Richmond, where new public housing communities create pockets of high-density poverty.

## 1970

Richmond annexes 23 square miles of majority-white areas to influence elections, causing the U.S. Supreme Court to halt all local elections in Richmond.

## 1976

The Supreme Court requires Richmond to redistrict the city, which leads to a special election and the first Black-majority City Council.

## 2013

Anti-Poverty Commission report outlines actionable steps to combat poverty through public schools, public housing, employment, public transit, and economic development.

2021

## 2023

The City is awarded \$80 million from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for park and community center projects that will be used to support historically underinvested communities.

Community Centers maintain a vital role across socioeconomic lines, providing holistic youth support and serving as hubs of care, connection, and opportunity.

Community centers begin offering low-cost summer camps, giving youth a place to learn, play, and receive meals during the work week.

During the summer, staffed playground houses at neighborhood parks offered free supervision, programming, and meals for local youth.

## 2014

Office of Community Wealth Building is established.

## 2020

Richmonders protest for racial justice, following the murder of George Floyd; centered around the Robert E. Lee monument, the site, renamed Marcus-David Peters Circle, became a community space filled with art, memorials, gardens, and gatherings.

2025

# Demographic Snapshot

Richmond's population has been on a steady growth path for 20 years, and projections developed for *Richmond 300* indicate the city's population could grow up to 46% by 2037, demonstrated in "Figure 4: Population change since 1910" on page 16. Given these trends, park and recreation planning in Richmond must account for the needs of both current and future populations.

The following observations and trends—based on demographic information from Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) and analysis from previous City planning efforts—helped to drive the *Richmond INSPIRE* planning process.

## DEEPER DIVE



See more in the *Richmond INSPIRE* Appendix D: Planning Context and in

[Richmond 300's Comprehensive Demographic Analysis \[external link\]](#).

## Changing Population

### Influx of Young Adults and Retirees

Richmond's growth has been driven by young adults and retirees. Today, young adults make up a much larger proportion of Richmond's population than state and national figures. Looking toward 2029, the largest areas of population growth by age group will be people aged 65-74 (15% projected growth) and 75+ (40% projected growth), demonstrated in "Figure 5: Population change by age" on page 17. This suggests the need for a greater diversity of recreation programs for people of different ages, interests, and abilities, and the need for scientific surveys to fine-tune program offerings for all Richmond's communities.

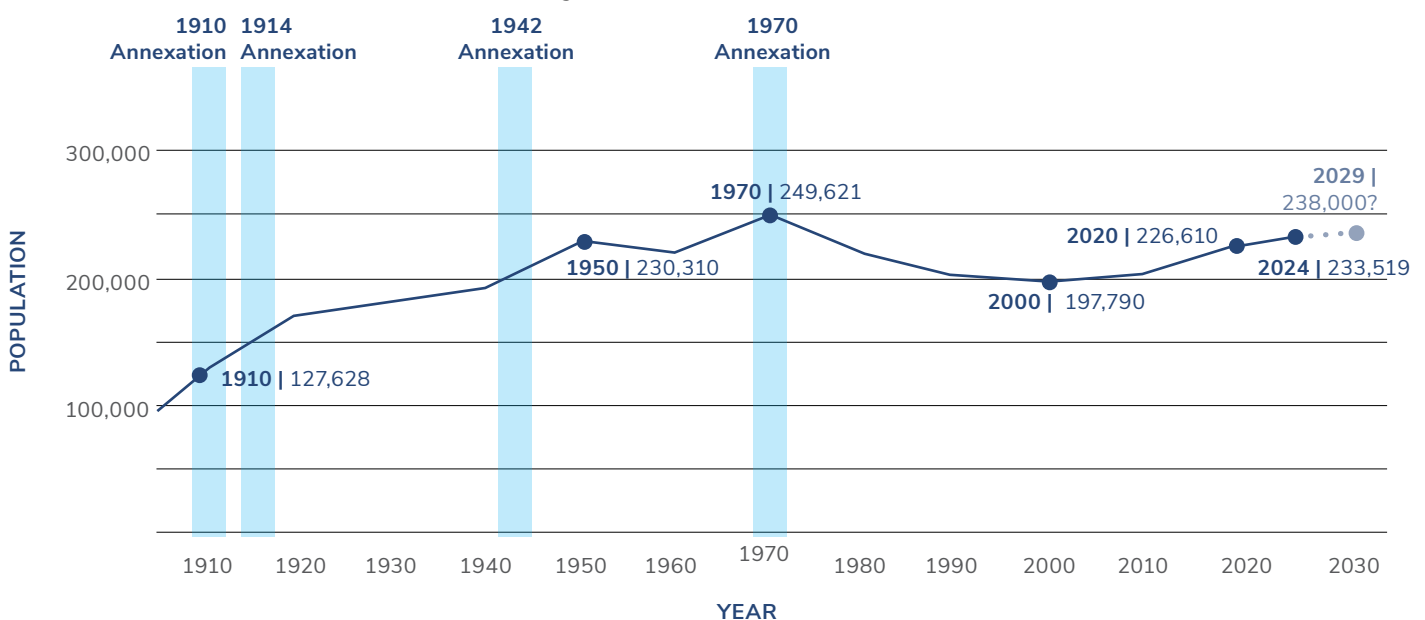


Figure 4: Population change since 1910

Source: Richmond 300; U.S. Census Bureau: 1910, 1950, 1970, 2000, 2020 Census, 2024 Population Est.



James River Park System (JRPS) staff smile for a photo

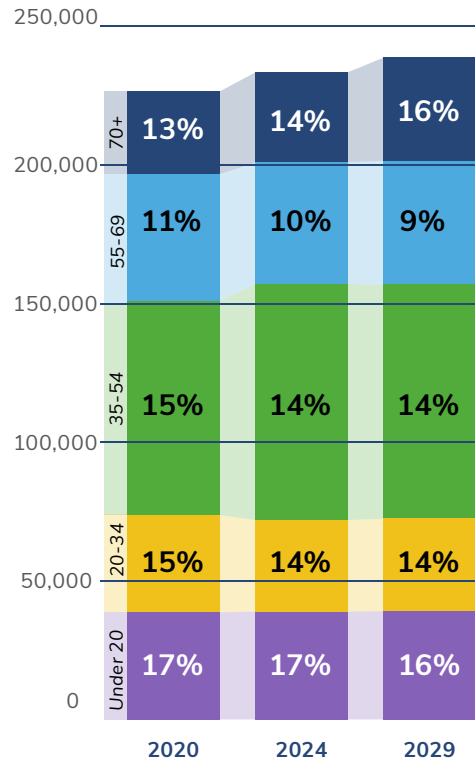
### A More Racially Diverse City

Richmond’s growth is also driven by increases in white, Latino, and Asian populations. As the city becomes more racially diverse, its Black population accounts for a smaller proportion of city residents.

### Inequitable Growth

Richmond 300’s analysis showed that the city’s growth has not benefited everyone: Poverty rates are concentrated in certain areas of the city; inflation-adjusted median household income has actually decreased since 1990 and 2000; and housing costs have outpaced income growth for low- and very-low income households.

All of this points to the importance of *Richmond INSPIRE* analysis and recommendations that identify and serve the communities most in need of the life-changing benefits of parks and recreation, even as it charts a course for a larger, growing, and diversifying population.



Population by Age, 2020 - 2029  
percent population show are the percent of that year’s population in a given age group.

Source: 2024 ESRI Estimate

Figure 5: Population change by age



# Through an Equity Lens

Richmond's demographics tell a clear story: the city is changing, but not every neighborhood has changed in the same way. Some areas have grown, while others face higher poverty, rising housing costs, or hotter conditions. These uneven patterns shape who has access to the benefits of parks and recreation—and who does not. An equity lens means viewing the entire system with these realities in mind and committing to direct resources where they can reduce disparities and expand opportunity.

## DEEPER DIVE



Review Equity Investment Zone scoring methodology in Appendix F.

Equity Investment Zones are based on census block groups, which include all land uses but are defined by and represent a residential population of approximately 600 to 3,000 people.

## Equity Investment Zones

Richmond INSPIRE puts this lens into practice through Equity Investment Zones (EIZs)—a data-driven model that highlights the census block groups that would benefit from investment. The scoring criteria are based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Social Determinants of Health (SDH) framework, ensuring the approach reflects nationally recognized measures of economic, health, and environmental conditions. Each project area receives a composite score, which guides how resources are prioritized. Details on the criteria and scoring process can be found in Appendix F.

Equity Investment Zones will be updated as conditions change and can be layered with other City tools to prioritize future investments. They offer a consistent, transparent way to highlight communities where increased investment in parks and recreation may have the greatest impact. When viewed alongside Richmond's current system, they provide a lens for understanding how historic patterns of growth and disinvestment continue to shape access, quality, and opportunity today.

## Equity Investment Zone Criteria



### Economic Indicators

- Households with Food Stamps/SNAP
- Poverty Rate
- Unemployment Rate
- Location Affordability
- Housing Burden
- Racial and Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty
- Households with 0 Vehicles



### Education Indicators

- Population without High School Diploma
- Population without College Education



### Neighborhood & Built Environment Indicators

- Canopy Coverage
- Imperviousness
- Industrial Land Use
- Transit Access



### Health Indicators

- Heart Disease
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Mental Distress
- Physical Inactivity
- Green Space Access

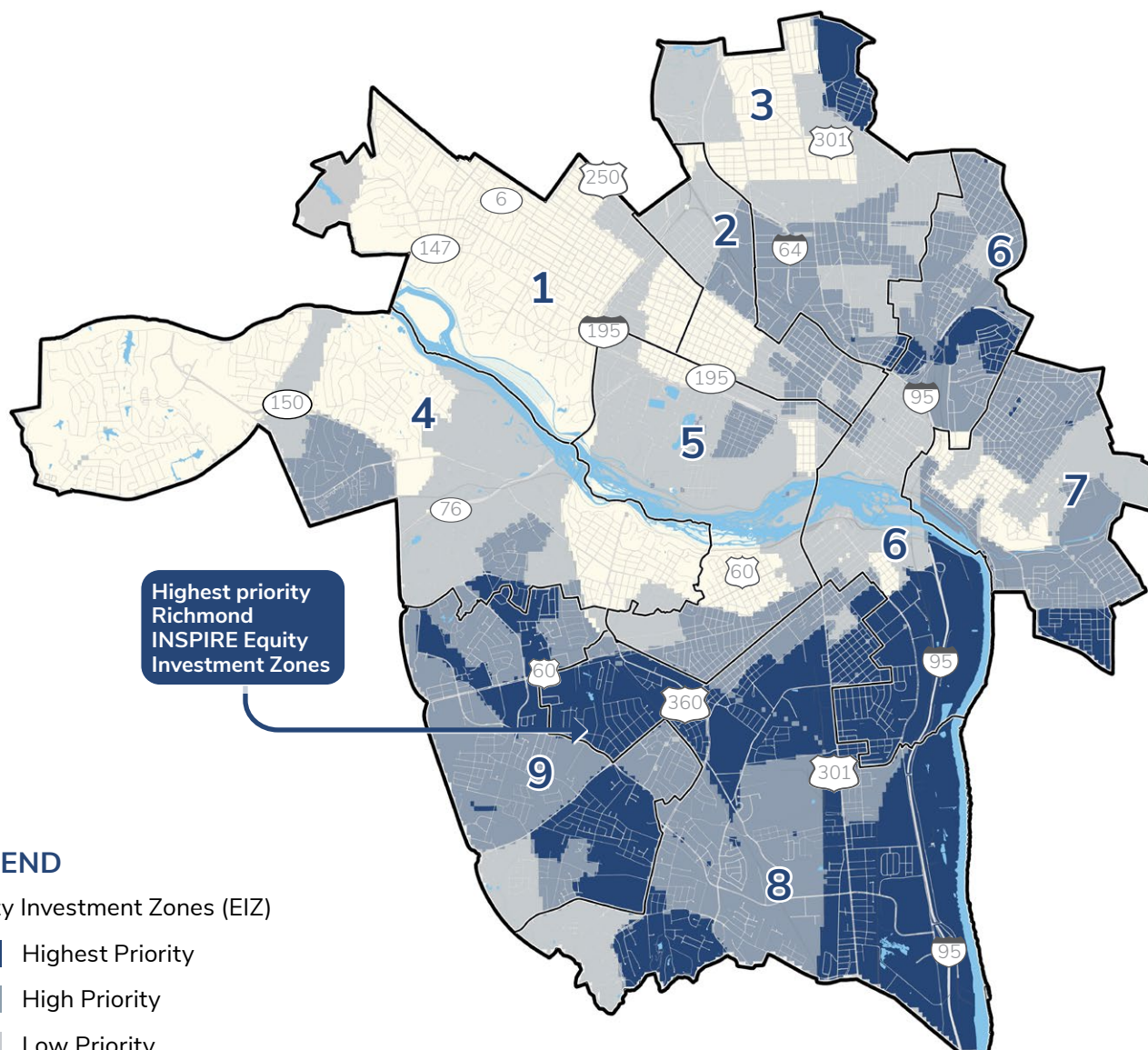


### Social & Community Indicators

- Crime Index
- Linguistically Isolated Population
- Households with Population Under 18
- Households with Population Over 64
- Households with 1+ Disability
- Historically Underrecognized Communities

**Figure 6:** Equity Investment Zone Criteria within the CDC's Social Determinants of Health (SDH) Framework

## MAP 4: RICHMOND INSPIRE EQUITY INVESTMENT ZONES (EIZ)



### LEGEND

#### Equity Investment Zones (EIZ)

- Highest Priority
- High Priority
- Low Priority
- Lower Priority
- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams

### EQUITY INVESTMENT ZONES (EIZ)

Census block groups where parks and recreation investment can have the greatest impact. These zones are used in combination with other criteria to guide decision-making.



SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop

# Park and Facility Assessment

## CURRENT SYSTEM SNAPSHOT

2,660  
Acres

160  
Parks

## ADDITIONAL ACREAGE NEEDED

+417 Acres  
2024 POPULATION

+1,301 Acres  
2037 POPULATION

To Meet the National Median  
of 13.3 Acres per 1,000  
Residents

2024 population figures are from Esri.  
2037 population figures are from the 'Strong'  
population growth scenario of Richmond 300, which  
is the middle of three scenarios.

The City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF) operates 160 parks and community facilities on more than 2,600 acres across the city. As part of Richmond INSPIRE, every site was visited and evaluated to understand its condition, quality, and distribution.

## Level of Service

By some measures, Richmond is performing well. The number of parks and individual assets (in any condition)—like playgrounds, sports fields, courts, and community gardens—aligns with national benchmarks and with peer cities. (See Appendix B for more detail.) However, the system falls short in total park acreage. When measured per resident or as a share of land area, Richmond provides less parkland than the national median. Key amenities are also unevenly distributed, with notable gaps such as restrooms. Addressing gaps in acreage and amenities will be critical to meeting current and future needs.

## Classification

National benchmarks provide a baseline to review, but they do not reflect how Richmond's system is structured or what each park is intended to provide. Organizing parks and recreation facilities into categories that reflect the experiences they offer and the roles they play in the community allows PRCF to evaluate whether sites are meeting expectations. These categories are referred to as classifications.

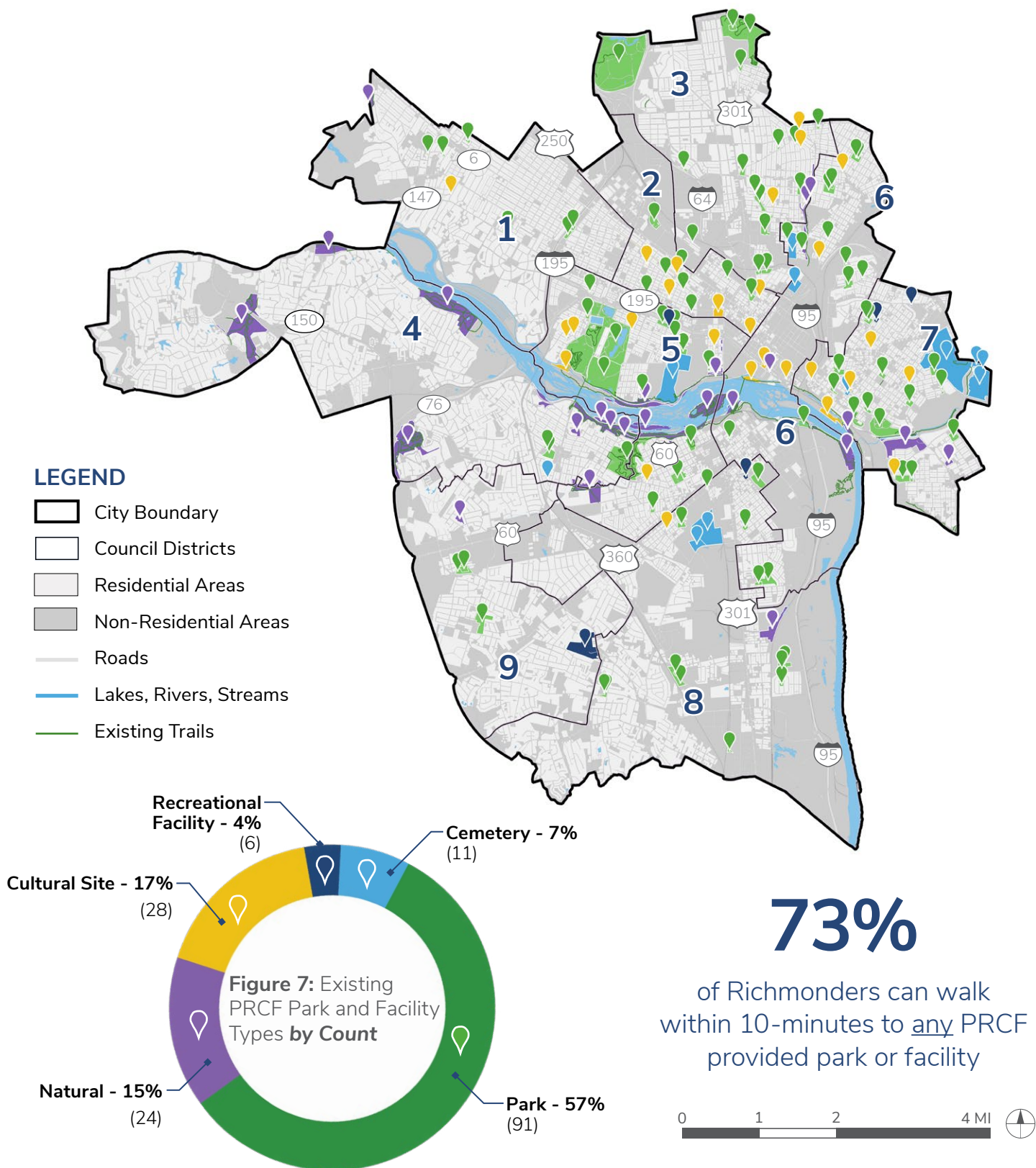
Table 2: 2024 Level-of-Service Comparisons Example, Residents per Facility. Refer to Appendix B for full analysis.

| Facility Type               | Existing Facility Count | Residents per Facility<br>Current Population | Residents per Facility<br>2037 Population |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Playgrounds                 | 86                      | 2,667                                        | 3,488                                     |
| Diamond fields              | 40                      | 5,735                                        | 7,500 <sup>1</sup>                        |
| Basketball courts           | 71                      | 3,231                                        | 4,225                                     |
| Swimming Pools <sup>2</sup> | 10                      | 22,940                                       | 30,000                                    |
| Restrooms                   | 31                      | 7,400                                        | 9,677                                     |

1 Figures in red indicate a Richmond shortfall relative to the TPL ParkServe national median figure  
2 Exterior swimming pools



## MAP 5: EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES BY CLASSIFICATION



SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop,

## How are Classifications Useful?

Not all parks are the same—and that’s a good thing. A neighborhood playground, a riverfront natural area, and a historic landmark all serve different purposes. A clear classification system gives Richmond a common language to describe these differences and helps make decisions that improve the entire park network.

Classifications help Richmond:

- **Set expectations** for what amenities and standards each type of park should provide.
- **Guide design** by establishing minimum standards for new parks and facility projects, defining what quality design means.
- **Target investments** by showing where capital projects are most needed to bring sites up to standard.
- **Improve maintenance** through consistent guidelines tailored to each type of site.

## Richmond INSPIRE’s Classification System

The Richmond INSPIRE classification system is flexible but descriptive, with three components:

- **Type:** the purpose of the site (for example, a park, natural area, or cultural site).
- **Area Served:** who the site is intended to serve, based on its size and capacity for amenities. A tiny 0.001-acre triangle, for example, will never be able to house a community center.
- **Classification:** the category that results from combining type and service area.

Looking at PRCF sites through this system shows clear patterns. By number (Figure 8 on page 22), most sites are Parks, Cultural Sites, and Natural Areas. By acreage (Figure 8 on page 22), Natural Areas and Cemeteries account for much more space despite being fewer in number—while Cultural Sites are numerous but small in size. Classification Descriptions in Table 3 on page 23 provides more detail on each category.

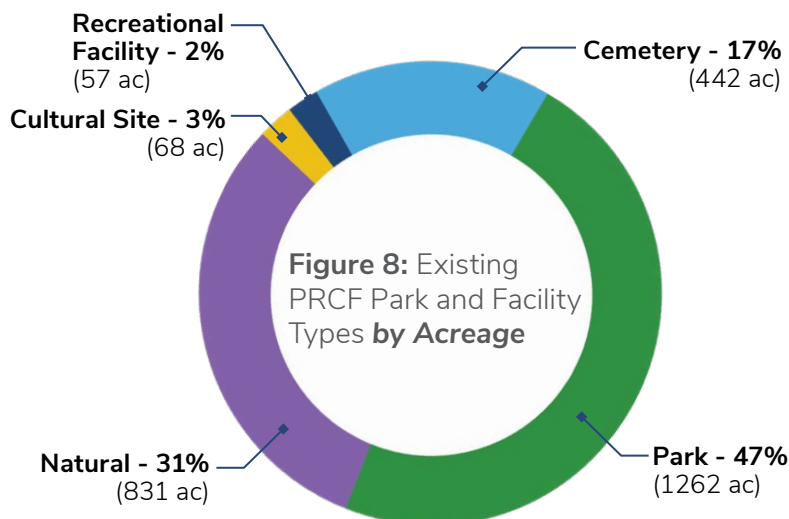
## What to Expect

Each classification comes with Classification Standards for amenities and maintenance. These standards, described in Chapter 3, ensure that every type of site—from the smallest triangle park to the largest natural area—delivers on its promise to the community.

## RELATED ACTION ITEM



[See Classification Standards in Chapter 3 to understand the standards and expectations for each type in the classification system.](#)



**Figure 8:** Existing PRCF Park and Facility Types **by Acreage**

Acres includes enclosed waterbodies like ponds. James River Parks do not include the river as part of their acreage. However, the exact perimeter of the islands fluctuates.

**Table 3: City of Richmond Park and Recreation Classification System Definitions**

|       |                       | AREA SERVED                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|       |                       | Neighborhood                                                                                                                                                                                                                | District                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | City                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| TYPES | Park                  | <b>Neighborhood Park</b><br>Parks with core amenities like playgrounds, flexible lawns, community gardens, fitness equipment, and public art. These parks project a sense of place and serve their nearest neighbors.       | <b>Community Park</b><br>Parks with core amenities plus more intensive recreational and community-building facilities like <u>community centers</u> , athletic fields, and courts. Includes Community Resilience Hubs.                   | <b>City Park</b><br>Large classical parks with abundant flexible lawn space, large trees, gardens, walking and biking trails, covered gathering areas, and capacity for large events such as pop-up markets and performances.               |
|       | Natural Area          | <b>Nature Pocket</b><br>Small protected and managed greenspace providing neighborhood shade, beauty, and habitat. Might or might not have public access or passive recreation areas, but will be actively managed.          | <b>Nature Preserve</b><br>Large protected and managed open space providing significant ecosystem services and a natural respite. Passive recreation amenities such as trails, benches, and signage. Part of a connected citywide system. | <b>Signature Nature Preserve</b><br>Iconic natural areas with stunning scenery and amenities that allow people to learn about and build connections to Richmond's natural resources.                                                        |
|       | Cultural Site         | <b>Neighborhood Culture Park</b><br>Pocket parks with monuments, public art, gardens, or other assets that are important for the cultural life and story of the neighborhood.                                               | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Signature Culture Park</b><br>Iconic parks and cultural landscapes that serve the whole city and bring people together around art, food, or play.                                                                                        |
|       | Recreational Facility | <b>Community Center</b><br>Neighborhood-based community centers. These sites may contain exterior amenities associated with the building such as courts or gardens. These serve immediate neighbors and neighborhood needs. | <b>Pool or Water Park</b><br>Park or indoor facility with a pool, splash pads, water parks, or other significant water features.                                                                                                         | <b>Athletic Complex</b><br>Clustered fields or courts that can host local clubs and leagues and sometimes regional events.                                                                                                                  |
|       | Cemetery              | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Community Cemetery</b><br>Small cemeteries, both active and historic, are carefully managed as local places for reflection, shade, beauty and passive recreation.                                                                     | <b>City Cemetery</b><br>Significant citywide resources that are managed and designed as places for reflection, learning, gardens, art, and passive recreation. Grounds are managed respectfully as environmental and cultural resources.    |
|       | Greenway              | <b>Spur Path</b><br>Paved trails, marked sidewalks, or on-road facilities that connect individual neighborhoods to the larger system of connectors and greenways.                                                           | <b>Connector Trail</b><br>Paved multi-use or natural surface trails that connect parks, schools, and other community amenities to the larger citywide and regional greenway system.                                                      | <b>Greenway</b><br>Citywide and regional paved, multi-use, or blueway trails with major trailhead amenities including restrooms, water fountains, bike repair stations, and parking lots. Considered linear parks with park-like amenities. |



# Condition Evaluation

## Asset Inventory and Assessment

For the first time, Richmond has a complete exterior visual assessment of every park and recreation asset. The inventory covered 4,718 assets—from recreation centers and pools to benches, lights, courts, play structures, and more—and assigned each a condition score from 1 (like new) to 5 (unsafe). Building interiors were not assessed. Building structures are addressed in a separate report commissioned by the Department of Public Works and General Services.

Together, these assets represent about \$260 million in *condition-adjusted value*, meaning each item's value reflects its condition. On average, individual assets scored a 2 (good), while parks overall scored a 2.7 (MAP 6 on page 25), showing many sites feel worn even if features remain functional.

The findings are clear:

- \$75 million in deferred maintenance is needed to bring assets up to good condition.
- Assets are depreciating by about \$15 million each year.
- Common items like benches are generally in good shape.
- Restroom and concession buildings, grills, half basketball courts, and some splash pads are among the poorest-condition features.
- While 73% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park or facility, only 59% can walk to a quality park or facility.

### Why It Matters

This assessment launches PRCF's *Total Asset Management 1.0*. It establishes a living database of every park and facility asset—what exists, where it is, and its condition—that can be updated to guide planning and investment. With this tool, the City can target reinvestment more precisely. The findings shaped the 10-Year Plan, prioritized reinvestment, and informed the funding and operations strategies in Chapter 10.

### RELATED ACTION ITEM



See Chapter 4 for [Strategies on how to improve condition within the park system.](#)

### DEEPER DIVE



Refer to Appendix G to learn more about the functionality and condition analysis.

# 2.7

Average Overall Condition Indicates a Need for Reinvestment

1—Like New

3—Tipping Point, Needs Investment

5—No Remaining Value, Unsafe



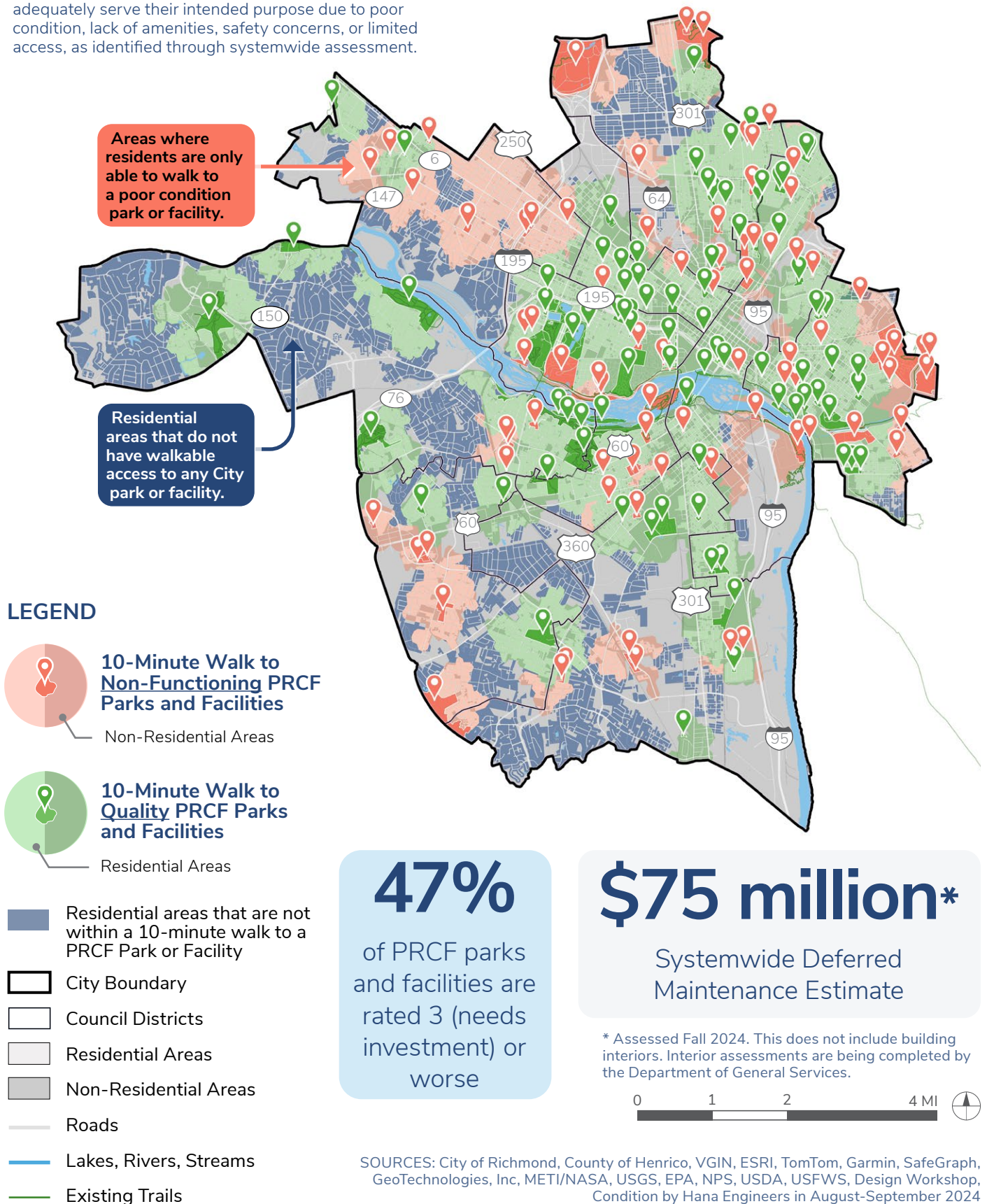
Tennis Courts in Broad Rock Creek Sports Complex with like-new surfacing.



Basketball Court in Briel Park with an overgrown, cracked court.

## MAP 6: FUNCTIONALITY OF EXISTING CITY PARKS AND FACILITIES

**Non-Functioning**—Parks or facilities that do not adequately serve their intended purpose due to poor condition, lack of amenities, safety concerns, or limited access, as identified through systemwide assessment.



# Recreation and Programming

## RELATED ACTION ITEM



See Chapter 9 for the [Community Driving Principle and recreational programming strategies](#).

For decades, PRCF has been defined by recreation. Compared to peer cities, Richmond invests more in programming. (Refer to Appendix B for more details). Many families depend on PRCF programming every day—for afterschool care, classes, athletics, aquatics, and even citywide events like concerts at Dogwood Dell. Often, residents don’t realize all these activities are part of PRCF, but they shape daily life across the city.

At the heart of PRCF’s recreation are these core services—aquatics, afterschool, camps, athletics, cultural arts and dance, outdoor nature programs, fitness, senior services, therapeutic recreation, and federally supported food programs. These services are designed to be affordable, accessible, and central to the department’s mission, with free or low-cost options offered whenever possible.

Gaps, however, are clear. MAP 7 on page 27 shows uneven distribution—athletics and afterschool programs are available in many neighborhoods, while aquatics and environmental education remain limited, for example. Tracking is another challenge. In 2023, only 55% of available program slots were filled according to RecTrac, PRCF’s online registration tracking software, but that figure undercounts actual use because adult participation, drop-in activities, partner-led programs, and large city events are rarely recorded. The result is a data picture that fails to capture the full reach and impact of PRCF programming.

Accurate tracking matters because Richmonders value these programs and want more opportunities that reflect their communities, ages, and interests. To deliver on that promise, PRCF must be able to measure demand, improve access, and build equity into the system. Chapter 9 outlines strategies for community-driven programming, while Chapter 10 details how better tracking and evaluation will help every program count.

**Table 4:** Overall Registration Data, RecTrac, 2023

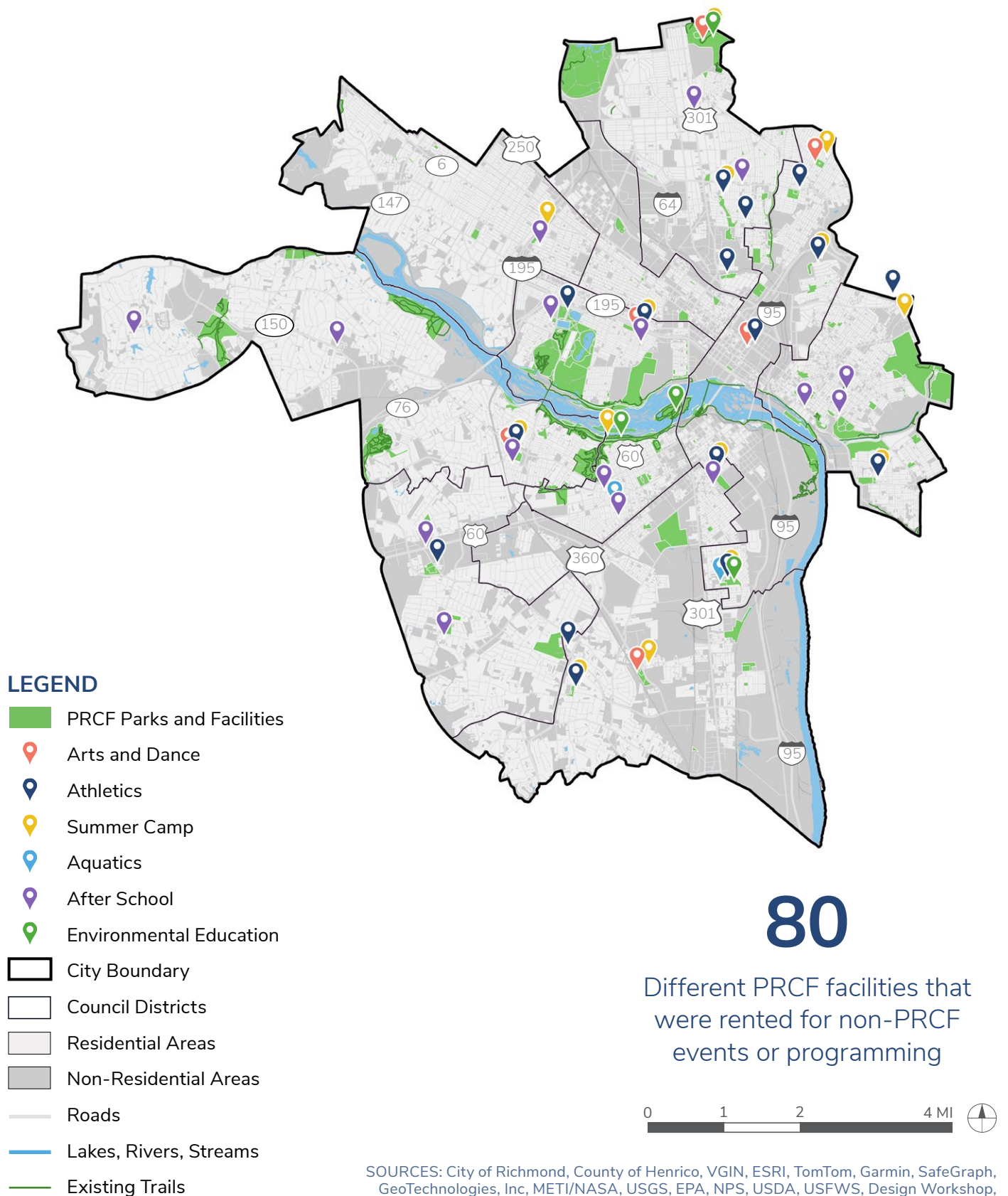
|                               |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Total Registrations Available | 10,828    |
| Total Registrants             | 5,969     |
| % Registrations Filled        | 55%       |
| Total Fees Collected          | \$331,052 |

**Table 5:** PRCF Programming Participation, RecTrac, 2023

| Programming Type     | People Registered | Average Age |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Aquatics             | 302               | 23.9        |
| Afterschool          | 823               | 8.5         |
| Camps                | 996               | 10.2        |
| Sports/ Athletics    | 644               | 14.8        |
| Culture/ Arts/ Dance | 247               | 22.5        |



## MAP 7: EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES



# Partners Snapshot

**RELATED ACTION ITEM**

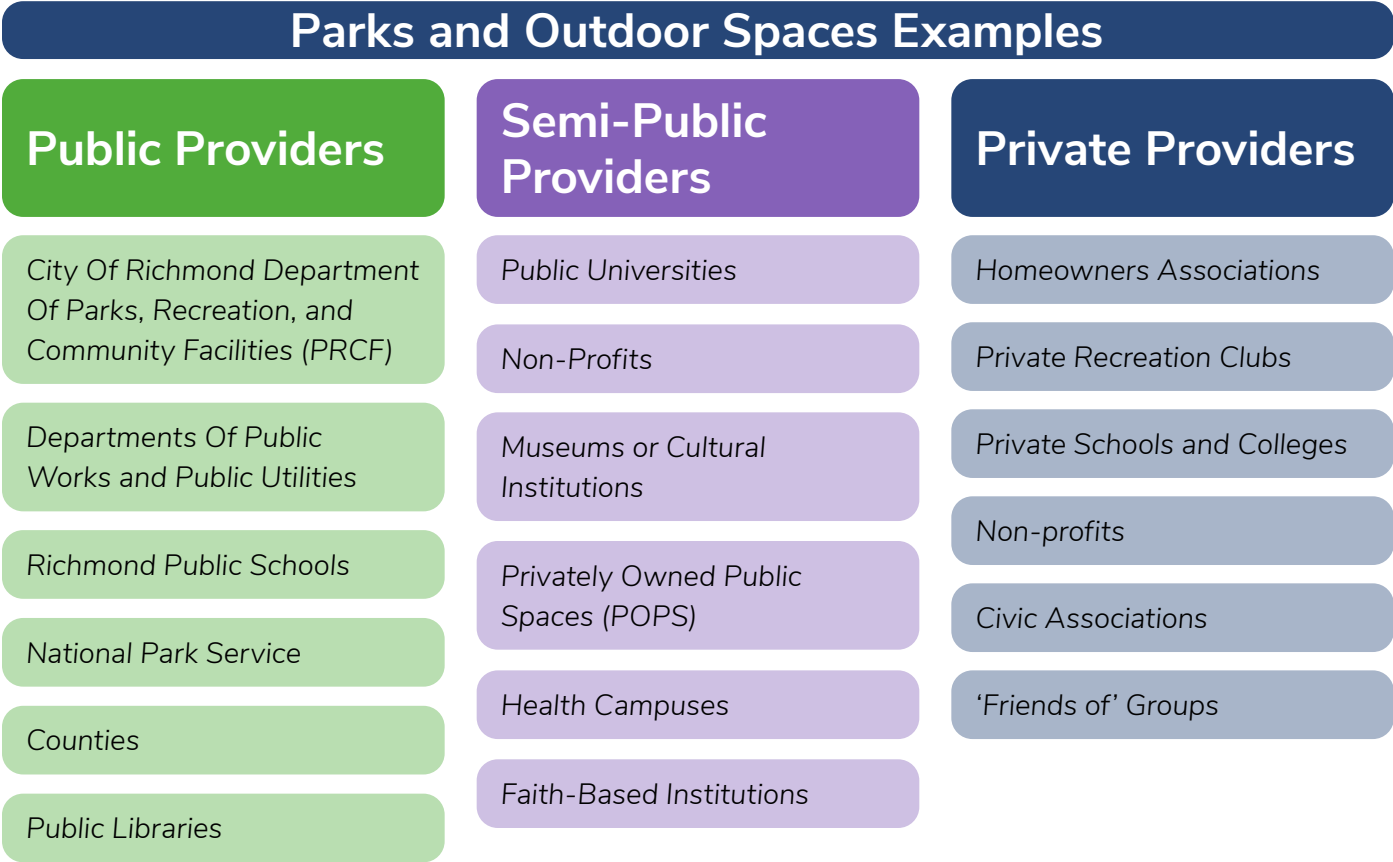


See the [Chapter 10, Implementation for proposed partnership strategies](#).

PRCF is part of a wider network of park and recreation providers across Richmond. This network includes schools, nonprofits, community groups, semi-public providers that offer public access, and private providers that serve more limited audiences. Together, they all shape a system that goes well beyond what PRCF can provide alone.

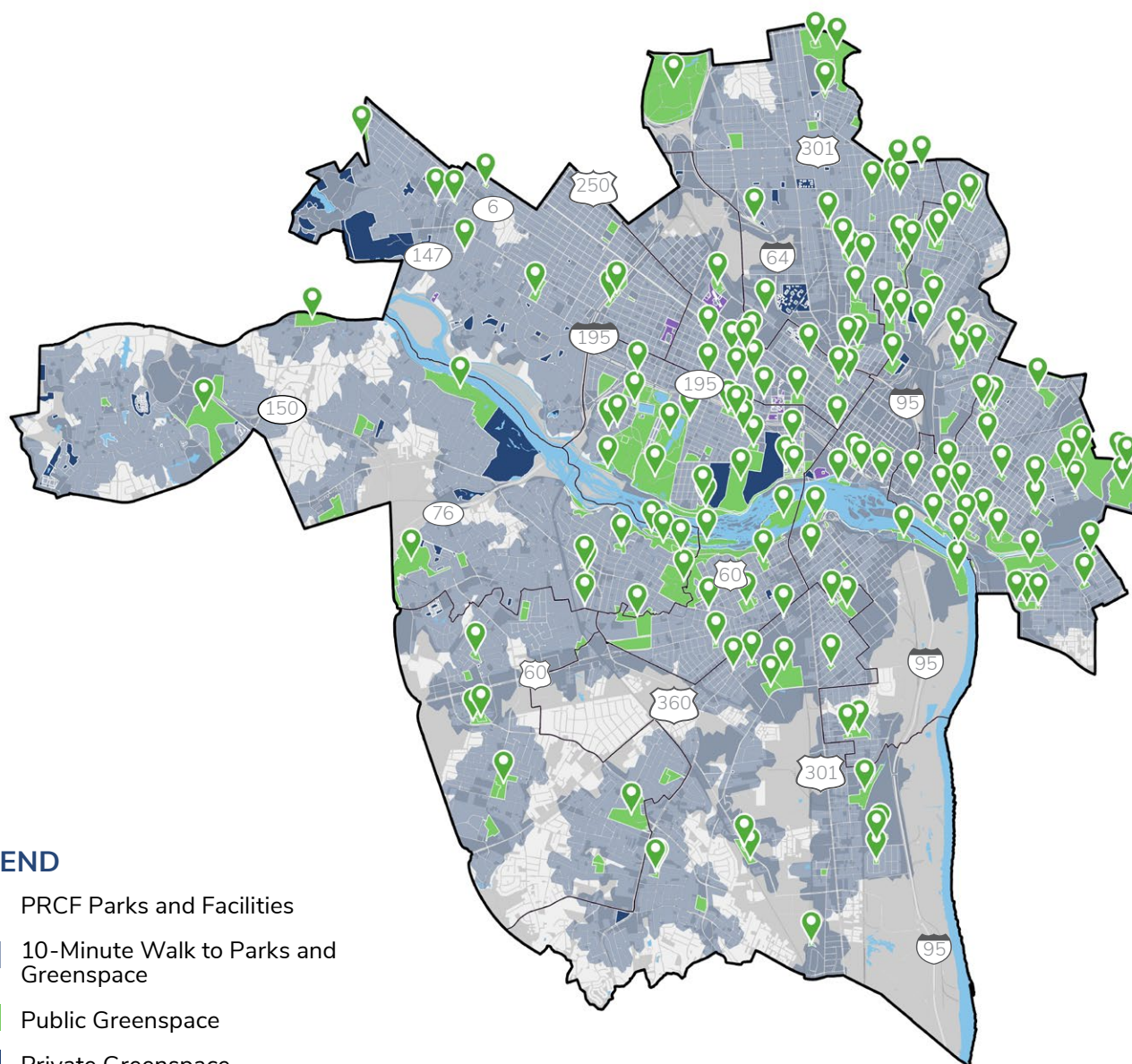
Strengthening existing partnerships—and creating new ones where they don't yet exist—is essential to building an equitable system. Collaboration can close gaps, stretch dollars further, and prevent inefficiencies like duplicating facilities side by side. By working together with partner agencies, Richmond can make better use of every resource and ensure communities can access the parks, recreation, and green space they need.

MAP 8 on page 29 shows the impact: while 73% of residents can walk to any PRCF site, 86% of all residents are within a 10-minute walk to a park or greenspace when private and semi-private sites are included. Partnerships with other providers are the bridge to true citywide access.



**Figure 9:** Examples of different types of agencies who offer parks and recreation throughout Richmond

## MAP 8: 10-MINUTE WALK TO ANY PARK OR GREENSPACE INSIDE OF RICHMOND



### LEGEND

-  PRCF Parks and Facilities
-  10-Minute Walk to Parks and Greenspace
-  Public Greenspace
-  Private Greenspace
-  Semi-Private Greenspace
-  City Boundary
-  Council Districts
-  Residential Areas
-  Non-residential Areas
-  Roads
-  Lakes, Rivers, Streams
-  Existing Trails

# 86%

of Richmonders can walk within  
10-minutes to any park, facility  
or greenspace



SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop,



2



# PUBLIC PROCESS

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- How Public Input Drives the Plan
- Summary: What Was Heard
- Community Vision
- Engagement Process



Workshop Series 1 Event at Midtown Greene



Workshop Series 2 Event at the grand opening of Southside Community Center

## How Public Input Drives the Plan

*Richmond INSPIRE* was shaped by the people of Richmond. The planning process asked big questions: What should the park system look like 10 years from now—or even 100? How should it fit into everyday life? What role can parks, community centers, greenways, and natural areas play in making Richmond healthier, safer, and more beautiful?

Over 16 months, thousands of Richmonders weighed in. Their voices defined the Vision, the Driving Principles, and the Strategies that make up *Richmond INSPIRE*. The plan reflects what people said they needed most, what they valued, and what they hoped the park system could become—while balancing different opinions and perspectives.

Figure 10 on page 33 shows how public engagement informed each stage of the plan, from

identifying needs to refining recommendations. Figure 12 on page 37 illustrates the scale of participation—residents connected through workshops, online and physically distributed surveys, focus groups, and neighborhood conversations.

The process does not end here. *Richmond INSPIRE* proposes new systems and procedures to fine-tune implementation as community needs evolve. Just as engagement shaped this plan, it will remain essential to putting the plan into action and keeping Richmond's park and recreation system responsive, equitable, and community-driven.

Read on to see how the community helped shape *Richmond INSPIRE*—what methods were used to gather input and what residents had to say about the future of parks and recreation.



# Learning From Engagement

Developing the community vision and understanding needs and priorities

## Needs Assessment

### Public Workshop Series #1

|                                         |                                                     |                               |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>11</b><br>Facilitated Focus Groups   | <b>100</b><br>September District Workshop Attendees | <b>502</b><br>Coloring Sheets |
| <b>2</b><br>Steering Committee Meetings | <b>24</b><br>Neighborhood Meetings & Pop-Ups        |                               |



### Citywide Survey #1

**2,195**  
Total Survey Responses  
(Online, Paper, Pictorial, and Spanish)

Refining community priorities and physical projects

## Shaping Priorities



### Public Workshop Series #2

|                             |                                      |                                   |                                         |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <b>2</b><br>March Workshops | <b>6</b><br>Community Center Pop-Ups | <b>89</b><br>Online Map Responses | <b>2</b><br>Steering Committee Meetings |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|

### Citywide Survey #2

**500**  
Survey Responses



**16,000**  
Visits To The Project Website

### Project Website

**+19,000**  
Estimated Community Touchpoints

## Final Recommendations

**35 + 206**  
Strategies      Action Items

Figure 10: How Engagement Informed the Plan

# What was Heard

## Key Themes

People love Richmond’s parks, community centers, and greenways, and they want the City to invest in improving and taking care of the system.



There is **strong support** for the plan’s focus on equity and resilience.

Community feedback helped shape and refine the plan’s Driving Principles: Access, Welcoming, Equity, Quality, Environment, and Community.

**Poor condition** is the biggest current barrier to facility use.

**Tailor** facility designs, events, and programs to meet the needs and interests of Richmond’s diverse communities.

There is an **urgent need to improve accessibility**, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities, in parks and community facilities.

People need **easier-to-find and up-to-date information** about parks and programs.



Richmonders emphasized the importance of **consistent standard** of quality and care in all parks. These parks should also have art and other elements that reflect the needs and character of their specific neighborhoods.



# A Community Vision

From thousands of voices, three community takeaways emerged (Figure 11 on page 35). These takeaways reflect consistent input heard from residents across neighborhoods and backgrounds and capture a shared vision for the future of parks and recreation. Early engagement shaped these takeaways, and later engagement confirmed that these priorities were widely shared across residents.

Residents described their dream parks and recreation system as one that is safe, welcoming, and easy to access, with well-designed and well-maintained parks and facilities that support daily life and bring people together. They emphasized the need for spaces that respond to changing conditions and serve Richmond's communities.

## Vision Statement

These three community takeaways form the foundation of the plan and come together in the *Richmond INSPIRE* Vision Statement (page 36). The statement reflects what was heard through public engagement and defines a shared vision for parks and recreation in Richmond. It expresses, in clear terms, what residents want the system to be and what it should provide for communities across the city.

## COMMUNITY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Our parks, greenways, and community centers should be beautifully designed and built and maintained to last.

Residents want thoughtful investment—reinvesting in existing facilities, designing new ones with community input, and ensuring long-term care through adequate staffing and resources.

- 2 Our parks, greenways, and community centers should make Richmond a more beautiful, more resilient, and more comfortable place to live.

As the city grows hotter, more flood-prone, and less green, residents see PRCF as essential infrastructure—creating green corridors and public oasis that connect and strengthen neighborhoods.

- 3 Community centers should be places where people come together—and where the community can rely on support in times of need.

PRCF community centers have a proud history of serving the recreational and social needs of Richmonders. Those who use them already value them and want more programs. To reach more people, PRCF should expand outreach, diversify programs, and ensure everyone feels welcome, strengthening their role as trusted spaces for both daily life and emergency response.

**Figure 11:** Community Takeaways





Richmond INSPIRE community resource fair at the Southside Community Center Grand Re-Opening as a part of Workshop Series 2

To ensure that the Vision Statement accurately reflects Richmond’s vision, it was presented to the public and received strong support. Survey responses confirmed that residents agreed with its direction and priorities — reinforcing that it reflects values that are widely shared across the city. This confirmation was important to the planning process, because the Vision Statement is the

defining statement for the plan. It establishes the direction for parks and recreation in Richmond and sets a clear expectation for the future of the system. Every strategy, action, and investment in this plan intends to align with this vision and works toward achieving it.



## Richmond INSPIRE Vision Statement



**Richmond’s parks, greenways, and community centers are safe, thoughtfully designed, well-maintained, and loved by all. Our parks strengthen and connect all neighborhoods, inspire healthier lives, and create the fabric of a resilient and beautiful city.**



# Engagement Interactions

11

Workshops  
Throughout  
the City



2,600+

Paper and Online  
Survey Respondents



11

Facilitated  
Focus Groups



30+

Neighborhood  
Meetings and  
Pop-Ups Events

16,000+

Unique Visits to the  
Project Website



2

Languages used  
for Engagement  
Materials (English +  
Spanish)

4

Steering  
Committee  
Meetings



35

Richmond *INSPIRE*  
Ambassadors and Steering  
Committee Members

1,500+

People Engaged In-  
Person



Figure 12: Engagement Touchpoint Snapshot



Figure 13: Richmond INSPIRE Engagement Schedule

# Engagement Process

## Overview

Richmond INSPIRE kicked off in January 2024 and unfolded over a 16-month schedule (Figure 13 on page 38). During this time, PRCF staff, stakeholders, community members, and partners shaped a shared vision for the city's parks and recreation system.

Engagement took many forms—workshops in every Council District, online and paper surveys in multiple languages and a pictorial version, community meetings and events, pop-ups, focus groups, and input from Park Ambassadors and the Steering Committee. Across engagement methods, thousands of Richmonders weighed in—their feedback became the foundation of *Richmond INSPIRE*. To make sure every community was represented, geographic and demographic data was used to assess which areas of the city were responding and adjusted

outreach strategies in real time when gaps in participation appeared. This approach attempted to ensure that the voices shaping the plan reflect the full diversity of Richmond's neighborhoods.

Lessons from this process informed several action items to help PRCF strengthen engagement moving forward, underscoring that authentic community feedback is essential to long-term success.

### DEEPER DIVE



See the Engagement Appendix E: for a detailed description of outreach methods and limitations

### RELATED ACTION ITEM



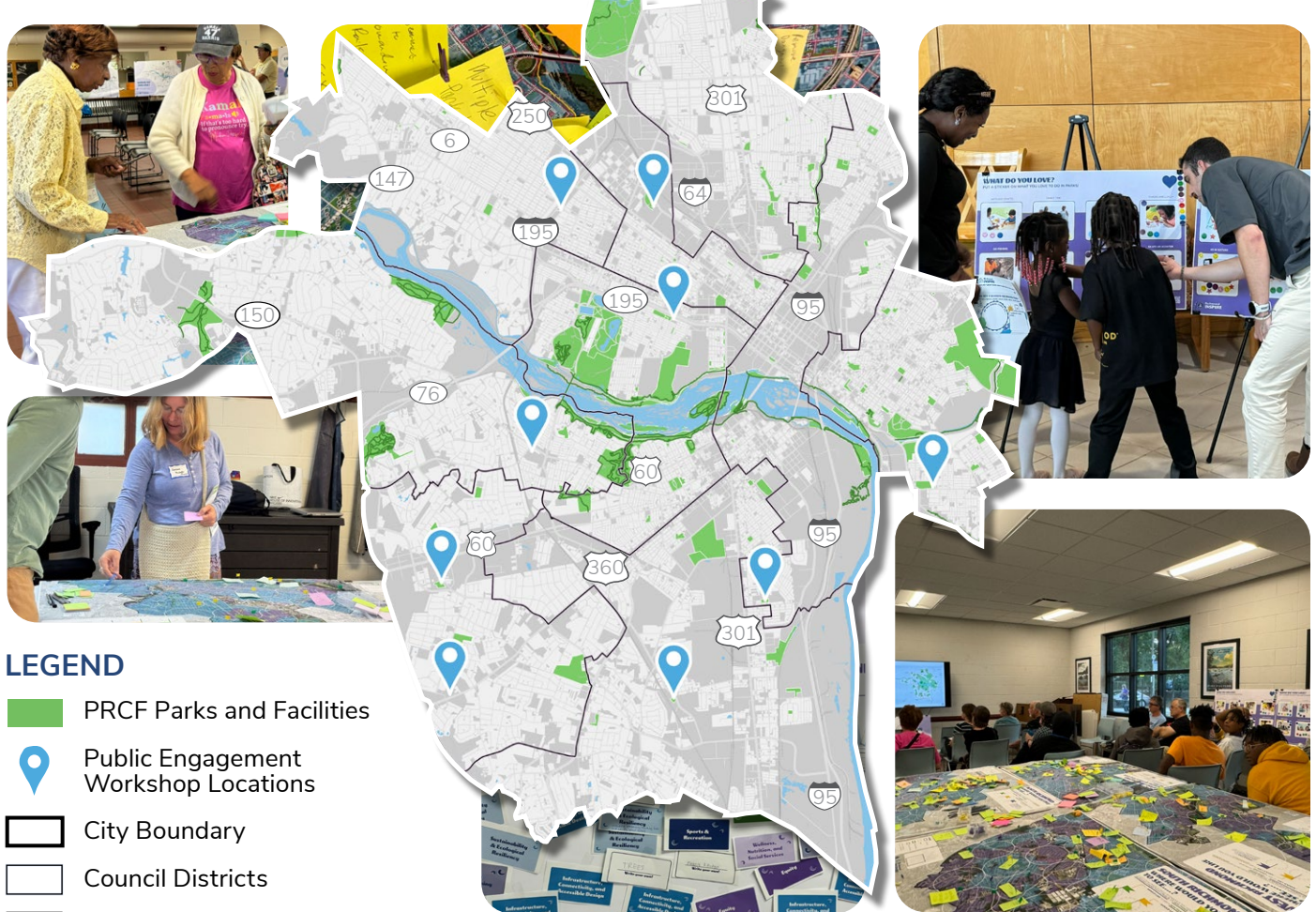
See the Chapter 6, [Equity for proposed community engagement strategies](#).



## MAP 9: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP LOCATIONS



Public workshops were held in each council district



### LEGEND

- PRCF Parks and Facilities
- 📍 Public Engagement Workshop Locations
- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Residential Areas
- Non-residential Areas
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams
- Existing Trails

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SOURCES: City of Richmond, VGIN, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Safegraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop

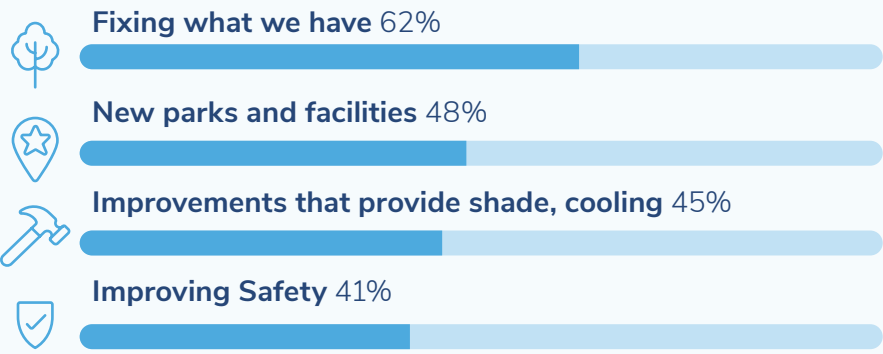




# Survey 1 Snapshot



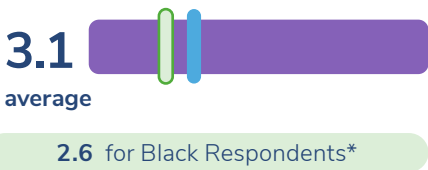
What are the top ways to make Richmond’s parks and recreation system **more equitable**?



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being excellent, how do you rate the quality of Richmond **parks and facilities** you visit?^



On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being excellent, how do you rate **PRCF programs, classes and events**?



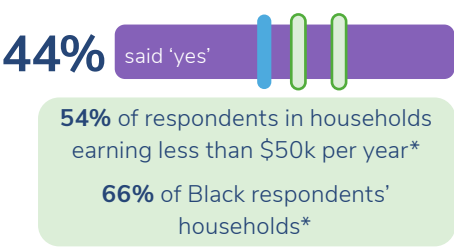
What are the most **important plan benefits and themes**?

- Safety
- Nature Conservation
- Inclusivity and Accessibility
- Environmental Health
- Equity
- Beautiful Communities and Neighborhoods
- Community Strengthening
- Climate Resilience
- Neighborhood Parks within a 10-Minute Walk

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being excellent, how do you rate the **maintenance** of parks and facilities?



Have you or your household attended any **PRCF programs, classes or events** in the last 12 months?



\* Survey responses were filtered by demographic variables to understand where there might be different needs across different Richmond communities. These call-outs highlight where the responses of certain demographic groups differed significantly from the survey responses overall.  
^ Results from questions that used the scale 1 to 5 have been inverted in this report to match other 1 (positive) to 5 (negative) scales within the plan document. When surveyed, respondents answered scale questions with 5 being positive (5 stars) and 1 being negative.

"Give the surrounding neighborhoods agency to shape, operate, and upkeep the facilities."



What keeps you from using Richmond's parks and **recreation facilities** more often?

**Poor condition** 27%

**Lack of information** 19%

**Poor quality** 16%

**Hard to access by bike or foot** 16%

**Safety concerns** 15%

**Other** 7%

What keeps you from using Richmond's **programming** more often?

**Lack of information** 42%

**Timing and schedule conflicts** 20%

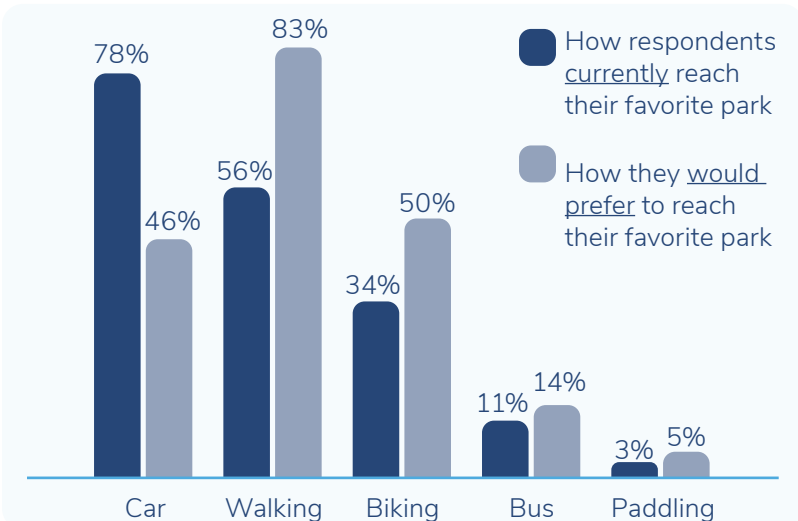
**Lack of interest** 13%

**Difficult to sign up** 12%

**Lack of availability** 10%

**Other** 3%

How do you **currently** reach your favorite park, and how would you **prefer** to be able to reach your favorite park?



# Residents' **BIG IDEAS** for Parks and Recreation

**"All facilities have the same quality units and maintenance done.** Restrooms facilities instead of outdoor portable units."

**"Fix and improve what we have,** interconnect them to the extent possible."

**"Please give more access to the river!**  
We are the RIVER city"

**"A fully walkable city,** with parks and community gardens everywhere you go. Less dependency on cars for transportation because everything is walkable or bikeable."

**"Partner with private business to bring life back to underutilized facilities"**

**"Better/broader communication!** The website is hard to navigate (especially on mobile). I want to stay up to date but have a hard time doing so."

**"An emphasis on nature and biodiversity** could be coupled with **educational events for all ages.** This would also support tourism by improving and supplementing facilities associated with the James River."

**"That the department is prioritized, fully and completely funded and staffed** with dedicated, trained, talented people of all ages from all walks of life."

**"All playgrounds and parks must be accessible for all people.** Use schools as anchors where possible. Every newly built school should have a community space managed by Rec and Parks. Put playgrounds at libraries."

**"We are so grateful to the staff and teams that have loved our kids at the Westover Community Center after school for Westover Hills Elementary. I would love to see those staff valued by giving them the infrastructure that they deserve."**

**"That they [parks] are used by all city residents, regardless of means or socioeconomic status.** I want them to be top quality and a notable asset in Richmond City."

Select quotes from Survey 1. Quotes may have minor edits for clarity or length.



# Shaping *Richmond INSPIRE* Priorities

## Safety as a Priority

Safety emerged as an important priority during the first round of engagement. In round two, when asked to identify what would make areas feel safer in Richmond’s parks and facilities, the following is public input on how to increase safety.



“Center those with the least mobility/accessibility (children, older adults, people with disabilities) in planning and the result will serve everyone better!!”



What are the top ways to make Richmond’s parks and recreation system **safer**?



**Improved maintenance and cleanliness**  
70%



**Improved access to shade or water**  
52%

- 42% • **Enforcement of rules**
- 38% • **More park staff presence**
- 30% • **Improve safe travel to parks and facilities**
- 28% • **More organized events, interesting features, and activities**
- 21% • **More police presence and patrols**
- 20% • **Increase the feeling of welcome and belonging**
- 18% • **More security cameras**
- 12% • **Barrier fencing around play areas**
- 5% • **I don’t have safety concerns for parks and facilities**

## Confirming Public Opinion

To what extent do you **agree** with the following statements?

**75%**



Every local park should at least have standard features or improvements.

**73%**



I would like to see even more events, classes, and leagues for people of all backgrounds and abilities.

**69%**



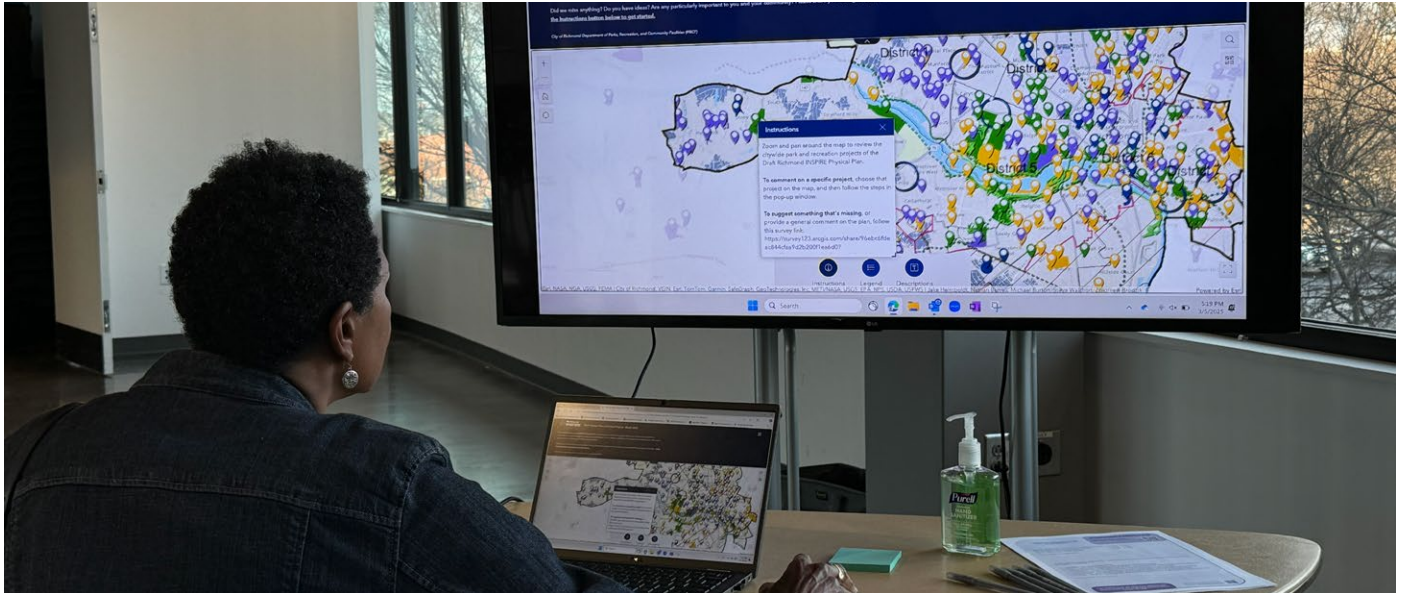
Richmond should have a large, downtown park or square that is beautiful, easy to reach, and great for community events.

**44%**



I’m proud of how much the City of Richmond invests in its recreational programming.

# Outreach Strategies



A participant of Workshop Series 2 at Midtown Greene, navigates the proposed physical projects on a digital map

Outreach was designed to connect with residents across neighborhoods, community spaces, and everyday places. Each method played a role in building a more complete understanding of community priorities.

## Methods

To reach Richmonders where they live, work, and gather, *Richmond INSPIRE* relied on a wide variety of outreach strategies. From

citywide surveys and workshops in every Council District to pop-ups at existing events, coloring sheets for children, and web-based interactive maps, the planning process sought to meet people where they were. A dedicated project website also provided updates throughout the 16-month process, with materials available for review and feedback online. In the second round of workshops, engagement expanded beyond formal sessions to include appearances at neighborhood fairs and community celebrations, ensuring even more opportunities to participate.

## Advertising the Process

The following were used to advertise the planning process and engagement opportunities

to as broad an audience as possible:

- Social media
- Press releases
- Radio programs
- Local TV
- Flyers
- Yard signs
- Emails
- Networking
- Community center advertisements
- City Council presentation
- Planning Commission presentation

## Community Centers

Community centers served as everyday touchpoints for engagement. Flyers, business cards, and surveys were distributed at PRCF sites

## DEEPER DIVE



[Take a look at Richmond INSPIRE's website to stay up to date on the plan and implementation \[external link\].](#)

across the city, while coloring sheets invited children to share their ideas through drawings. During the workshop series 2, centers also hosted boards and posters that allowed residents—especially youth—to interact with plan materials outside of formal meetings. These everyday opportunities ensured that feedback could come from families who might not attend a citywide event but still use PRCF spaces regularly

## Park Ambassadors

Park Ambassadors are PRCF staff who served as *Richmond INSPIRE* plan liaisons to their neighborhoods and the broader public. The Ambassadors played a key role in engaging residents and gathering formal and informal feedback from each of the nine Council Districts.

Park Ambassadors also helped ensure that *Richmond INSPIRE*'s recommendations address operations and staffing needs.

## PRCF Staff Engagement

PRCF staff had dedicated opportunities to shape *Richmond INSPIRE* from the very beginning. An internal workshop and anonymous survey launched the process, allowing staff to share candid feedback that helped frame early priorities. Later, during the second engagement window, staff participated in focus groups to review the draft Vision, Driving Principles, and Big Moves, offering input on the direction of the plan framework.

## Steering Committee

More than 70 Richmond residents applied to serve on the *Richmond INSPIRE* Steering Committee, which provided guidance and oversight throughout the planning process. Steering Committee members were chosen to represent a diversity of Richmond communities, interests, and areas of expertise, with representation from all the Council Districts. The Steering Committee

participated in regular virtual and in-person meetings and provided feedback on public engagement strategies and materials; draft plan recommendations; and implementation strategies and opportunities.

## Focus Groups

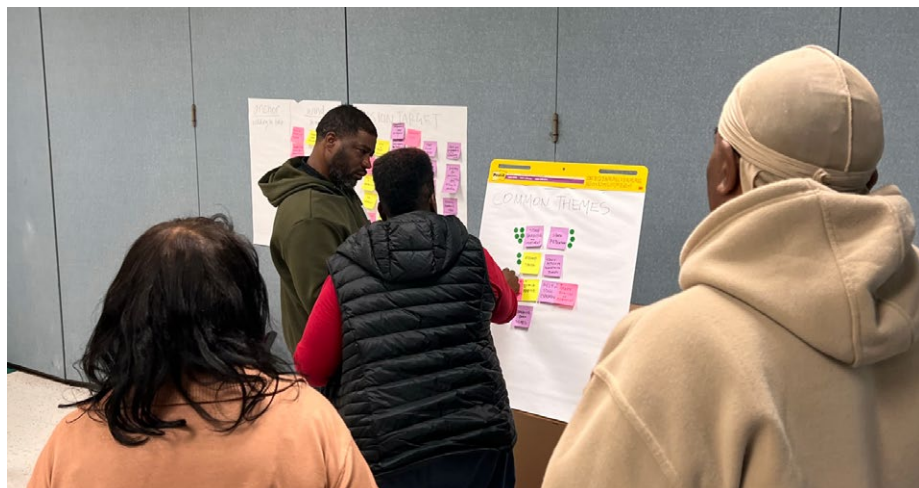
Focus groups and stakeholder conversations provided insight into specific park and recreation user concerns and aspirations. Focus group topics included:

- Sports, Recreation, and Youth Programming
- Equity, Wellness, Nutrition, and Social Services
- Arts, Culture, and Historic Resources
- Infrastructure, Connectivity, Accessible Design
- Sustainability & Ecological Resiliency
- Management Partners and Urban Forestry
- James River Park System

## Community Surveys

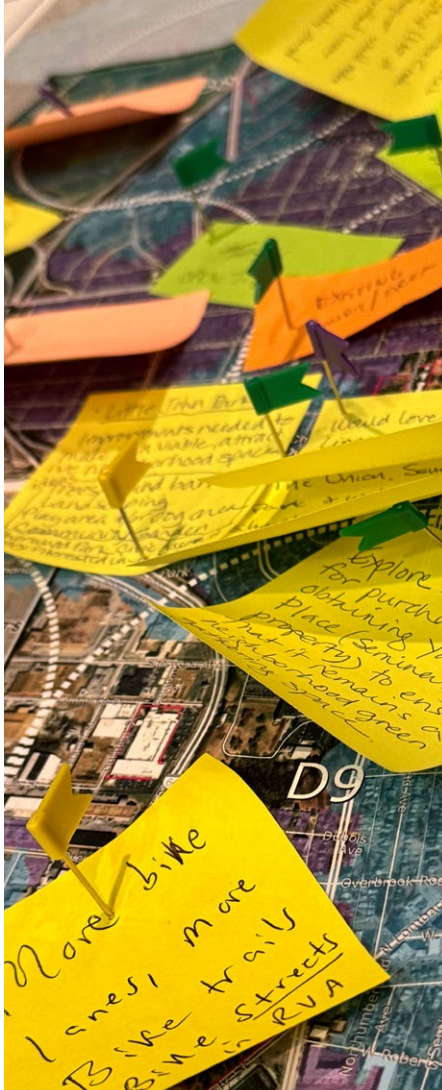
Two citywide surveys were launched to engage a broad cross-section of the Richmond community. Surveys were offered online and in print format, in English and Spanish.

The first survey sought to capture the community's current use of and vision for Richmond's parks and recreation. Gift cards were raffled off to three random survey respondents. The second survey asked for feedback on draft plan



PRCF staff participate in a workshop to kick-off the project in early 2024





Residents had the opportunity to provide specific feedback in Workshop Series 1 on where and what improvements they wanted to see

recommendations and asked community members how to prioritize capital investments.

Between survey 1 and 2, a shortened 5 minute survey was launched to collect oral and targeted responses.

## Community Workshops

The City hosted two community workshop series.

The first, in September 2024, included nine workshops held at different times of day in locations across the city—one location in each council district. It invited community members to learn about the planning process, review the team’s inventory and analysis work, and weigh in on the future of Richmond parks and recreation.

The second workshops, held in March 2025, were designed as community celebrations, with free food, entertainment, and activities. The main workshop south of the river was able to be timed with the grand re-opening of Southside Community Center, which included a community resource fair and local representative engagement. Participants at workshop series 2 were asked to review draft plan recommendations and to provide feedback and priorities.

Materials from both workshop series were also made available online for review and feedback. Raffles for *Richmond INSPIRE* swag were offered at both rounds of workshops.

## Pop-Ups

PRCF staff and Park Ambassadors set up booths and tables at previously planned events across the city to advertise the *Richmond INSPIRE*

process and seek feedback and conversations.

## Coloring Sheets

PRCF handed out *Richmond INSPIRE* coloring sheets to allow children at schools and community centers to draw what they love or hope to see improved about Richmond parks and recreation.

## Interactive Web Maps

Web maps allowed community members to interact with the planning process from their phones, tablets, or computers.

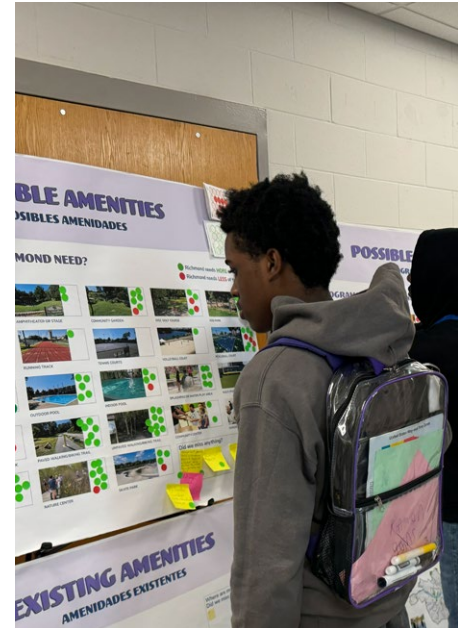
The Community Capsule web map invited Richmonders to share their favorite parks, greenways, and community centers, and to leave comments about their park and recreation memories.

The Vision Plan Projects web map invited viewers to rate and leave comments on proposed capital projects.

## Takeaways

Together, these outreach strategies made it possible to hear from residents across Richmond and confirm the priorities reflected in this plan. The engagement results and Vision Statement are grounded in this approach and reflect input from a broad and diverse group of residents.





Youth-focused engagement boards at Pine Camp Community Center

Teens participate at Powhatan Hill Community Center



**Figure 14:** Youth coloring sheets were distributed at schools and centers to vision their dream parks. Hundreds of coloring sheets were received. See Appendix E for all collected coloring sheets.



# VISION, FRAMEWORK, AND DRIVING PRINCIPLES

---

- *Richmond INSPIRE Framework*
- Dream Vision Plan Map
- Project Scoring and Prioritization
- 10-Year Priority Project Map
- Classification Standards
- Navigate the Strategies





Kids learn to cook at a PRCF community center cooking class

# Richmond INSPIRE Vision and Framework

The community's vision for parks and recreation—expressed through the *Richmond INSPIRE* Vision Statement—forms the foundation of the plan's framework and objectives.

## Richmond INSPIRE Framework

Through community engagement, Richmonders expressed strong support for a *multiple benefits* approach for the future of parks and recreation. The six key benefits identified—Access, Welcoming, Equity, Environment, Quality, and Community—became the *Richmond INSPIRE* Driving Principles. *Richmond INSPIRE* builds on these principles, incorporating best practices and defining specific actions to realize the community's vision. Together, the Driving Principles create the structure of the plan's framework, shaping every part of the plan. "Figure 16: Richmond INSPIRE Framework" on page 53 illustrates how the plan's direction flows from the Vision Statement through the Driving Principles to specific Action Items.

## What is a Multiple Benefits Approach?

Park agencies in the United States once focused primarily on building amenities and offering basic programs. Over the past two decades, best practices have shifted toward a *multiple benefits* model, where parks serve as essential spaces for health, social connection, and resilience. Cities nationwide are adopting this approach, recognizing parks as vital to infrastructure, the environment, health, education, and the economy. Richmond's community has embraced this vision, strengthening the city's ability to maximize funding and resources through coordinated action among departments and partners.



## Richmond INSPIRE Vision Statement



**Richmond's parks, greenways, and community centers are safe, thoughtfully designed, well-maintained, and loved by all. Our parks strengthen and connect all neighborhoods, inspire healthier lives, and create the fabric of a resilient and beautiful city.**





## Driving Principles

## Big Moves

### CH. 4 - ACCESS

Everyone in Richmond can walk to a great park in 10 minutes or less. Parks are easy to reach using safe, comfortable, and beautiful streets and paths.



Walkable Parks For All



Connected System



### CH. 5 -WELCOMING

Richmond's parks, trails, and centers use public art, park design, and programs to celebrate Richmond's people and culture. Parks are welcoming and reflect the neighborhoods they serve.



Safe And Welcoming Parks



Cultural Preservation & Celebration



### CH. 6 - EQUITY

Richmond's parks and recreation projects are shaped by the community. They make neighborhoods stronger without pushing people out. The City is open about where it spends parks and recreation dollars.



Community-Driven System



Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods



### CH. 7 - ENVIRONMENT

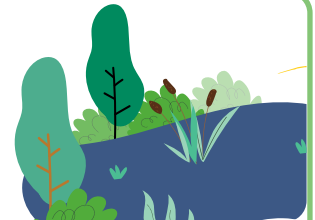
Richmond's parks help keep the city cooler, greener, healthier, and better prepared for the future. The City leads the way in green design and stewardship of the environment.



Cool, Healthy, Resilient City



Green Design, Sustainability, & Stewardship



### CH. 8 - QUALITY

Richmond's parks and community centers are built to last, maintained to high standards, and supported by ongoing investment in staff, funding, and partnerships. Staff are encouraged to be lifelong learners and dedicated stewards of the city's parks and recreation system.



Standard of Excellence



Sustainable Funding And Partnerships



World-Class Staff



### CH. 9 - COMMUNITY

Richmond's parks and community centers bring people together through diverse and inclusive programming. Recreation centers are engines of social, economic, and environmental resilience.



Recreation & Programming For All



Park-Based Urban Agriculture



Community Resilience Hubs



**Figure 15:** Richmond INSPIRE Driving Principle Visions and Big Moves

# A Community Vision in Action

The *Richmond INSPIRE* Vision Statement reflects a shared direction for parks and recreation in Richmond. The framework carries that vision forward through the plan's strategies, action items, and physical projects.

- The Driving Principles and Big Moves define the plan's focus and establish a clear set of priorities for decision-making and investment. They shape the strategies and action items that guide improvements across the parks and recreation system and ensure that each action contributes to multiple community benefits. Chapters 4–9 explore these strategies in greater detail.
- The Dream Vision Plan Map and 10-Year Priority Project Map show how the vision is expressed through physical change across the city. They identify where parks, greenways, and community facilities are needed and how they can evolve over time. Classification Standards define expectations for each physical project type and support a consistent level of quality across the system.

Together, these elements ensure that the community's vision is carried through into action.

## DEEPER DIVE



Review "Classification Standards" on page 68.

### New Physical Project Example:

Greater Scott's Addition Park Search Area

### What is the project's classification?

New Community Park

### What will proposed physical projects look like?

Classification standards define what each classification should include and how it should function, helping translate the project maps into clear expectations on the ground. Each project is tied to a classification, such as a community park, with corresponding standards that outline expected amenities, features, and design elements. This connection clarifies what is appropriate for each site, what should be constructed, and how success is measured, ensuring projects meet quality expectations and function as intended.

### What do the Classification Standards show about this project?

Amenities and design are guided through community input, but it would be expected for this project to include some of these amenities:



### 'PARK' CLASSIFICATION TYPES

Neighborhood



Community



City



# Richmond INSPIRE Framework

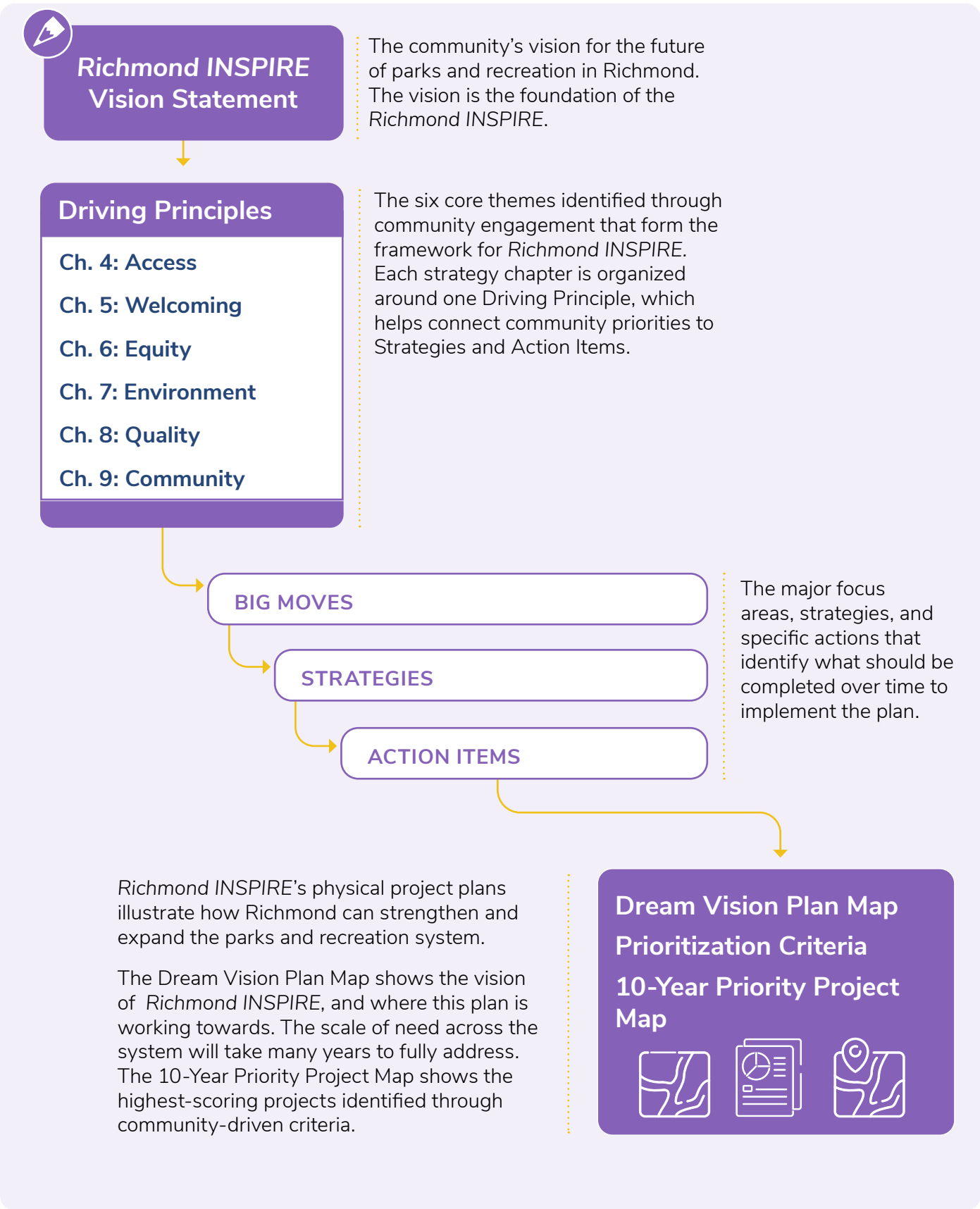


Figure 16: Richmond INSPIRE Framework



# Richmond *INSPIRE* Dream Vision Plan Map

The Dream Vision Plan Map represents the long-term realization of Richmonders' vision for parks and recreation. The Vision Plan is a living document that identifies future park, greenway, and community facility projects by proposed classification and investment type. It reflects the full scale of need across the system and establishes a long-term direction for investment. Read on for more information about how the projects are scored and prioritized for the *Richmond INSPIRE* 10-Year Priority Project Map.

## Physical Plan Investment Types

Each project is assigned a physical plan investment type that describes the kind of action proposed. Project investment types include improving existing parks and facilities, creating new parks or facilities, preserving sites over time, conserving land, and advancing greenways or partner-led connections. These categories clarify whether a project is a renovation, a new opportunity, a preservation effort, or another form of physical investment.

Project types describe the type of investment but do not define the intended outcome. That role is defined by the classification system. Each project is assigned a park or facility classification, such as a neighborhood park, community park, or nature preserve. Classifications and associated Classification Standards establish clear expectations for each project.

**Table 6:** Physical Plan Investment Type Definitions

| Physical Plan Investment Types |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project Types                  | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Improve                        | Projects to improve or renovate existing parks or facilities. These facilities will also require significant capital investment and are included in the cost assumptions, typically at a lower per-acre cost than Opportunity projects. Improve projects will prioritize renovating existing facilities to bring them up to quality classification standards and site design standards which can include: community engagement, vision plan, new amenities, accessibility improvements, environmental improvements, and more. |
| Opportunity                    | New park or facility construction projects. These facilities will require significant capital investment and are included in the Dream Vision Plan Map cost assumptions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



| Physical Plan Investment Types   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project Types                    | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Preservation</b>              | Existing parks or facilities that need to be maintained to preserve their existing function and value. These facilities are not included in the cost assumptions; rather, their ongoing maintenance is accounted for in annual systemwide repair and replacement estimates, addressed separately. These sites will still receive regular improvements to maintain functionality, but their needs do not rise to the same significance of the “Improve” sites.                                                                            |
| <b>Partner:</b>                  | Sites that are operated by a non-PRCF entity, but are considered in the plans to represent potential partnership opportunities to fill important gaps or provide important services within a citywide system. These sites are not considered for public capital investment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Conservation</b>              | Areas of Richmond ideal for natural area conservation. Specific projects were not identified, but PRCF should aim to target the recommended acres.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Proposed Greenway</b>         | <p>The Vision Plan includes suggestions on potential future greenway corridors. The greenway alignments suggested in the plan do not represent specific alignments, but they do recommend a need for multi-modal connectivity in that area. Each greenway would need further study to confirm feasibility and appropriate alignments</p> <p>The greenway alignments that PRCF may consider studying for future greenways. These alignments were chosen to improving access to parks, recreation, and greenspace throughout the city.</p> |
| <b>Proposed Partner Greenway</b> | Routes that are important for multi-modal access to parks, recreation, and greenspace. However, these alignments would be likely operated and created by a non-PRCF entity. PRCF will advocate for the inclusion of multi-modal enhancements along these corridors and commits to partnering with other agencies to prioritize access to the City’s network of parks, recreation, and greenspaces.                                                                                                                                       |

**Table 7: Vision Plan Project Count**

| COUNCIL DISTRICT | NEW PARK, COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECTS | EXISTING PARK AND COMMUNITY FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS | VISION PLAN TOTALS |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1                | 9                                   | 6                                                         | 15                 |
| 2                | 7                                   | 4                                                         | 11                 |
| 3                | 6                                   | 10                                                        | 16                 |
| 4                | 13                                  | 5                                                         | 18                 |
| 5                | 9                                   | 14                                                        | 23                 |
| 6                | 12                                  | 13                                                        | 25                 |
| 7                | 18                                  | 15                                                        | 33                 |
| 8                | 18                                  | 11                                                        | 29                 |
| 9                | 4                                   | 4                                                         | 8                  |

# THE DREAM VISION PLAN MAP

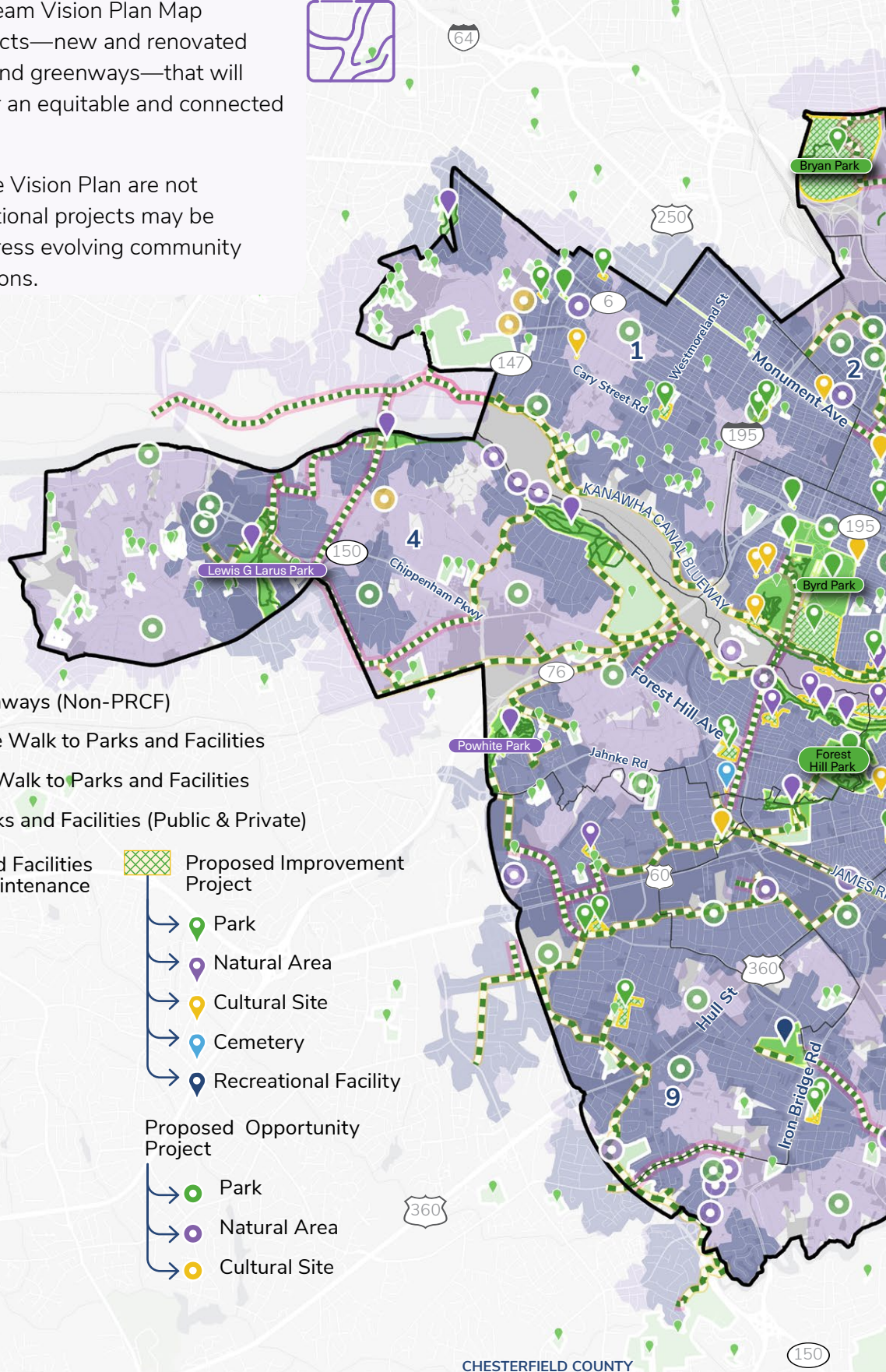
The Richmond *INSPIRE* Dream Vision Plan Map demonstrates physical projects—new and renovated parks, community centers, and greenways—that will realize Richmond's vision for an equitable and connected system of green spaces.

The projects identified in the Vision Plan are not guaranteed or funded. Additional projects may be introduced over time to address evolving community needs and changing conditions.

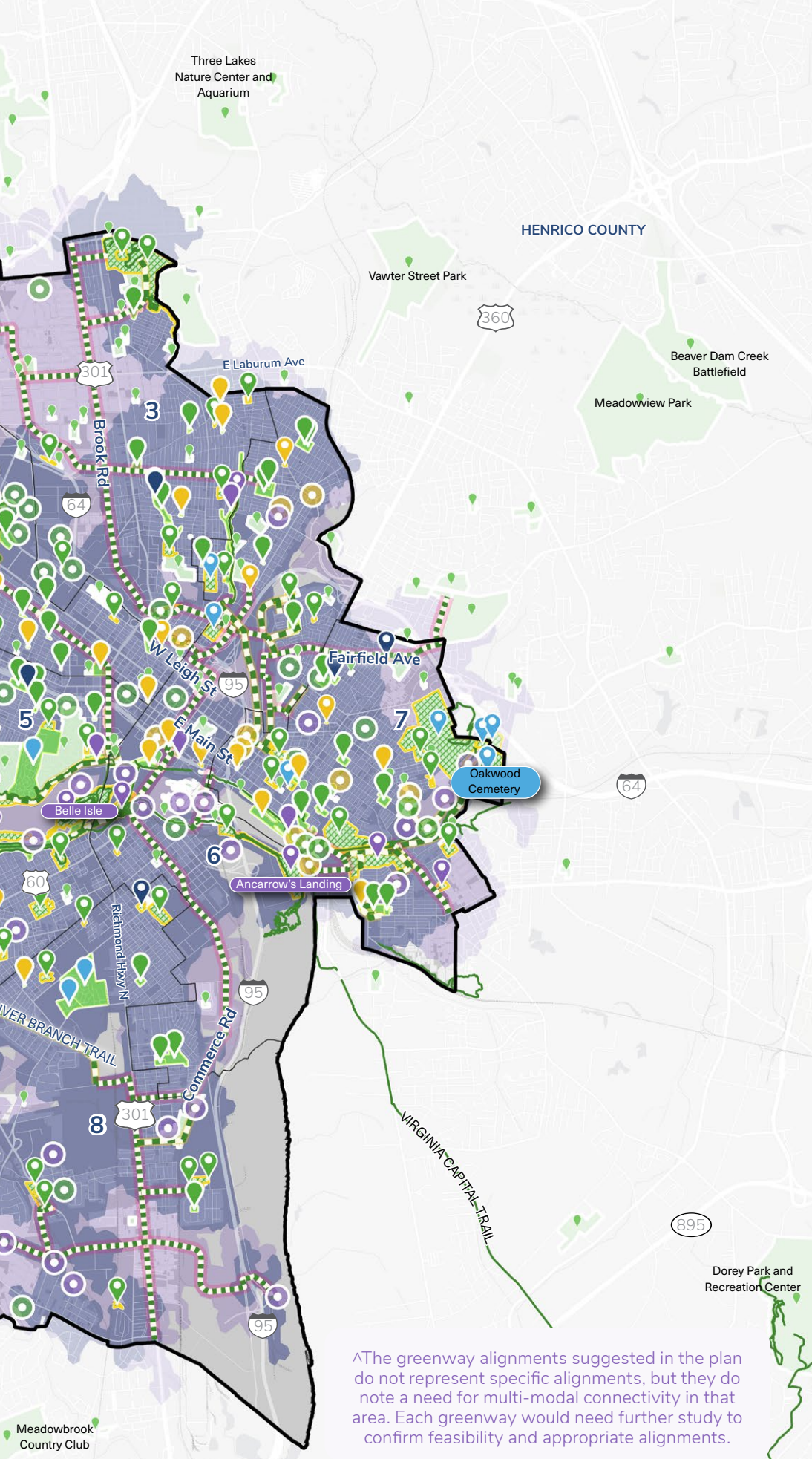
## LEGEND

### Greenways

- Proposed Greenways^
- Proposed Partner Greenways (Non-PRCF)
- 10-year Plan: 10-Minute Walk to Parks and Facilities
- Vision Plan: 10-Minute Walk to Parks and Facilities
- Existing Non-PRCF Parks and Facilities (Public & Private)
- Existing PRCF Parks and Facilities Proposed Continued Maintenance
- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- Cemetery
- Recreational Facility
- Proposed Improvement Project
- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- Cemetery
- Recreational Facility
- Proposed Opportunity Project
- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Residential Areas
- Non-residential Areas
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams
- Existing Trails







^The greenway alignments suggested in the plan do not represent specific alignments, but they do note a need for multi-modal connectivity in that area. Each greenway would need further study to confirm feasibility and appropriate alignments.

## DREAM VISION OUTCOMES

# 15 acres

of Quality Parkland per  
1,000 Residents

# 100%

of Richmonders  
Live Within Walking  
Distance To A  
Quality Park

# 98 miles

of Proposed Greenways  
(all types)

# 100%

of Parks and Facilities  
Meet Quality Design  
Standards

# 94

New Parks or Facilities

# 850 acres

of Land Newly  
Conserved  
as Natural Area

MAP 10: THE DREAM VISION PLAN MAP

SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop



## 10-Year Priority Project Map

While the Vision Plan (MAP 10 on page 57) sets a generational course, the 10-Year Priority Project Map (MAP 11 on page 61) identifies the highest-priority projects to advance over the next decade. These projects were evaluated using the Community-Driven Prioritization Criteria (Figure 17 on page 59)—a living model developed and confirmed through community-driven workshops, then refined with PRCF staff. The model will continue to be updated as community needs evolve.

The result is a focused list of projects that are both high-impact and feasible within the next decade. More importantly, the model establishes a transparent, consistent, and equity-driven process that directs resources where they matter most while building momentum for the larger vision. Completion of physical projects can be achieved through a variety of strategies outlined throughout *Richmond INSPIRE*.



## Project Prioritization Model

The *Richmond INSPIRE* prioritization model scores and ranks Vision Plan projects using criteria shaped by community priorities throughout the engagement process. Projects that meet multiple high-point criteria rise to the top of the list. High-point criteria include sites that are:

- Located in an area where residents cannot currently walk within 10-minutes to any PRCF park, facility, or openspace.
- Located in an area where residents cannot currently walk within 10-minutes to a *quality* PRCF park, facility, or openspace.
- Located in a high priority *Richmond INSPIRE* Equity Investment Zone (EIZ).
- Located in an area prone to extreme heat.
- An existing site that needs renovation.

## A Living Framework

The prioritization model is designed as a living framework that adapts to evolving community needs. While the 10-Year Priority Project Map highlights the most pressing and feasible projects today, future updates will refine priorities as opportunities and conditions change.

Greenway and land conservation projects in particular often depend on timing—such as new trail-oriented developments, land donations, or easements. Because citywide and regional connectivity delivers greater benefits (and is more complex to achieve) than any single trail segment, the City and its partners should act quickly when opportunities arise.

### DEEPER DIVE



[Review Funding Strategies and Cost Estimates in Chapter 10.](#)



# 10-Year Prioritization Criteria



## DEEPER DIVE



Review the criteria and scoring methodology in Appendix G.

## RELATED ACTION ITEM



10-Year Prioritization Criteria was created through community engagement. Read about the strategies to implement these projects in Chapter 4.

**Figure 17:** 10-Year Prioritization Criteria

# 10-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECT MAP

The 10-Year Priority Project Map represents the highest scoring Vision Plan Map projects using community-driven criteria. There are both new and renovations projects.

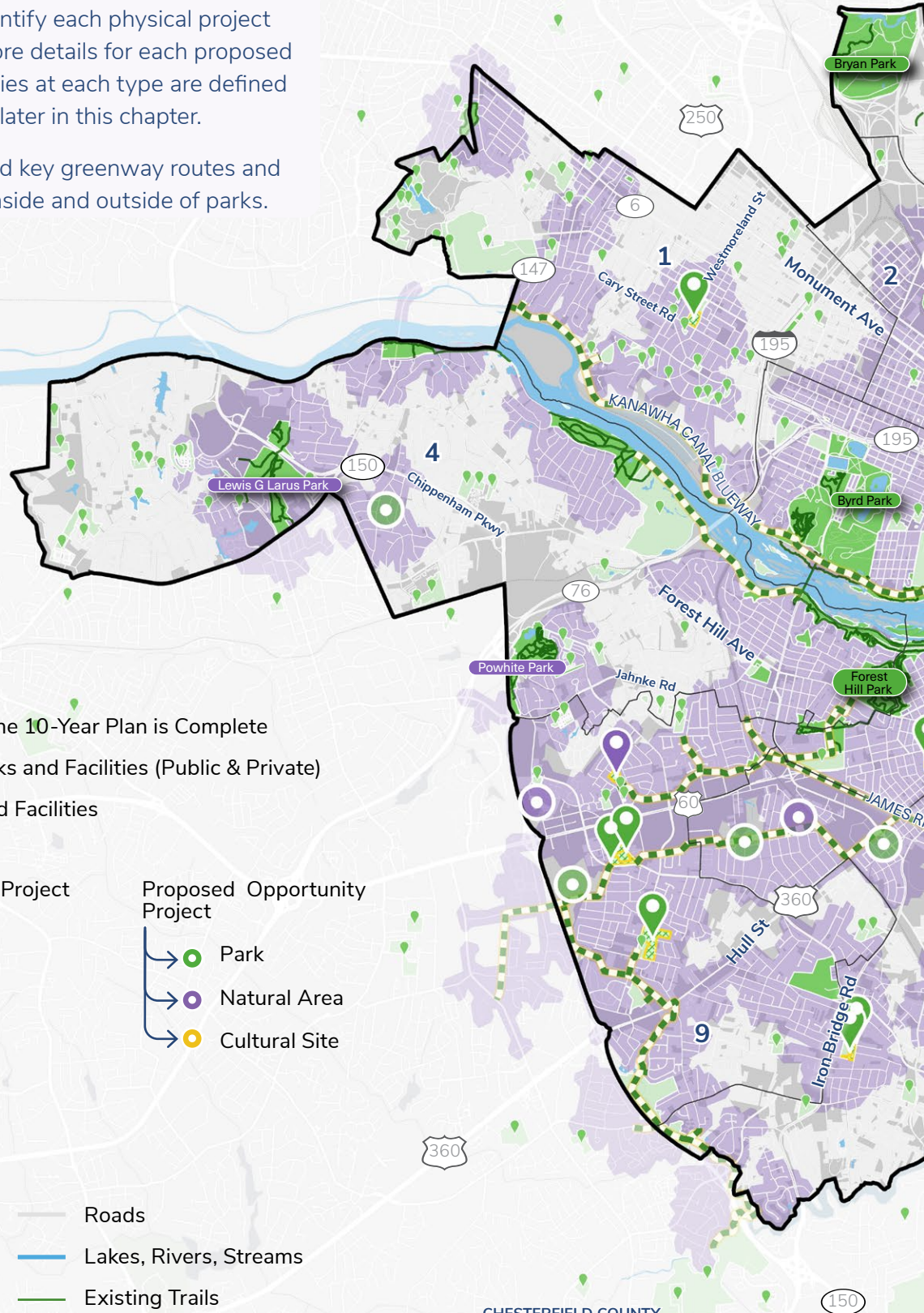


Use the legend below to identify each physical project type. The next pages list more details for each proposed physical project. The amenities at each type are defined in Classifications Standards later in this chapter.

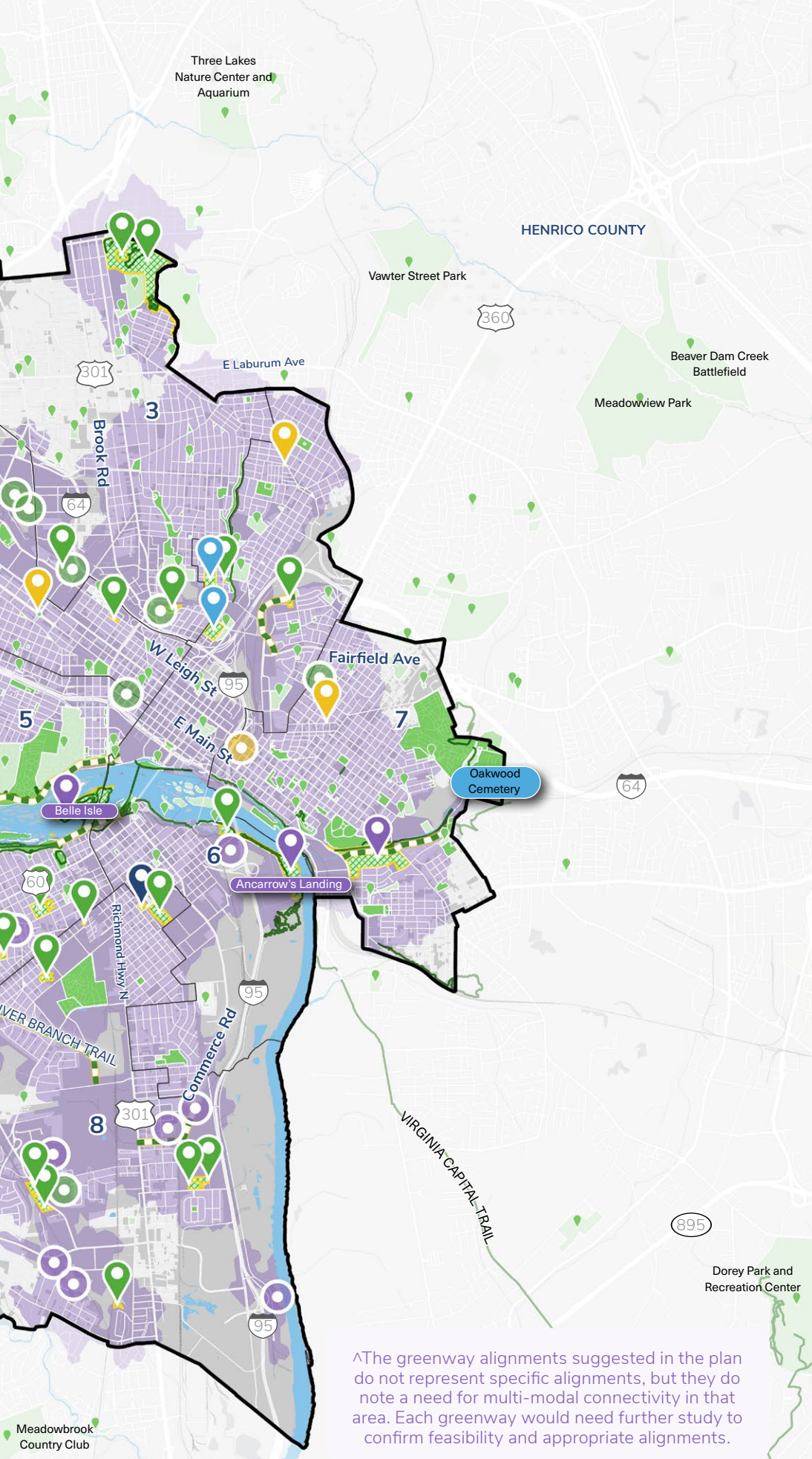
Richmond INSPIRE identified key greenway routes and missing connections both inside and outside of parks.

## LEGEND

- Proposed Greenways
- 10-Minute Walk After the 10-Year Plan is Complete
- Existing Non-PRCF Parks and Facilities (Public & Private)
- Existing PRCF Parks and Facilities
- Proposed Improvement Project
  - Park
  - Natural Area
  - Cultural Site
  - Cemetery
  - Recreational Facility
- Proposed Opportunity Project
  - Park
  - Natural Area
  - Cultural Site
- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Residential Areas
- Non-Residential Areas
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams
- Existing Trails







^The greenway alignments suggested in the plan do not represent specific alignments, but they do note a need for multi-modal connectivity in that area. Each greenway would need further study to confirm feasibility and appropriate alignments.

## 10-YEAR PLAN OUTCOMES

# 9 acres

of Quality Parkland per  
1,000 Residents - an  
Increase of 3 acres per  
1,000 Residents

# 74%

of Richmonders Would  
Live Within Walking  
Distance to a Quality  
Park – a 15% Increase

# 27 miles

of New Greenway Trails

# 34 parks

Improved to Meet  
Quality Design  
Standards

# 23

New Parks or Facilities

# 400 acres

of Land Newly  
Conserved  
as Natural Area



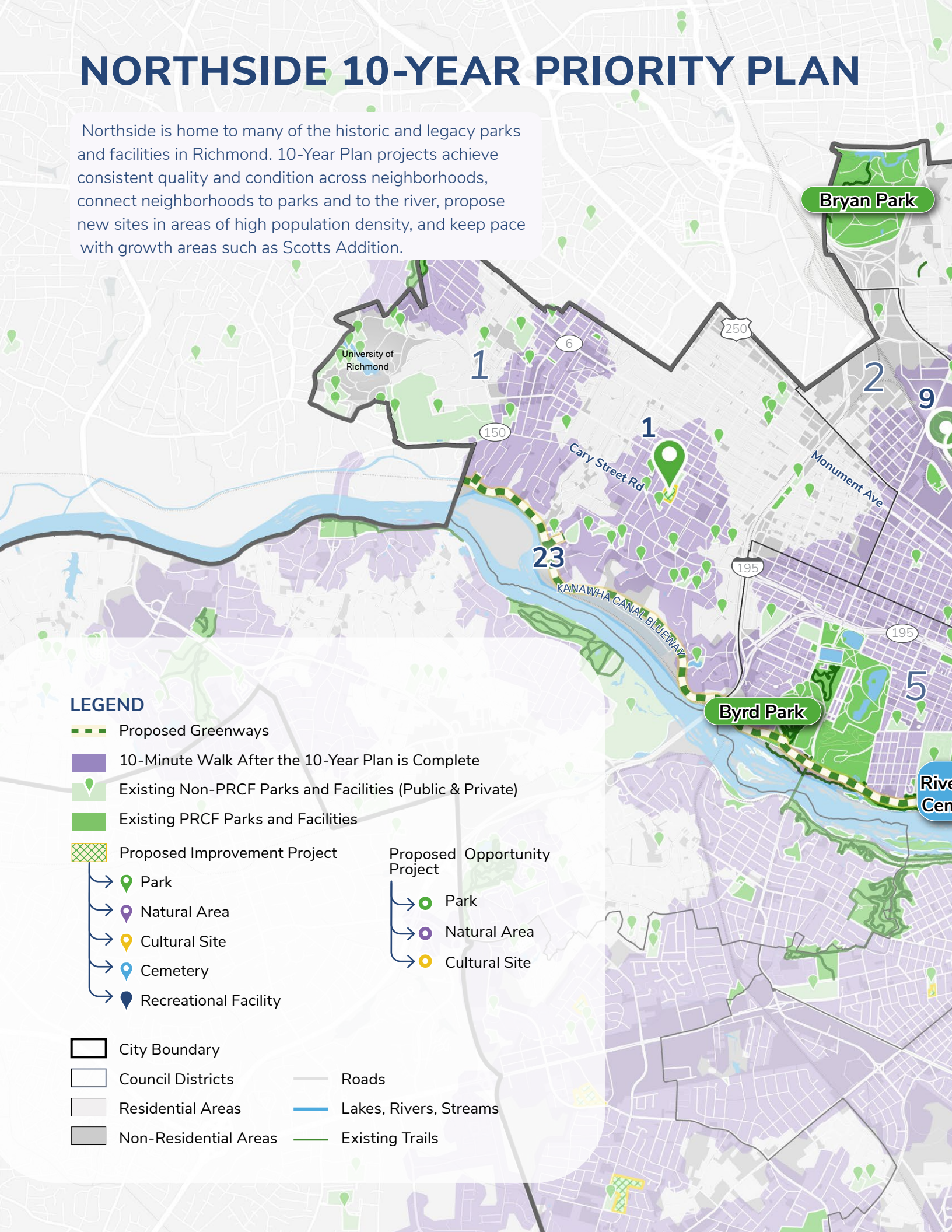
SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop

MAP 11: 10-YEAR PRIORITY PROJECT MAP



# NORTHSIDE 10-YEAR PRIORITY PLAN

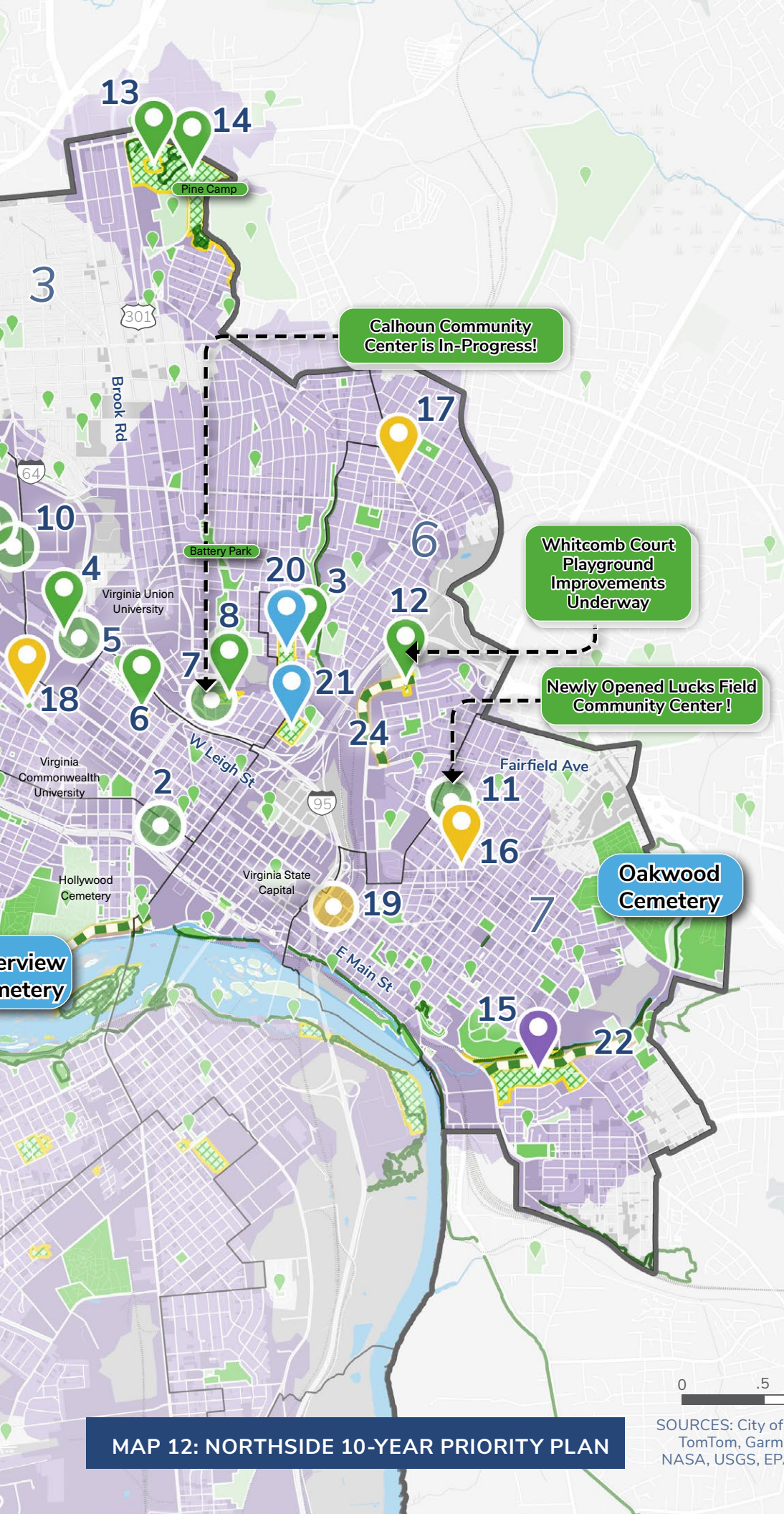
Northside is home to many of the historic and legacy parks and facilities in Richmond. 10-Year Plan projects achieve consistent quality and condition across neighborhoods, connect neighborhoods to parks and to the river, propose new sites in areas of high population density, and keep pace with growth areas such as Scotts Addition.



## LEGEND

- Proposed Greenways
- 10-Minute Walk After the 10-Year Plan is Complete
- Existing Non-PRCF Parks and Facilities (Public & Private)
- Existing PRCF Parks and Facilities
- Proposed Improvement Project
- Proposed Opportunity Project
- Park
- Natural Area
- Cultural Site
- Cemetery
- Recreational Facility
- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Residential Areas
- Non-Residential Areas
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams
- Existing Trails





## OUTCOMES

# 6 acres

of Quality Parkland per  
1,000 Residents - an  
Increase of 2 acres per  
1,000 Residents

# 76%

of Richmonders Would  
Live Within Walking  
Distance to a Quality  
Park – a 7% Increase

# 7 miles

of New Greenway Trails

# 14 parks

Improved to Meet  
Quality Design  
Standards

# 7

New Parks or Facilities

# 70 acres

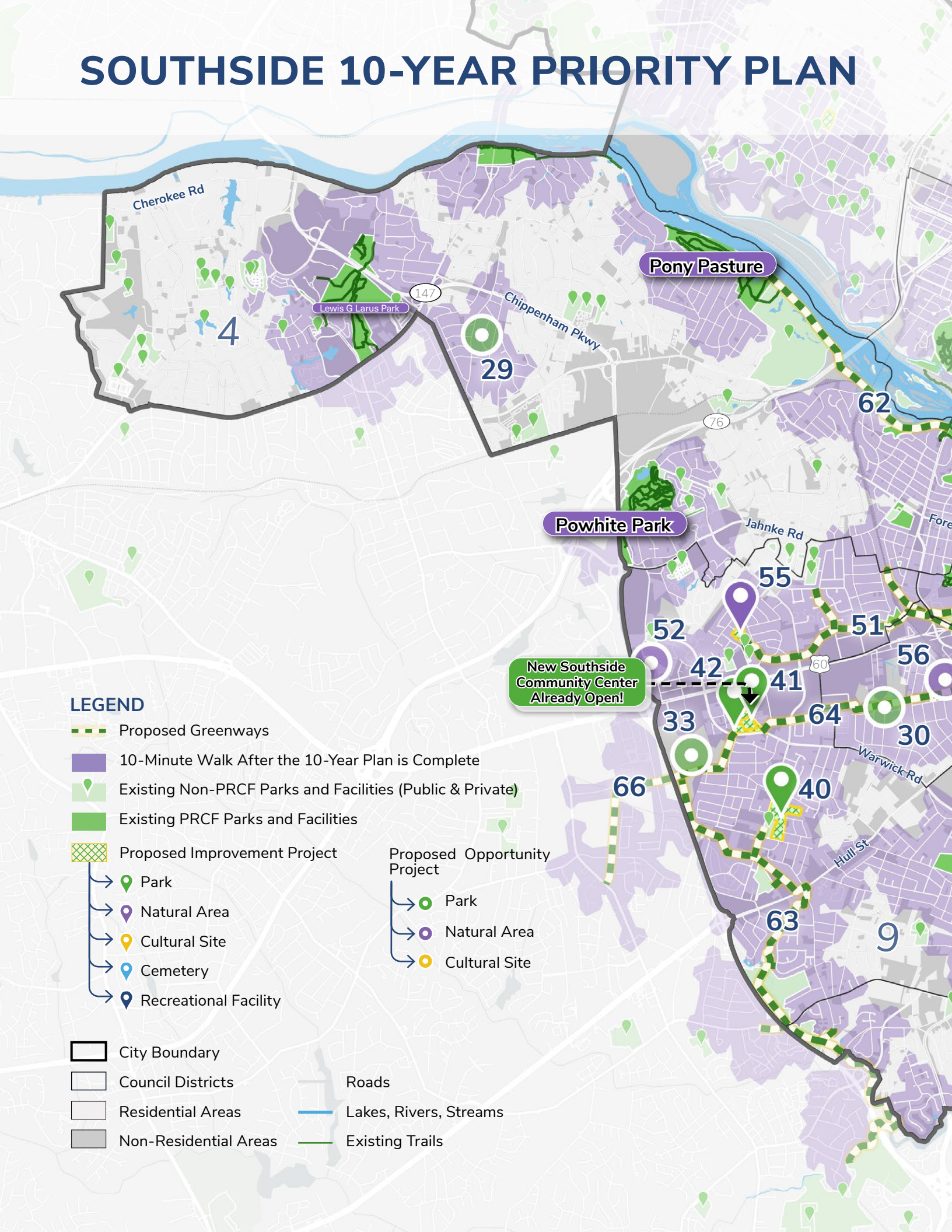
of Land Newly  
Conserved  
as Natural Area

MAP 12: NORTHSIDE 10-YEAR PRIORITY PLAN

SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop

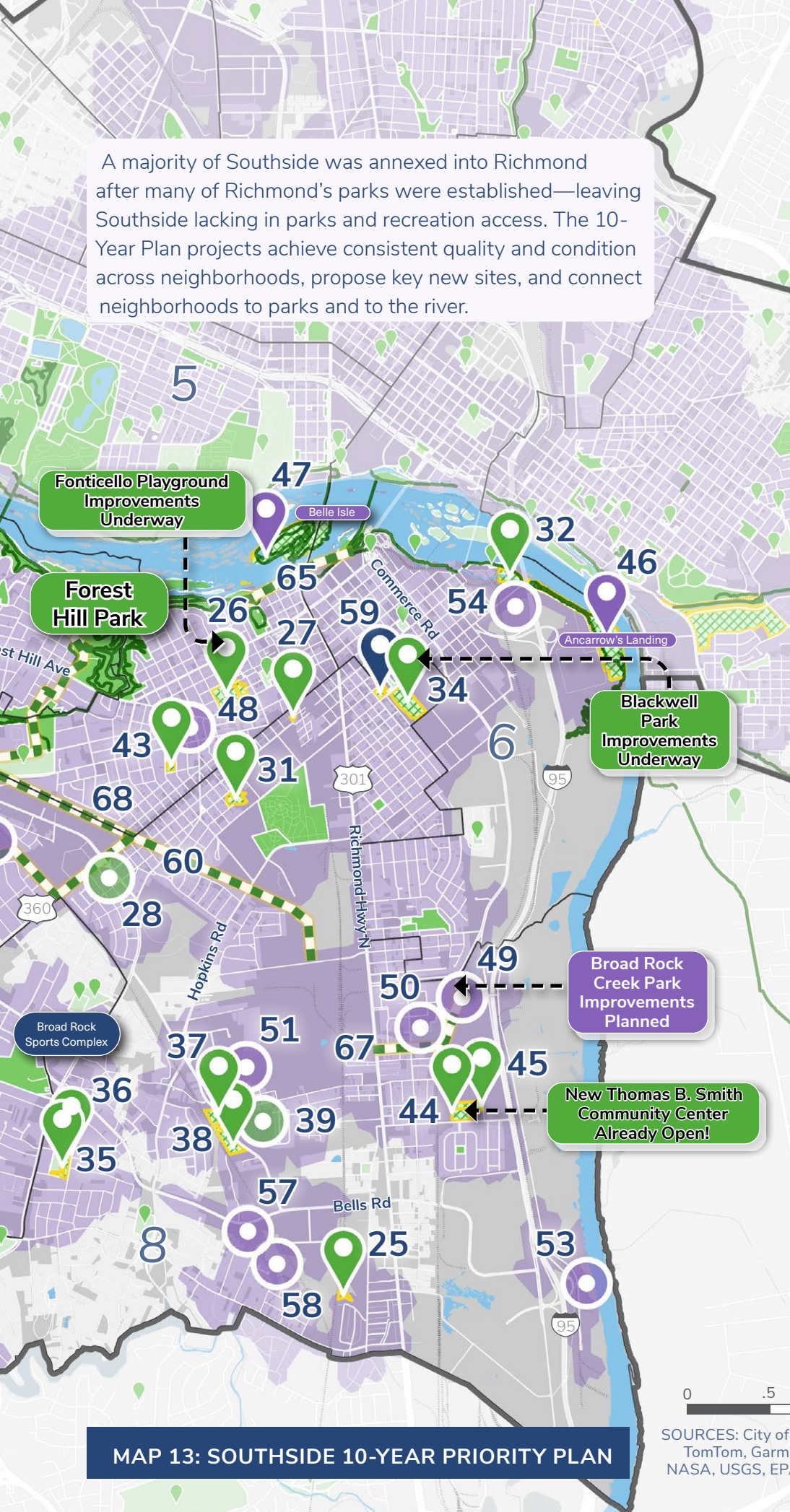


# SOUTHSIDE 10-YEAR PRIORITY PLAN





A majority of Southside was annexed into Richmond after many of Richmond's parks were established—leaving Southside lacking in parks and recreation access. The 10-Year Plan projects achieve consistent quality and condition across neighborhoods, propose key new sites, and connect neighborhoods to parks and to the river.



## OUTCOMES

# 10 acres

of Quality Parkland per  
1,000 Residents - an  
Increase of 2 acres per  
1,000 Residents

# 72%

of Richmonders Would  
Live Within Walking  
Distance to a Quality  
Park - a 29% Increase

# 28 miles

of New Greenway Trails

# 20 parks

Improved to Meet  
Quality Design  
Standards

# 15

New Parks or Facilities

# 330 acres

of Land Newly  
Conserved  
as Natural Area

MAP 13: SOUTHSIDE 10-YEAR PRIORITY PLAN

SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/ NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop



# 10-Year Plan Project List

## Northside

### Neighborhood Park

- 1  **Mary Munford Playground**  
Improvement
- 2  **Monroe Ward Search Area**  
Opportunity
- 3  **Monteiro Street Park**  
Improvement
- 4  **Moore St Tot Lot**  
Improvement
- 5  **Moore Street Search Area**  
Opportunity
- 6  **Smith-Peters Playground**  
Improvement

### Community Park

- 7  **Calhoun Community Center**  
Opportunity
- 8  **Calhoun Playground**  
Improvement
- 9  **Greater Scott's Search Area 1**  
Opportunity
- 10  **Greater Scott's Search Area 2**  
Opportunity
- 11  **Luck's Field Community Center**  
Opportunity
- 12  **Whitcomb Court Playground**  
Improvement

### City Park

- 13  **Pine Camp Arts Center**  
Improvement
- 14  **Pine Camp Park and Natural Area**  
Improvement

### Signature Nature Preserve

- 15  **Gillies Creek Nature Area (Fulton Park)**  
Improvement

### Neighborhood Culture Park

- 16  **Carrington Street Triangle**  
Improvement

### Neighborhood Culture Park

- 17  **Gabriel's Freedom Park**  
Improvement

### Signature Culture Park

- 18  **Monument Avenue Park**  
Improvement
- 19  **Shockoe Memorial Park Phase 2**  
Opportunity

### City Cemetery

- 20  **Barton Heights Cemetery**  
Improvement

### Community Cemetery

- 21  **Shockoe Hill Cemetery**  
Improvement

### Greenways

- 22  **Gillies Creek Greenway**  
Opportunity
- 23  **Kanawha Canal Blueway**  
Opportunity

### Connector Trail

- 24  **Transmission Line Trail - Whitcomb Connector**  
Opportunity

## Southside

### Neighborhood Park

- 25  **Ernest Road**  
Improvement
- 26  **Fonticello Playground**  
Improvement
- 27  **Mashore Playground**  
Improvement
- 28  **McGuire Search Area**  
Opportunity
- 29  **Oxford Search Area**  
Opportunity
- 30  **Rosemont Road Open Space**  
Opportunity
- 31  **Swansboro Playground**  
Improvement

## Neighborhood Park

- 32  Walker's Creek Retention Basin Park Improvement
- 33  Worthington Search Area Opportunity

## Community Park

- 34  Blackwell Park (C D Sydnor Playground) Improvement
- 35  Broad Rock Community Center Improvement
- 36  Broad Rock Playground Improvement
- 37  Hickory Hill Community Center Improvement
- 38  Hickory Hill Community Center Park Improvement
- 39  Hickory Hill Search Area Opportunity
- 40  Reid Playground Improvement
- 41  Southside Community Center Improvement
- 42  Southside Community Center Park Improvement
- 43  Swansboro Natatorium and Playground Improvement
- 44  T. B. Smith Community Center Improvement
- 45  T. B. Smith Community Center Park Improvement

## Signature Nature Preserve

- 46  Ancarrow's Landing Improvement
- 47  Belle Isle Improvement
- 48  Broad Creek Search Area Opportunity
- 49  Broad Rock Creek Park Opportunity
- 50  Broad Rock Creek Park Access Opportunity

## Nature Preserve

- 51  Broad Creek Conservation Opportunity
- 52  Hioaks Water Tower Opportunity
- 53  James River - Downstream Access Search Area Opportunity
- 54  Manchester Search Area Opportunity
- 55  Reedy Creek Wetland Improvement
- 56  Southside Plaza Park Opportunity
- 57  Warwick Search Area 1 Opportunity
- 58  Warwick Search Area 2 Opportunity

## Pool or Water Park

- 59  Blackwell Community Center and Pool Improvement

## Greenway

- 60  James River Branch Rail Trail Opportunity
- 61  Reedy Creek Greenway Opportunity
- 62  James River Park Main Line Trail (Buttermilk West) Opportunity
- 63  Pocosham Creek Trail Opportunity
- 64  Transmission Line Trail - South Opportunity
- 65  James River Riverside East Greenway Opportunity

## Connector Trail

- 66  Worthington Connector Opportunity
- 67  Fall Line Trail - Broad Rock Creek Connector Opportunity

## Spur Path

- 68  James River Branch Trail - Roanoke St Spur Opportunity

The 10-Year Project List offers general areas and types of sites that have been identified for potential investment. New parks, facilities, and greenways do not have specific properties identified. Their locations represent search and study areas. The list is also not a guarantee of a project or guarantee of future funding.

# Classification Standards

Classification standards define what each park and facility type should include and other defining site elements. Building on the classification system, these standards establish expectations for amenities, site characteristics, and service areas across the PRCF system.

Because each site is assigned a classification based on its type and area served, PRCF can apply consistent standards to both new projects and renovations. These standards help determine whether a site is appropriate for a specific park or facility type, ensuring the City does not invest in locations that cannot support the intended use.

Richmond INSPIRE establishes these standards to support both capital investment and ongoing operations. Classifications inform order-of-magnitude cost assumptions for projects, including cost-per-acre estimates used in the Vision Plan and 10-Year Priority Project Map. Over time, they can also support maintenance and operational benchmarks, such as staffing levels or maintenance hours by classification type.

## DEEPER DIVE



Review the full list of sites and classifications in Appendix B.

## Natural Area



| Classification        | Nature Pocket                                                                                                                                                                              | Nature Preserve                                                                                                                                                                                                | Signature Nature Preserve                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Tier          | Neighborhood                                                                                                                                                                               | District                                                                                                                                                                                                       | City                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Description           | Small protected and managed greenspace providing neighborhood shade, beauty, and habitat. Might or might not have public access or passive recreation areas, but will be actively managed. | Large protected and managed open space providing significant ecosystem services and a natural respite. Passive recreation amenities such as trails, benches, and signage. Part of a connected citywide system. | Iconic natural areas with stunning scenery and amenities that allow people from Richmond and beyond to learn about and build connections to Richmond's natural resources. |
| Size                  | 0-5 acres                                                                                                                                                                                  | 5-50 acres                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 20-100 acres                                                                                                                                                              |
| Service Area          | 0.5 mile / 10-min walk                                                                                                                                                                     | 1 mile / 5 minute drive                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2 miles / 10 minute drive                                                                                                                                                 |
| Recommended Amenities | Protected natural area                                                                                                                                                                     | Trails, seating, signage                                                                                                                                                                                       | Walking trails, restored or preserved habitat areas, environmental education, signage, seating                                                                            |

**Figure 18:** The three “natural area” type classifications

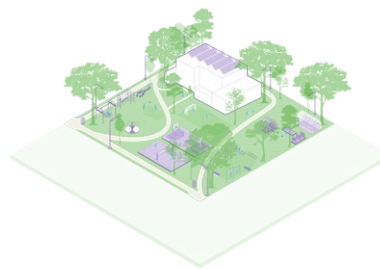
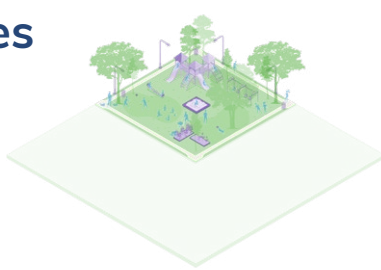


## DEEPER DIVE



[Review Site Design Standards in Chapter 10 to learn more about the operations toolkits that support classifications.](#)

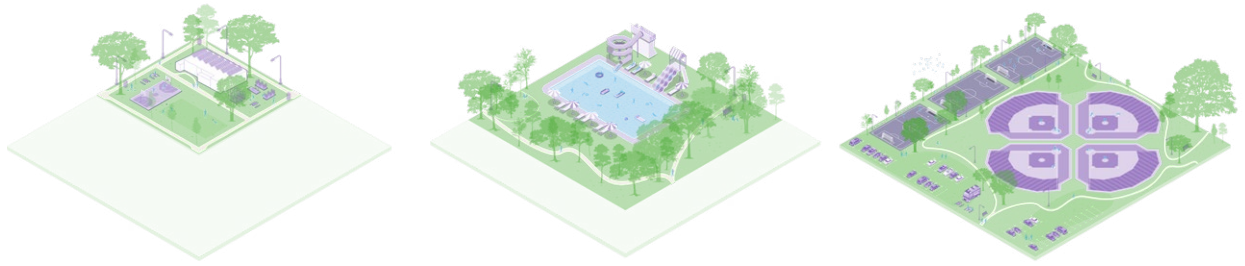
## Park Types



| Classification        | Neighborhood Park                                                                                                                                                                         | Community Park                                                                                                                                                                        | City Park                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Tier          | Neighborhood                                                                                                                                                                              | District                                                                                                                                                                              | City                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Description           | Parks with core amenities like playgrounds, flexible lawns, community gardens, fitness equipment, and public art. These parks project a sense of place and serve their nearest neighbors. | Parks with core amenities plus more intensive recreational and community-building facilities like community centers, athletic fields, and courts. Includes Community Resilience Hubs. | Large, classical parks with abundant flexible lawn space, large trees, extensive tree canopy, gardens, walking and biking trails, flexible covered gathering areas, and capacity for large cultural events such as pop-up markets and performances. |
| Size                  | 2-20 acres                                                                                                                                                                                | 10-100 acres                                                                                                                                                                          | 50+ acres                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Service Area          | .5 mile / 10 min walk                                                                                                                                                                     | 1 mile / 5 min drive                                                                                                                                                                  | 2 miles / 10 min drive                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Access Type           | Centrally located within residential areas, accessible by foot, on-street parking, and trails. Connected via sidewalks and pathways to residences.                                        | Access from an arterial street and are easily accessible. Off-street parking should be provided but can be supported by on-street parking                                             | Access from an arterial or collector street. Access to the greenway trail system and public transit is desirable. Parking should be provided off-street                                                                                             |
| Recommended Amenities | Benches/seating areas, shelters, looped trails, water fountains, picnic table, public art, flexible lawn, accessible entrances, play areas                                                | Athletic fields, athletic courts, large community center, gazebo, restrooms, gardens, unique amenities                                                                                | Lawns, tree canopy, walking and biking trails, event spaces, restrooms                                                                                                                                                                              |

**Figure 19:** The three “park type” classifications

## Recreation Facility



| Classification | Community Center                                                                                                                                           | Pool or Water Park                                                                                                                                       | Athletic Complex                                                                                |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Tier   | Neighborhood                                                                                                                                               | District                                                                                                                                                 | City                                                                                            |
| Description    | These sites may contain exterior amenities associated with the building such as courts or gardens. These serve immediate neighbors and neighborhood needs. | Park or indoor facility with a pool, splash pads, water parks, or other significant water features.                                                      | Clustered fields or courts that can host local clubs and leagues and sometimes regional events. |
| Service Area   | 5 min drive, 20 min walk                                                                                                                                   | 10-20 min drive                                                                                                                                          | 20-30 min drive                                                                                 |
| Access Type    | Small off-street parking lot, connections to sidewalk, greenways, and transit preferred                                                                    | Access from an arterial or collector street. Access to the greenway trail system and public transit is desirable. Parking should be provided off-street. |                                                                                                 |

**Figure 20:** The three “recreation facility” type classifications

## Greenway



| Classification     | Spur Path                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Connector Trail                                                                                                                                                             | Greenway                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Tier       | Neighborhood                                                                                                                                                                                                           | District                                                                                                                                                                    | City                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Description        | Paved trails, marked sidewalks, or on-road facilities that connect neighborhoods to the larger system of connectors and greenways. In some neighborhoods, spurs might be located on HOA or other privately owned land. | Separated, paved multi-use trails or natural surface trails that connect parks, schools, and other community amenities to the larger citywide and regional greenway system. | Citywide and regional paved, multi-use, or blueway trails with major trailhead amenities including restrooms, water fountains, bike repair stations, and parking lots. Considered linear parks with park-like amenities. |
| Standard Amenities | Wayfinding signs                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Wayfinding signs                                                                                                                                                            | Wayfinding signs, bike racks, trailhead, seating                                                                                                                                                                         |

**Figure 21:** The three “trail” site type classifications

# Cultural Site



| Classification        | Neighborhood Culture Park                                                                                                                                  | Signature Culture Park                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Tier          | Neighborhood                                                                                                                                               | City                                                                                                                        |
| Description           | Pocket parks with monuments, public art, community gardens, or other installations that are important for the cultural life and story of the neighborhood. | Iconic parks and cultural landscapes that serve the whole city and bring people together around art, food, or play.         |
| Size                  | 0-2 acres                                                                                                                                                  | 5-100 acres                                                                                                                 |
| Service Area          | .5 mile / 10 min walk                                                                                                                                      | 2 miles / 10 min drive                                                                                                      |
| Access Type           | Centrally located within neighborhoods, along trails or in urban centers. Connected via sidewalks and pathways to residences. On-street parking            | Signature culture parks offer unique cultural experiences that should be accessible within a short drive for all residents. |
| Recommended Amenities | Community art or memorial, seating                                                                                                                         | Space for events, multi-purpose space                                                                                       |

Figure 22: The two “cultural site” type classifications

# Cemetery



| Classification | Community Cemetery                                                                                                                      | City Cemetery                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Service Tier   | District                                                                                                                                | City                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Description    | Small cemeteries, both active and historic, are carefully managed as local places for reflection, shade, beauty and passive recreation. | Significant citywide resources that are managed and designed as places for reflection, learning, gardens, art, and passive recreation. Grounds are managed respectfully as environmental and cultural resources. |
| Size           | 0-50 acres                                                                                                                              | 50+ acres                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

Figure 23: The two “cemetery type” classifications





# Richmond INSPIRE

## From Vision to Implementation

Richmond INSPIRE translates the community's vision into action. The following chapters present systemwide strategies that guide how parks and recreation investments are prioritized, coordinated, and delivered over time.

### DEEPER DIVE



Blue call outs represent best practices or other supporting information.

### RELATED ACTION ITEM



Purple call outs represent actions or strategies to implement *Richmond INSPIRE*.

## Understanding the Plan Graphics

Richmond INSPIRE uses colors and icons as a simple, visual language so that project information is clear and accessible to all readers.

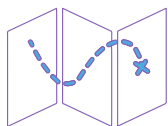
### Interact with the Plan

Background information and interactive links are provided throughout the document to help readers understand plan content. These side callouts may have links to other websites, navigate you to a specific page within this plan, or simply provide additional information. (Refer to examples, left).

## Symbols to Know

There are various icons used throughout the plan document that reference key topics. Below are some example icons that appeared throughout Chapter 3.

### Document Navigation



Help to Navigate  
the Document

### Physical Projects



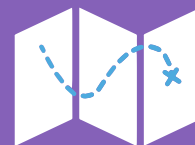
The Dream  
Vision Plan Map



10-Year  
Prioritization Criteria



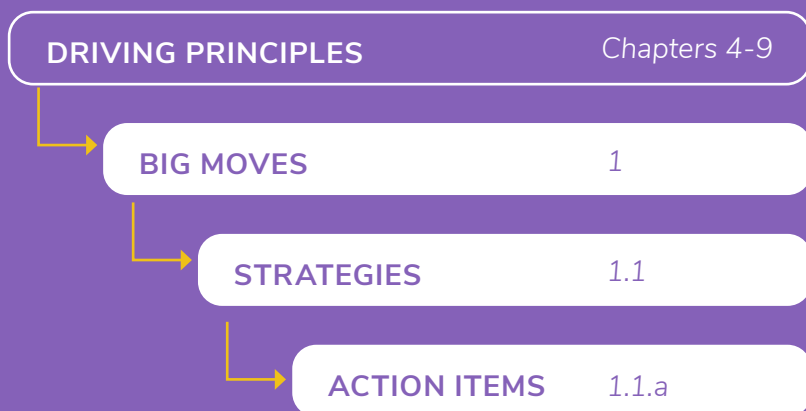
10-Year Priority  
Plan Map



## How Strategies are Organized

The plan's proposals and organization are guided by a community-driven vision for the future of Richmond parks and recreation. Chapters 4-9 outline the strategies and actions that implement each Driving Principle.

### Example Action Item Numbering System



### Example Action Items Table

Each strategy outlined in the next chapters includes action items that guide implementation.

Policy or Document    Operations    Physical Project



#### HOW STRATEGY 0.0 MOVES FORWARD

| Action Items |      | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners       | Type |
|--------------|------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------|
| 0.0.a        | Text | Welcome           | 4.3              | Short-term | Other entities |      |

Unique number    Description

Other Strategies that have similar topics or objectives.

Time frame: when the action should be started.

- Short-term: 1-5 Years
- Mid-term: 5-10 Years
- Long-term: 10+ Years

4





# **'ACCESS' STRATEGIES**

---

- **Why is Access Important?**
- **Big Move #1: Walkable  
Parks for All Strategies**
- **Big Move #2: Connected  
System Strategies**

# → Why Access is Important

Parks, greenways, and community centers support health, connection, learning, and joy. But too many Richmonders still face physical barriers to reaching these places—or experiencing them fully.

Again and again, community members named access as a top priority: Richmonders want more parks and greenways close to home, safer ways to get there, and welcoming spaces designed for all ages and abilities.

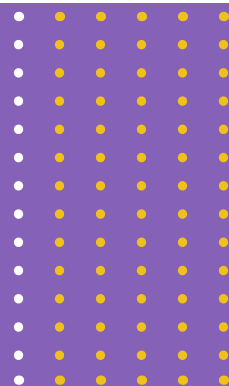
*Richmond INSPIRE* focuses on ensuring every Richmonder can reach a high-quality park or recreation facility through safe, comfortable, and inclusive routes. The vision—built from public workshops, surveys, and neighborhood conversations—calls for every person to live within a 10-minute walk or roll of a high-quality park or greenway.

To reach that goal, *Richmond INSPIRE* introduces two Big Moves:

- **Walkable Parks for All** adds new parks and greenways, improves existing ones, and closes access and quality gaps across neighborhoods.
- **Connected System** builds strong links between parks and communities by expanding safe, multi-modal routes for walking, biking, and rolling

## RICHMOND'S VISION FOR ACCESS

Everyone in Richmond can walk to a high-quality park in 10 minutes or less. Parks are easy to reach using safe, comfortable, and beautiful streets and paths.





## **BIG MOVE #1**

# **Walkable Parks For All**

This Big Move aims to address gaps in park access and quality by improving existing facilities, creating new green spaces, and leveraging future development to protect open spaces and expand greenways, maximizing benefits for the community.

### **Strategies**

- 1.1** Build new city parks and greenspace to ensure access for all.
- 1.2** Improve existing parks and facilities to fill quality gaps.
- 1.3** Maximize the positive community impact of existing public land and facilities.
- 1.4** Leverage future population growth and development to protect open space and build new parks and greenways.



## **BIG MOVE #2**

# **Connected System**

This Big Move aims to launch a 'Access to Parks and Recreation Community' program, improving access to parks, while expanding and connecting the city's network of greenways and linear parks to enhance overall connectivity.

### **Strategies**

- 2.1** Launch a 'Access to Parks and Recreation Community' program.
- 2.2** Improve existing parks and facilities to fill quality gaps.





## BIG MOVE #1

# Walkable Parks for All



## Access Today

Richmond is making steady progress toward a more walkable, connected parks system. 86% of residents now live within a 10-minute walk of any park or community center. When only considering PRCF-operated facilities, the number drops to 72%, but still well above the national average of 56%.

But access is about more than distance. It's also about safety, comfort, and the quality of the place. When residents look for parks and recreation centers to play, gather, or recharge, many still face barriers—especially in neighborhoods with fewer sidewalks, older facilities, or limited recreation options.

Only 59% of Richmonders live within walking distance of a PRCF park or facility in good condition, based on a physical survey of parks and facilities. Estimates indicate it would take \$75 million just to replace or repair aging features like playgrounds, sports courts, athletic fields, pools, and lighting—bringing them to a basic standard of safety and usability. That estimate doesn't include

any new amenities needed to expand access.

*Richmond INSPIRE* builds on the vision of *Richmond 300*, which calls for 100 percent of Richmonders to live within a 10-minute walk of quality open space. That goal prioritizes areas with high heat vulnerability and limited resources, helping ensure that every neighborhood has safe, welcoming, and connected parks. As new housing, infrastructure, and redevelopment projects take shape, PRCF can partner with other departments to add parks and trails in the places that need them most—especially in neighborhoods shaped by past disinvestment or affected by urban renewal.

With strong community support and a clear path forward, Richmond can close these remaining access gaps—and deliver on the promise of parks for all.



A tennis player at Byrd Park





Kayakers in the James River Park System

## Strategies

Richmond *INSPIRE* sets clear strategies to expand access, improve quality, and strengthen community connections through parks and public spaces. These strategies respond directly to what Richmonders shared during workshops, surveys, and neighborhood conversations.

By focusing on specific actions, the City and PRCF will close access gaps, upgrade existing parks and facilities, and make smart use of public land and future growth to serve every community more fully.

| STRATEGIES |                                                                                                            | PAGE |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1.1        | Build new city parks and greenspace to ensure access for all                                               | 82   |
| 1.2        | Improve existing parks and facilities to fill quality gaps.                                                | 84   |
| 1.3        | Maximize the positive community impact of existing public land and facilities                              | 86   |
| 1.4        | Leverage future population growth and development to protect open space and build new parks and greenways. | 89   |





BIG MOVE #1

# Walkable Parks for All



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## The Green Team Initiative

40

Properties  
Evaluated

5

New Parks  
Created

305+

Acres of City-Owned  
Land Identified to  
Become Park Space

Community created  
signs in the new Broad  
Rock Creek Park



## The Challenge

In January 2020, only 6% of Richmond's land was dedicated to parks—far below the national median of 15%—and 23% of residents, primarily Black and Latino communities, lacked a park within walking distance.

## Policy Wins

Then-Mayor Levar Stoney convened the “Green Team,” a multi-sector coalition of over 40 civic leaders, residents, and nonprofits, to address longstanding park access inequities. On September 14, 2020, he announced an ordinance to create five new parks recommended by the group.

City Council unanimously approved Ordinance 2020-219, transferring these five properties to PRCF.

## The Green Team's Work

With support from the Office of Sustainability, the Green Team used the Climate Equity Index to identify neighborhoods without access to high-quality parks and prioritize investments. Two subgroups—the Land Identification and Policy Working Groups—sped up progress by identifying potential parcels and removing policy barriers.

Despite COVID-19 disruptions, the Green Team continued meeting virtually, reflecting their commitment to parks. By May 2020, the Land Identification Group had evaluated more than 40 city parcels and prioritized 12 high-impact sites. Five parcels—three in the 8th District and two in the 9th—were selected to become new parks in areas with the greatest need.



**I believe that new parks and facilities ensure all Richmonders are able to walk to a park or facility to make Richmond PRCF more equitable.**

Anonymous Resident from  
Richmond INSPIRE Engagement



## What's Next?

As part of its aspirational goals, PRCF has identified 53 additional city-owned parcels—totaling over 305 acres—to become parks, many of which are already maintained by PRCF staff or are adjacent to existing parks. This includes parcels in areas like Whitcomb Court, where walking trails have already been developed, and school-owned parcels identified through collaboration with Richmond Public Schools.

The future of Walkable Parks for All depends on sustained community engagement and strong partnerships. PRCF's Workforce Development Program plays a key role in preparing these sites, while local nonprofits help co-create visions for

each new park. As PRCF transfers land from other departments to become parks and secures additional funding, the city moves closer to delivering equitable, connected, and climate-resilient neighborhoods.

Walkable Parks for All is more than a land-use strategy—it's a promise that every child, family, and elder in Richmond, regardless of income or zip code, will have the chance to walk outside and experience the joy, safety, and belonging of a nearby green space.

STRATEGY 1.1

Build new city parks and greenspace to ensure access for all.

Growing the System

Richmond has made progress expanding its park system, but access gaps remain. Currently, 27%<sup>1</sup> of Richmonders live more than a 10-minute walk from a PRCF park, community facility, or greenspace, which is better than national averages. However, only 7% of Richmond’s land is dedicated to parks, compared to the national median of 10% (Table 8 on page 83). The city offers 12.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, below the national figure of 13.3 acres. To

meet today’s needs, Richmond would need to protect at least 312 additional acres. By 2037, that need grows to nearly 1,200 acres—a significant challenge for a growing city.

Strategy 1.1 recommends growing the system through targeted land acquisition, greenspace preservation, and new park development—especially in neighborhoods with limited access. Richmond will continue working toward the 10-minute walk goal by creating new parks

and greenways in gap areas. To guide this growth, the City will launch a transparent Parkland Real Estate Strategy to direct land acquisition, partnerships, and secure permanent public use. Richmond will also pilot creative park development approaches—prioritizing Equity Investment Zones, using flexible methods to deliver new parks and openspace in areas that currently have none or little.

MAP 14 on page 83 demonstrates where new projects are proposed in the Vision Plan. More information can be found in Chapter 3.

DEEPER DIVE

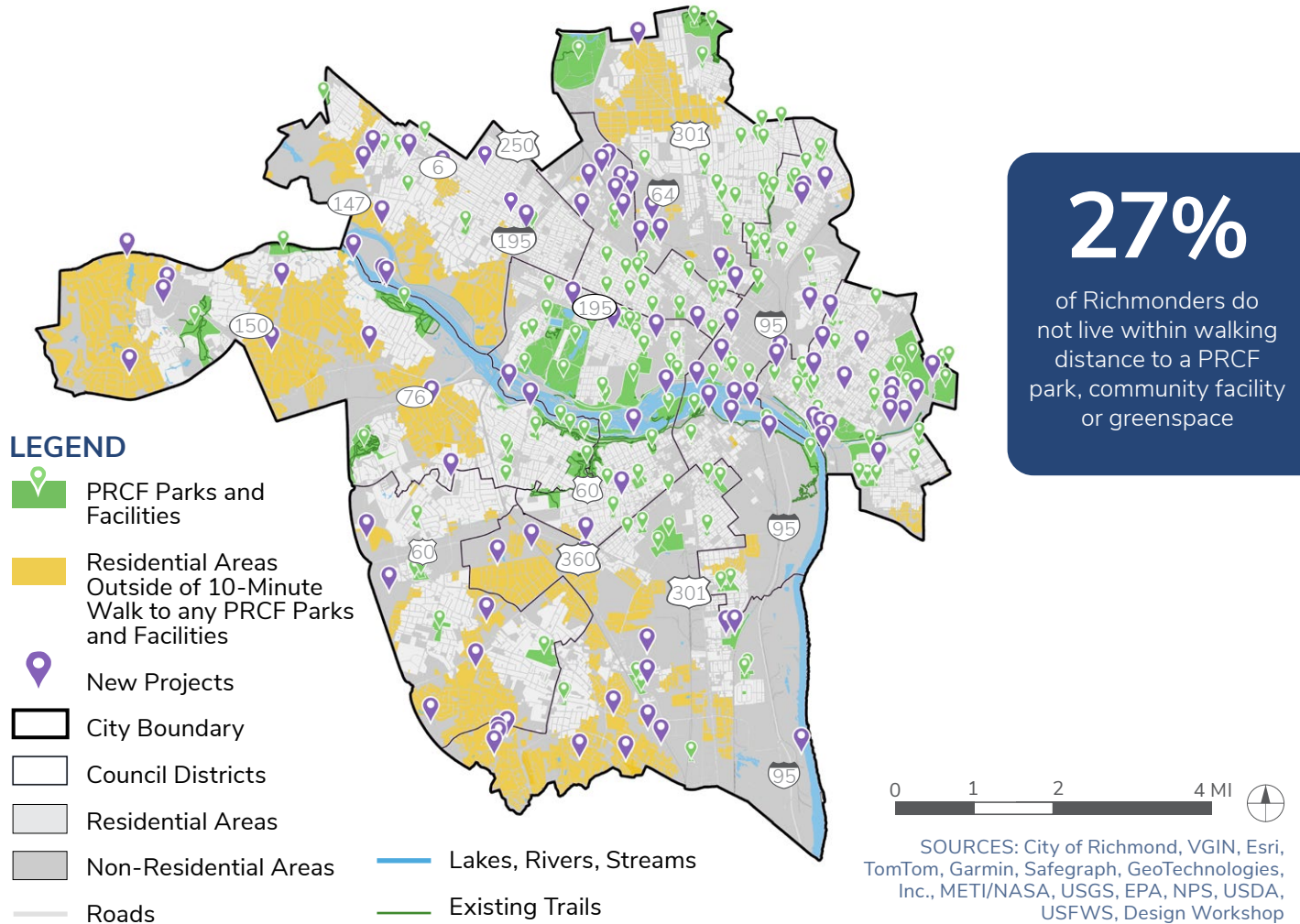
See Peer City Analysis in Appendix B

1 TPL ParkServe numbers are used in this section to allow for direct comparison with outside agencies. Known limitations exist with this data source.

Richmond INSPIRE, outside of this direct comparison, uses more accurate data to report on Richmond.

| HOW STRATEGY 1.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                   |                          |            |                 |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                              | Driving Principle | Related Strategy         | Start Time | Partners        | Type                                                                                  |
| 1.1.a                          | Pilot new park development strategies in Equity Investment Zones.                                                                                                                         | Access            | 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4       | Short-term |                 |  |
| 1.1.b                          | Develop a City Parkland Real Estate Strategy to guide land acquisition, partnerships, and secure permanent public access. The new, transparent strategy and criteria should be published. | Access, Quality   | 1.1, 2.2, 11.2, 11.3     | Short-term | CAO, DED, MWCLT |  |
| 1.1.c                          | Continue progress towards ensuring all Richmonders live within a 10-minute walk of a quality park by creating new parks and greenways in gap areas.                                       | Access, Quality   | 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.2, 11.3 | Mid-term   | CRLC, DED       |  |

## MAP 14: NEW PROJECTS PROPOSED IN THE VISION PLAN



**Table 8: Peer City and National Comparison of High-Level Park Metrics**

|                                            | Richmond, VA | Pittsburgh, PA | Cincinnati, OH | Des Moines, IA | Greensboro, NC | National Figures |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>PARK ACREAGE AND ACCESS<sup>1</sup></b> |              |                |                |                |                |                  |
| TPL ParkScore Rank (# / 100)               | 22           | 17             | 8              | n/a            | 83             | -                |
| % Residents w/10-Min. Walk Park Access     | 80%          | 93%            | 88%            | 75%            | 63%            | 56%              |
| Total City Park Acreage                    | 2,794        | 4,175          | 7,799          | 7,125          | 8,360          | 5,575            |
| Park Acreage per 1,000 Residents           | 12           | 14             | 25             | 33             | 28             | 13               |
| Parks per 10,000 Residents                 | 8.4          | 5.3            | 9.1            | 4.2            | 7.0            | 3.4              |
| % City Area as Parkland                    | 7%           | 12%            | 16%            | 13%            | 10%            | 10%              |

<sup>1</sup> Figures self-reported by agencies, TPL ParkServe 2024 used for comparison; known limitations exist in the underlying counting methodology.



STRATEGY 1.2

Improve existing parks and facilities to fill quality gaps.

Fix What We Have

Richmonders have made one thing clear: the City needs to take care of the parks it already has. In the *Richmond INSPIRE* survey, 66% of respondents prioritized investing in existing parks and facilities over building entirely new ones.

Many Richmonders already live near a park—but that doesn’t always mean quality access. Some parks offer vibrant, well-used spaces. Others lack lighting, seating, working restrooms, or safe walking routes. These differences matter.

Strategy 1.2 calls for reinvesting in parks with deferred maintenance, updating aging infrastructure, and improving public space design to meet best practices. This approach supports walkability and equity goals by making sure all parks—especially those in historically underserved neighborhoods—offer safe, welcoming, and high-quality experiences. MAP 15 on page 85 demonstrates

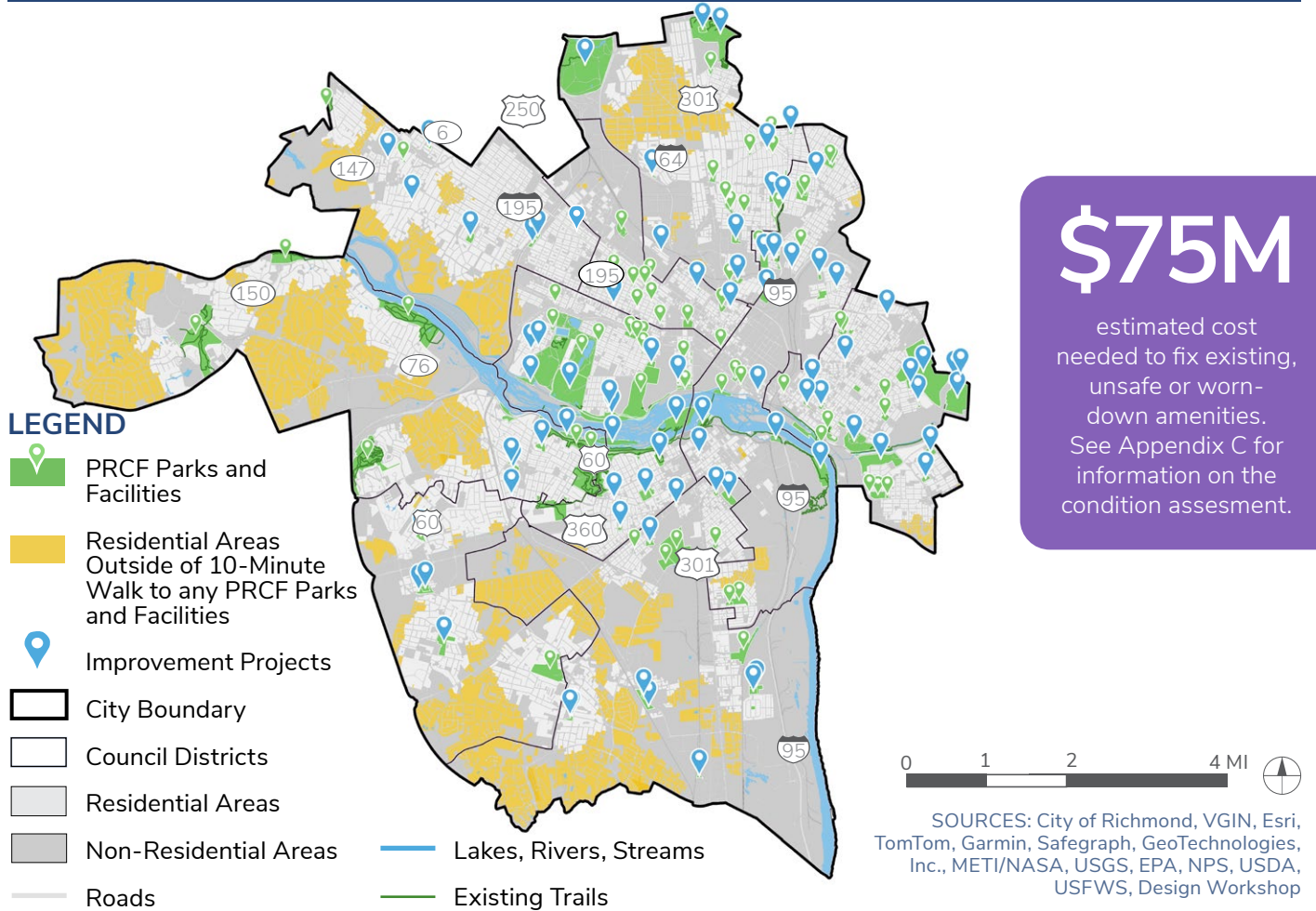


VISION PLAN

Strategy 1.2 is crucial to ensure everyone in Richmond can access a quality park, facility, or greenspace. Parks and facilities identified as needing significant repairs are identified as improvement projects in the Vision Plan. [Read more about the Vision Plan in Chapter 3.](#)

| HOW STRATEGY 1.2 MOVES FORWARD                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                   |                  |            |                                         |      |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------|------|--|
| Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners                                | Type |  |
| 1.2.a Apply the new PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards as outlined in Strategy 9.1, to all new and renovated parks and facilities to meet consistent standards for accessibility, sustainability, safety, comfort, and community relevance.   | Access, Quality   | 9.1              | Short-term |                                         |      |  |
| 1.2.b Conduct a systemwide gap analysis to identify existing parks and facilities that do not meet the new PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards. Determine which parks are not being put to their best use as potential sites for reinvestment. | Access            | 1.2              | Short-term |                                         |      |  |
| 1.2.c Address the funding deficit needed to sustainably address deferred maintenance systemwide.                                                                                                                                                             | Access, Quality   | 1.2, 10.1        | Mid-term   | DPW, RPS, ACB, JRA, non-profit partners |      |  |

## MAP 15: IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS PROPOSED IN THE VISION PLAN



### HOW STRATEGY 1.2 MOVES FORWARD

| Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Driving Principle          | Related Strategy                   | Start Time | Partners                           | Type |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|------|
| 1.2.d Reinvest in existing parks with deferred maintenance, prioritizing upgrades to align with the classification guidelines and community needs. Utilize the new Total Asset Management 1.0 to strategize and track changing asset conditions. | Access, Quality, Community | 1.2, 9.1, 12.3                     | On-going   | DPW, RPS, ACB, non-profit partners |      |
| 1.2.e Pilot quick and light temporary design solutions as a way to kick off and test supporting assessments and studies recommended throughout the plan. Work in tandem with park activation pilots. Expand pilots as needed.                    | Access                     | 1.2, 3.1, 5.2, 7.1, 7.2, 9.1, 11.1 | Short-term |                                    |      |
| 1.2.f Study and review pilots to identify the successes and challenges. Report on the effectiveness of the pilots and how they apply to policies and operations.                                                                                 | Access                     | 1.2, 3.1, 5.2, 7.1, 7.2, 9.1, 11.1 | Mid-term   |                                    |      |

## STRATEGY 1.3

# Maximize the positive community impact of existing public land and facilities.

### Reclaim Underused Spaces

As Richmond works to improve existing parks and add new ones, the City can also look inward—unlocking the full potential of land and facilities it already owns. The City and its partners—including Richmond Public Schools—hold thousands of acres of underused land that could support parks, gardens, and shared spaces.

Libraries, schools, and other public facilities can expand access to recreation and enrichment by coordinating more closely with PRCF. Future projects should consider co-locating services, sharing resources, and modernizing aging sites.

PRCF has a strong history of collaboration with other departments and agencies. The *Richmond INSPIRE* Plan builds

on this legacy—and on guidance from Richmond 300—by calling for new public processes to identify shared opportunities and coordinate capital planning.

Vacant or underused properties can affect neighborhood safety and appearance. The plan recommends short-term maintenance and activation strategies, including support for community stewardship. Converting surplus parking lots into green space and relaunching programs like parklets can help transform overlooked public land into valued assets.

Together, these steps ensure that public lands, buildings, and resources serve the community's highest needs. PRCF is committed to working with Richmond Public

Schools and other partners to make better use of City-owned land for parks, recreation, and community use.

#### DEEPER DIVE



[Trust for Public Land, Unlocking Schoolyard Potential \[external link\]](#)

[Watch PRCF speak about their role in removing the monuments on Monument Avenue in 2020 \[external link\].](#)



Concrete ruins inside Wayside Springs Park, painted by Richmond urban artists





## HOW STRATEGY 1.3 MOVES FORWARD

| Action Items |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Driving Principle | Related Strategy     | Start Time | Partners                                                               | Type                                                                                  |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.3.a        | Amend policy to encourage public access to school yards and playgrounds during non-school hours. Update the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between PRCF and RPS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Access            | 1.3                  | Short-term | PDR, RPS                                                               |    |
| 1.3.b        | Work with other City departments to conduct an annual review City-owned land and identify underused properties for reuse as parks, gardens, or community spaces. Where land and facilities are not being put to their highest and best use, apply uniform criteria to determine which sites should be set aside as future parks, greenspace, or community facilities. Report annually documenting the working group findings. | Access            | 1.1, 1.3             | Short-term | CAO, DED, PDR, RPS                                                     |    |
| 1.3.c        | Utilize and launch vacant city-owned property temporary activation toolkit. The kit should be publicly available, document maintenance standards, and strategies and processes for activating these unused sites. Leverage the time and expertise of community and friends groups to develop the toolkit and further steward these sites.                                                                                     | Access, Quality,  | 1.3, 9.1, 11.1, 11.2 | Short-term | DPW, PDR                                                               |    |
| 1.3.d        | Promote and relaunch parklet program after the creation of new guidelines and standards.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Access, Enviro..  | 1.3, 7.2             | Short-term | non-profit partners                                                    |  |
| 1.3.e        | Work with other City departments to co-locate, consolidate, and modernize community-serving public facilities. Participate in a working group for planned capital improvements with city departments.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Access, Quality   | 1.3, 11.1            | Mid-term   | RPS, RPL, RRHA                                                         |  |
| 1.3.f        | Work with other public and private entities to decrease the city's surface parking area by converting surface lots to parks wherever appropriate and by developing shared parking assets.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Access, Enviro.   | 1.1, 7.1             | Mid-term   | DPW, OS                                                                |  |
| 1.3.g        | Participate in a collaborative effort with City departments, community members, and partner agencies to develop a collective vision plan for Monument Avenue as a civic space. Support the inclusion of parks and recreation as part of the corridor's long-term vision, recognizing its potential to help address gaps in park access west of I-195.                                                                         | Access, Welcome   | 4.2                  | Mid-term   | Virginia DHR, DPW, non-profit partners, History and Culture Commission |  |



William Dick Elementary School Before (Left) and After Schoolyard Participatory Design (Right), Trust for Public Land

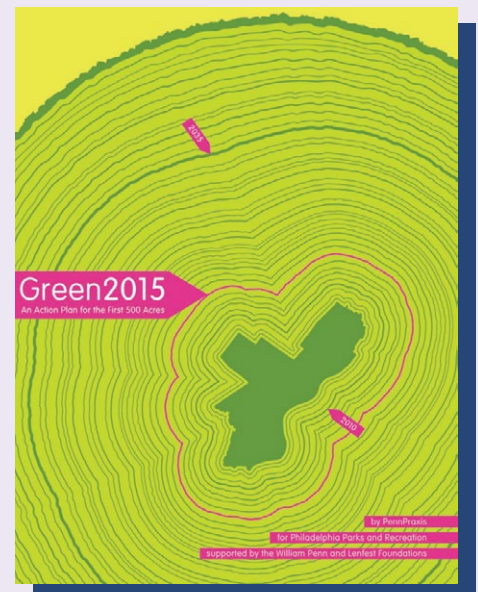
## NATIONAL CASE STUDY

# Creating Parks from Underused Land

Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia's Green2015 initiative demonstrates how a city can take swift, focused action to expand park access by rethinking how public land is used. Rather than relying solely on new land acquisition, the initiative inventoried over 4,000 acres of potential parkland—including vacant lots, schoolyards, utility corridors, and recreation centers—with more than 1,000 acres already under public ownership and over 1,200 acres identified as privately owned but potentially repurposable.

This comprehensive approach allowed the city to prioritize sites in underserved areas and move quickly toward implementation. Green2015 showed that strong interagency coordination, clear acreage goals, and flexible thinking about what constitutes park space can unlock significant opportunities within a city's existing footprint. The effort also emphasized the value of using underused land to meet multiple needs—supporting not only recreation but also environmental performance, public health, and neighborhood revitalization.



## DEEPER DIVE



[Review the Green2015 Plan \[external link\]](#)



STRATEGY 1.4

Leverage future population growth and development to protect open space and build new parks and greenways.

Keeping Pace with Growth

As Richmond continues to grow, new development presents opportunities to expand the City’s network of parks, greenways, and recreation facilities. Richmond 300 and its network of small area plans outline major redevelopment efforts—ranging from infill housing and commercial projects to brownfield remediation and highway cap initiatives—that can make Richmond more livable, connected, and resilient.

When coordinated thoughtfully, these projects can also strengthen the parks and recreation system. PRCF plays a key role in shaping these efforts by participating in small area plans and working with partners to

integrate high-quality public spaces into new development. Strong relationships with the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) and other agencies will help ensure that public housing communities and historically underserved neighborhoods are included in future park planning. Brownfield remediation projects, highway caps, and other large infrastructure investments offer unique opportunities to add new parks and green infrastructure, especially in areas where open space is limited. Planning efforts can also align with goals to protect viewsheds, enhance neighborhood connectivity, and

repurpose underused or disturbed land as future park sites.

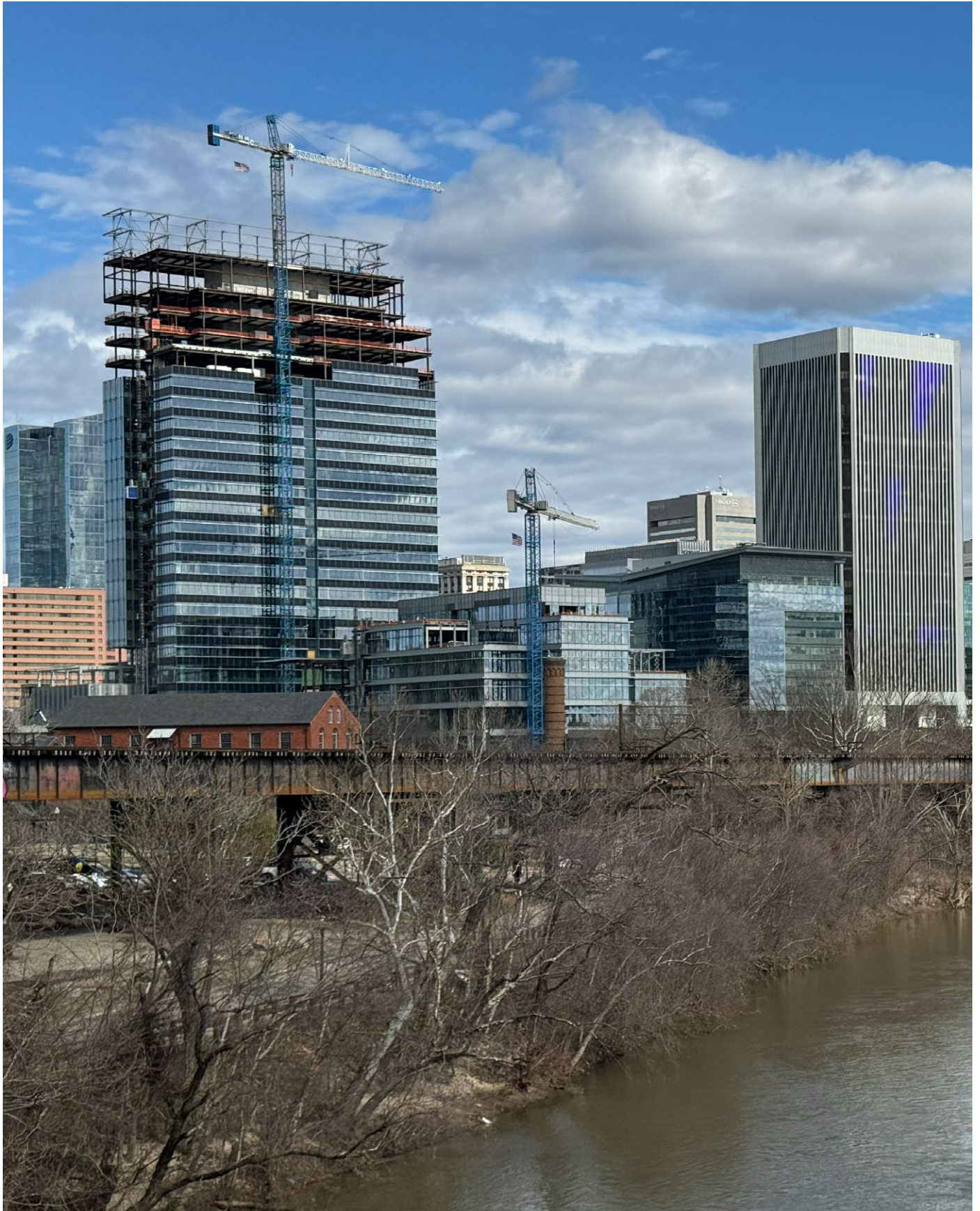
To make the most of these opportunities, the City can revise zoning policies and strengthen the use of tools like proffers (commitments made by developers to address the impacts of their projects) and impact fees. These updates can help ensure that private development contributes meaningfully to Richmond’s public realm—creating parks and greenways that benefit both new and existing residents, and helping shape a future that is healthy, equitable, and grounded in long-term community goals.

| HOW STRATEGY 1.4 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                   |                  |            |                     |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners            | Type                                                                                  |
| 1.4.a                          | Ensure PRCF participates in all small area plans to advocate for the integration of feasible, high-quality parks, greenspace, and community facilities moving forward.                                                                                | Access, Equity    | 1.4, 5.2         | Short-term | PDR                 |  |
| 1.4.b                          | Work with RRHA and RRHA residents to integrate high-quality, community-driven parks and recreation facilities in all RRHA communities. PRCF should build a strong working relationship with RRHA to integrate those communities into the park system. | Access, Equity    | 1.4, 5.2         | On-going   | RRHA, PDR, DED, HCD |  |



## HOW STRATEGY 1.4 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners          | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.4.c | Work with agencies to encourage any future highway caps to integrate public parks, usable greenspace, and support increased non-vehicular connectivity to parks and recreation.                                                                                                                                                                         | Access, Enviro., Quality | 1.4, 7.2, 11.2   | Long-term  | PDR, DPW, VDOT    |    |
| 1.4.d | Align the dedication of future park and greenspace with efforts to protect important viewsheds.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Access, Enviro.          | 1.4, 7.2         | On-going   | PDR               |    |
| 1.4.e | Continue to perform a Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment on each new PRCF site to identify potential site remediation needs and to ensure that no park site poses a risk to environmental or human health.                                                                                                                                           | Access, Enviro., Quality | 1.4, 7.1, 9.1    | On-going   |                   |    |
| 1.4.f | Seek opportunities to include high-quality public park and greenspace as part of brownfield remediation and redevelopment projects. Advocate for the transition of disturbed lands to park space, especially in Equity Investment Zones.                                                                                                                | Access, Enviro., Quality | 1.4, 7.2, 11.2   | On-going   | PDR, OS, DEQ, EPA |    |
| 1.4.g | Work with Planning and Development Review to revise the Zoning Ordinance in order to strengthen private support for new and high-quality public parks, open space, green infrastructure, and recreation. Coordinate with private developers to link new amenities and open spaces to citywide park and greenway networks.                               | Access, Quality          | 1.4, 11.2, 11.3  | Short-term | PDR, CRLC         |  |
| 1.4.h | Update development code exactions for parks, greenways, trails and open space to revise impact fees and land dedications (proffers) that align with current rates of public park provision needs. Include design standards for developer contributions of quality park. Consider including development incentives for exceeding minimum park standards. | Access, Quality          | 1.4, 11.2, 11.3  | Short-term | PDR               |  |



New buildings are constructed along the James River in Spring 2025





## BIG MOVE #2

# Connected System



## Connectivity Today

Richmond's parks, trails, and community centers offer places to play, gather, and recharge—but many community members face barriers getting there, especially on foot, by bike, or by bus. In neighborhoods shaped by past disinvestment, the route to a PRCF site may lack sidewalks, safe crossings, shade, protection from vehicles, or reliable transit access. In some areas, no safe or comfortable route exists at all

Community feedback highlights the urgency of these gaps. More than four in five Richmonders say they would prefer to walk to their favorite park—but only 56 percent currently do. Nearly half would like to bike, yet just one-third can. One in six residents identified difficulty

reaching parks as a key reason they don't visit more often, while another 15 percent cited safety concerns.

Successful projects like Pine Camp—where community leadership and interdepartmental coordination led to new trail connections—show what's possible. Richmond INSPIRE builds on this momentum with targeted strategies to improve safe, comfortable connections between neighborhoods and parks. These efforts respond directly to what Richmonders shared: a need for better walking, biking, and transit routes to nearby parks and public spaces.

By coordinating with other City departments and focusing on areas with the greatest barriers, PRCF will expand and improve the network of sidewalks, greenways, and trails—ensuring every community has safer, more welcoming ways to reach the parks and recreation opportunities they value



Unsafe sidewalks are a barrier to park access and connectivity







The Canal Walk is a multi-entity supported trail along the historic canal, which is a key walking and biking routes

# Strategies

Richmond INSPIRE sets clear strategies to improve safe, comfortable connections between neighborhoods and parks. These strategies respond directly to what community members shared during outreach—especially the need for better walking, biking, and transit routes to nearby parks and public spaces. By

coordinating with other City departments and focusing on areas with the greatest barriers, PRCF will strengthen the citywide network of sidewalks, greenways, and trails—ensuring that every community has a safer, more welcoming way to reach parks and recreation opportunities.

| STRATEGIES                                                              | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 2.1 Launch a 'Access to Parks and Recreation Community ' program.       | 96   |
| 2.2 Expand and connect the city’s system of greenways and linear parks. | 99   |

# Connected System



## Community Trailbuilding at Pine Camp

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## Years of Community-Led Collaboration

Trailhead at Pine  
Camp's nature trails



## Community Trailbuilding at Pine Camp

### The Opportunity

More than six years ago, a Pine Camp program coordinator requested a way for kids in his program to explore the woods. In response, the Department's trail crew—alongside volunteers—built the first single-track loop behind the center. That initial trail quickly gained popularity, sparking community interest and involvement.

### Culture of Collaboration

What sets the Pine Camp model apart is its foundation in trust, openness, and cross-sector teamwork.

- Staff-led, volunteer-powered: Trails are designed and built by the trail crew with hands-on help from community volunteers, many of whom have deep knowledge of the site's terrain and ecology.
- From informal to intentional: When unauthorized trails appeared, staff engaged the users behind who created them—turning informal activity into an opportunity for co-creation, trust, shared ownership.

- Interdepartmental coordination: The Department of Public Utilities' stream restoration at Pine Camp became an asset, not a barrier. Together, DPU and PRCF integrated new stream crossings into the trail system, using restoration funding to support both environmental and recreational goals.
- Ecological integration: Trails are not overlaid on the land—they're woven through it, aligning with topography, habitat, and water systems to minimize disturbance and enhance resilience.

### Citywide Model

The Pine Camp model—layering access, ecology, and partnership—is now informing Richmond's broader trail-building strategy. The result is a model of collaboration that balances recreation, ecology, and community stewardship. Projects like the James River Branch Trail, Crooked Branch Trail, and Fall Line Trail use the Pine Camp model: community-supported, ecologically integrated, and designed for long-term care.

### What's Next

PRCF is adapting lessons from Pine Camp to shape how future greenways and trail projects are built and maintained. Trail crews are formalizing practices that prioritize early public involvement, interdepartmental coordination, and long-term stewardship. Future trails will be planned and managed as essential public spaces—supporting mobility, nature access, conservation, and neighborhood connection.

As Richmond implements the goals of Richmond Connects, lessons from Pine Camp will inform the best practices that guide how the City identifies, prioritizes, and designs non-vehicular infrastructure improvements near parks and facilities. New tools and formalized best practices will bring residents and staff together to evaluate barriers and co-create solutions. Implementation will focus on greenways, streetscapes, transit access, and other improvements that make it easier, safer, and more comfortable to reach parks, nature, and facilities by foot, bike, or bus.



STRATEGY 2.1

Launch the ‘Access to Parks and Recreation’ program.

Creating Safe Routes to Parks

Getting to a park should be easy, safe, and comfortable—whether walking from home, biking from school, or riding the bus. But in Richmond, that journey depends heavily on neighborhood conditions. Some communities have sidewalks, crossings, and shade. Others—especially those shaped by past disinvestment—lack even the basics. Missing infrastructure and barriers like highways often make parks difficult or unsafe to reach without a car.

Strategy 2.1 calls for launching a new Access to Parks and Recreation Community program. At the heart of the program, PRCF will partner with residents, community leaders, and City staff to walk, bike, and ride transit within the half-mile area around parks. Together, they will identify barriers and recommend short-

and long-term improvements that make reaching parks safer and more welcoming.

Community feedback reveals strong support for a more connected and comfortable trail system. Many residents shared concerns about missing links, confusing signage, safety along busy roads, and greenways that feel cut off from their neighborhoods. These issues especially affect older adults, families with young children, and those with limited mobility. Responses also showed that Black and lower-income residents are less likely to use greenways—pointing to deeper infrastructure and equity gaps. *Richmond INSPIRE* champions an expanded, more inclusive greenway network that reflects these realities and helps guide future investment.

Improvements may include sidewalks, signage, traffic calming, safer crossings, and bus stop access—as well as shade, benches, lighting, and protected areas that buffer people from vehicle traffic. These efforts will align with citywide goals like *Richmond Connects* and *Vision Zero*.

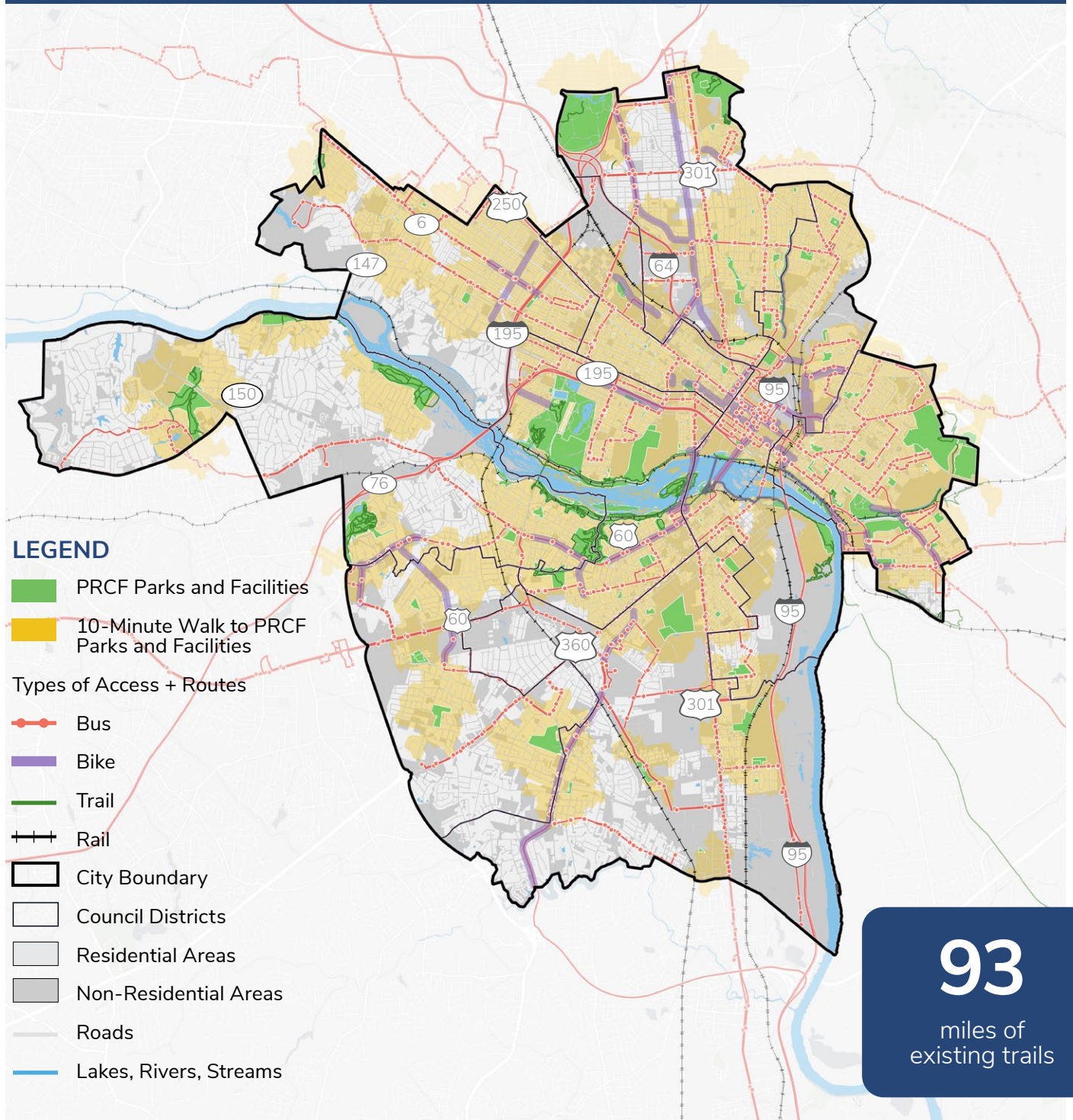
By addressing these last-half-mile challenges, the City can help more Richmonders reach parks without needing to drive—and create a more connected, equitable, and healthy community in the process.

| HOW STRATEGY 2.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                   |                  |            |                          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners                 | Type                                                                                  |
| 2.1.a                          | As part of the implementation of Richmond Connects, develop a methodology for identifying and prioritizing sidewalk, bike lane, greenway, bus service, Complete Streets and other non-vehicular infrastructure improvements within the walksheds and bikesheds of existing and future parks. | Access, Welcome   | 2.1, 2.2, 3.1    | Short-term | DPW, non-profit partners |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 2.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners                 | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1.b | Pilot “Access to Parks and Recreation Community Audits” in Equity Investment Zone (EIZ), bringing together residents, City officials and staff, and local stakeholders to walk, bike, and use transit in a park or facility’s surrounding area and evaluate barriers to access. Audits should consider a range of conditions that affect comfort, safety, and connectivity—such as lighting, signage, tree cover, sidewalk width and condition, curb ramps, crosswalks, bike and traffic speeds. Utilize these Audits to inform City priorities to invest in street, sidewalk, transit, and other mobility or neighborhood improvements. Use results to inform policies, capital improvements, and design guidelines that promote equitable, welcoming access to parks for people of all ages and abilities. | Access, Welcome          | 2.1, 3.1         | Short-term | DPW, DNCS                |    |
| 2.1.c | Implement the findings of ‘Access to Parks and Recreation Community Audits’ in studied neighborhoods.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Access, Welcome          | 2.1, 3.1         | Short-term | DPW, DNCS                |   |
| 2.1 d | Explore the potential demand and partnership opportunities for ridesharing programs to parks and programs, particularly for youth, seniors, and people with disabilities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Access, Welcome, Quality | 2.1, 3.1, 11.2   | Mid-term   | DPW, DNCS                |  |
| 2.1 e | Work with community-based access and cycling organizations to promote bike safety and ridership through educational programming, community events, and bike and helmet giveaways.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Access, Welcome, Quality | 2.1, 3.1, 11.2   | Mid-term   | DPW, non-profit partners |  |

## MAP 16: EXISTING ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop



## STRATEGY 2.2

# Expand and connect the city's system of greenways and linear parks.

### Expanding a Connected Greenway Network

Richmond's greenways offer scenic and safe routes for walking, biking, and connecting with nature—especially along the James River. But while these trails provide real value where they exist, the current system doesn't yet reach the whole city equitably. Many greenways are disconnected from surrounding neighborhoods, hard to access without a car, or missing clear signage and safe crossings. Poor maintenance and safety concerns also keep people—especially those with limited exposure and experience—from using them comfortably.

Strategy 2.2 calls for expanding and connecting the greenway system to better serve all Richmonders. The plan proposes high-impact projects that link neighborhoods to parks, schools, and civic spaces—especially in *Richmond INSPIRE Equity Investment Zones (EIZ)*. Actions include developing new trail corridors; advocating for converting underused medians into linear parks; and transforming public alleys into biodiverse; shared-use streets. In neighborhoods with limited park access; greenways can provide critical open space; safe

routes for walking and rolling; and connections to everyday destinations.

Survey responses confirm that Black and lower-income residents are less likely to use Richmond's existing greenways and riverfront parks—pointing to deeper equity and infrastructure gaps. *Richmond INSPIRE* wants to close those gaps by guiding investment and championing an inclusive system rooted in access and resilience. Additional accessibility improvements should consider older adults, families with young children, and people with disabilities and how to improve their ability to use greenways.

Regional trails like the Virginia Capital Trail and the East Coast Greenway already provide important connections through Richmond. New projects like the Fall Line Trail offer a chance to build on that foundation—linking neighborhoods, parks, and transit across seven localities. By coordinating local trail expansions, safer streets, and natural corridor restoration alongside these efforts, the City can help shape a more connected, inclusive public realm.

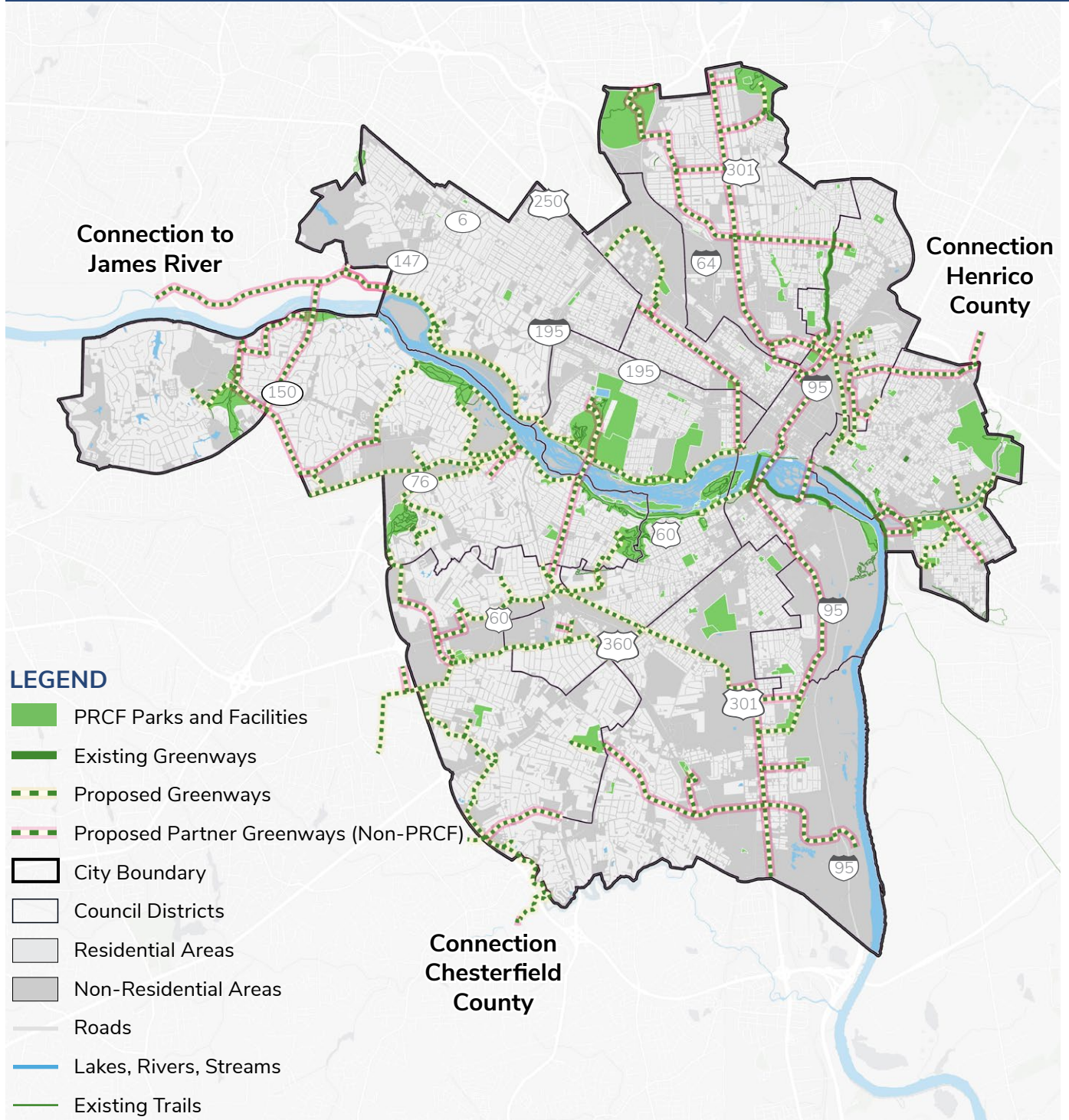
*Richmond INSPIRE* also calls for bold partnerships to make this vision possible. Working closely with local organizations, developers, and regional agencies, the City can secure new trail corridors, improve existing segments, and create a system where every resident benefits from safe, connected, and welcoming greenways.

Expanded greenways also support Richmond's broader goals—advancing health, climate resilience, habitat restoration, and mobility. With sustained investment and creative collaboration, Richmond can grow a greenway network that brings people closer to nature, strengthens community ties, and reclaims public space for all.

## HOW STRATEGY 2.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                     | Driving Principle                | Related Strategy   | Start Time | Partners      | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.2.a | Identify and pursue simple, high-impact projects that connect disconnected neighborhoods to parks and greenways and deliver strong community benefits.                                           | Access, Equity                   | 2.2, 5.2           | Short-term | DPW, OS, PDR  |    |
| 2.2.b | Identify opportunities for utilizing public alleys as biodiverse, multi-use streets and active transportation corridors.                                                                         | Access, Enviro., Quality         | 2.2, 7.2, 11.1     | Short-term | DPW           |    |
| 2.2.c | Develop greenways throughout the city, with a particular focus on connecting parks and other public amenities, schools, Nodes, Equity Investment Zone (EIZ), and adjacent localities.            | Access, Enviro.                  | 2.1, 2.2, 7.2      | Mid-term   | DPW, PDR, RPS |    |
| 2.2.d | Explore the conversion of significant medians to linear parks and ensure that future 'road diet' projects allow for linear parks, particularly in areas of the city with park access challenges. | Access, Quality                  | 2.2, 11.2          | Long-term  | DPW, OS       |    |
| 2.2.e | Collaborate with freight rail companies to develop rails-to-trails projects and trails-next-to-rails projects.                                                                                   | Access, Welcome, Equity, Quality | 2.2, 3.1, 5.2, 9.1 | Long-term  | DPW           |  |

## MAP 17: PROPOSED GREENWAYS



SOURCES: City of Richmond, County of Henrico, VGIN, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop



5



# **'WELCOMING' STRATEGIES**

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- **Why is Welcoming Important?**
- **Big Move #3: Safe and Welcoming Parks Strategies**
- **Big Move #4: Cultural Preservation and Celebrations Strategies**

# → Why is Welcoming Important?

A welcoming space goes beyond physical access—it means feeling safe, valued, and reflected in the design, programs, and atmosphere of parks and facilities. When people feel welcome, they return more often, form community connections, and help care for shared spaces.

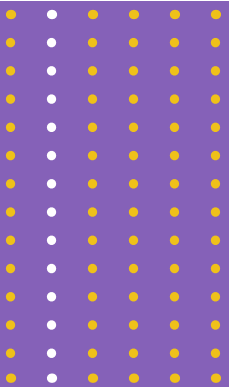
For many Richmonders, parks and recreation sites serve as “third places”—neither home nor work, but important public settings where people can be present without having to pay. These spaces allow for gathering, play, organizing, or simply enjoying a moment of rest among neighbors.

Richmond INSPIRE supports the idea that every park and facility should be welcoming to all. To achieve the vision for a more welcoming park and recreation system, Richmond INSPIRE introduces two Big Moves:

- **Safe and Welcoming Parks** assesses how parks and facilities can improve safety, comfort, and inclusive design
- **Cultural Preservation and Celebration** celebrates the people and culture of Richmond.

## RICHMOND’S VISION FOR WELCOMING

Richmond’s parks, trails, and centers use public art, park design, and programs to celebrate Richmond’s people and culture. Parks are welcoming and reflect the neighborhoods they serve.







### **BIG MOVE #3**

## **Safe and Welcoming Parks**

This Big Move focuses on creating safer, more accessible, and inclusive parks and community centers, improving access to information about recreation resources, and making the James River Park System a welcoming destination for all Richmonders.

### **Strategies**

- 3.1** Eliminate barriers and make every Richmond park and community center safer, more accessible, and more inclusive for all users.
- 3.2** Make it easy for all Richmonders to find helpful, up-to-date information about the city's park and recreation resources and how to use them.
- 3.3** Find new ways to make the James River Park System a destination for all Richmonders.



### **BIG MOVE #4**

## **Cultural Preservation and Celebration**

This Big Move celebrates cultural heritage by showcasing public art, highlighting local history and significant places, and equipping parks and community centers with the infrastructure to support local artists and performances.

### **Strategies**

- 4.1** In every project, showcase public art that preserves the cultural heritage of the city's places and neighborhoods.
- 4.2** Find new ways to spotlight local history and places of significance through park facilities and programming
- 4.3** Give parks and community centers the infrastructure they need to support local artists and performances.



## BIG MOVE #3

# Safe and Welcoming Parks



## Welcoming Parks and Facilities

Richmond's parks offer a wide range of experiences—from wooded trails and river overlooks to neighborhood playgrounds and recreation centers. Many residents describe these places as part of their daily lives, filled with memories of celebrations, summer camps, and shared meals. Still, while some parks feel friendly and familiar, others remain underused or disconnected from the communities they're meant to serve.

Across the city, park users report uneven experiences when it comes to feeling safe and welcome. Some parks have clear signs, active programs, and a strong community presence. Others feel isolated, lack lighting, or show signs of wear—creating discomfort or a sense of neglect. Safety concerns were a top issue raised during Richmond INSPIRE engagement—across all ages, neighborhoods, and backgrounds. Residents asked for cleaner parks, more staff visibility, and better lighting and paths to help them feel secure and welcome.

The James River Park System, one of Richmond's most iconic assets, draws visitors from across the region—but not all Richmonders feel it's for them. Survey data and interviews show that Black and lower-income residents are less likely to visit JRPS sites, often citing unclear entrances, limited transportation, and a lack of cultural connection. At the same time, new programs and staff efforts are helping reach more users and make JRPS feel more inclusive.

Citywide events like Jubilation in June and the Multicultural Festival highlight the power of cultural celebration in building community pride and park connection.

While progress is clear, experiences still vary widely by park and user group. Creating a system where every Richmond resident feels safe, welcome, and seen will require deeper investment in staffing, signage, programs, and design. It will also depend on regular community feedback—so parks grow and adapt alongside the people who use them.





Randolph City Pool is a place where community members cool off and take lessons and classes

Strategies

To make every park and community facility feel safe, inclusive, and inviting, Richmond must invest in the people, places, and programs that help residents feel at home. This means more visible

staff, improved lighting and signage, and spaces that reflect Richmond’s cultural identity and everyday needs

*Richmond INSPIRE* proposes a systemwide approach. The strategies and actions that follow focus on improving

real and perceived safety, making park information more accessible, broadening access to the James River Park System, and celebrating local culture in public spaces. Together, these steps aim to ensure every Richmond resident feels seen, welcome, and inspired.

| STRATEGIES |                                                                                                                                              | PAGE |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 3.1        | Eliminate barriers and make every Richmond park and community center safer, more accessible, and more inclusive for all users.               | 108  |
| 3.2        | Make it easy for all Richmonders to find helpful, up-to-date information about the city's park and recreation resources and how to use them. | 110  |
| 3.3        | Find new ways to make the James River Park System a destination for all Richmonders.                                                         | 112  |



STRATEGY 3.1

Eliminate barriers and make every Richmond park and community center safer, more accessible, and more inclusive for all users.

Ensure Parks and Facilities Feel Safe and Welcoming

Safety is essential to how people experience parks and recreation. In the *Richmond INSPIRE* survey, residents named safety as their top concern system-wide—especially in lower-income communities and among older adults and people with disabilities. Richmonders want clean, well-lit spaces, active use, and a visible staff presence.

Strategy 3.1 focuses on improving both real and perceived safety. This includes better design—like lighting, open sight lines, and accessible paths—as well as programs and staff that create a culture of respect and care. It also calls for more ways to report issues like vandalism or hazards, and clearer communication about how the City addresses those reports.

Safety and equity are closely linked. Black Richmonders emphasized safety more strongly than other physical improvements like cooling or shade. For this reason, *Richmond INSPIRE* treats safety as a foundation for creating welcoming spaces—and calls for continuous community input to guide how safety is addressed in each neighborhood.

| HOW STRATEGY 3.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                          |                  |            |          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 3.1.a                          | Conduct a PRCF Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Action Plan of existing parks and community facilities. Identify specific needs and develop criteria to prioritize improvements. Create a pilot program to kick-start this strategy. The pilot program should focus on temporary park activation and inclusive design in strategic areas.                                                                               | Welcome, Equity, Quality | 3.1, 5.2, 9.1    | Short-term | DNCS     |  |
| 3.1.b                          | Create a pilot program that should focus on temporary park activation and inclusive design in strategic areas. Hire community members as temporary “activation fellows” embedded in PRCF. Activation fellows will lead community engagement efforts and public space activation and public space improvements within their neighborhoods by managing city-funded mini-grants that are aimed at community-supported initiatives. | Welcome                  | 3.1              | Short-term |          |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 3.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Driving Principle          | Related Strategy    | Start Time  | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1.c | Conduct a community-driven PRCF Park Activation Audit and Action Plan for facilities in equity investment zones (EIZ), to ensure that parks and community facilities have the space, equipment, staffing, rental policies, and other infrastructure to offer the events and programming that their communities want and need. Moving forward, implement standardized program planning and evaluation processes for all programming divisions.                                                           | Welcome, Equity, Community | 3.1, 4.3, 5.2, 12.1 | Short-term  | DNCS     |    |
| 3.1.d | Apply national best practices in park and facility maintenance to enhance safety, comfort, and user experience. This includes keeping sight lines clear, installing lighting in key areas, adding Wi-Fi and emergency beacons where appropriate, and maintaining routine schedules for removing litter, graffiti, and debris. Assign responsible maintenance teams to each task, define minimum service levels, and identify priority locations for improvements based on usage and community feedback. | Welcome, Quality,          | 3.1, 9.1            | Short-term, | DPW      |    |
| 3.1.e | Work in partnership with Richmond Police Department and community stakeholders to create a Park Safety Working Group to further study community concerns about safety and to establish Richmond-specific guidance for how to make parks and community facilities feel safe and comfortable for all users.                                                                                                                                                                                               | Welcome, Equity            | 3.1, 5.2            | Short-term  | DNCS     |  |
| 3.1.f | Develop a PRCF Public Restroom Strategy for the addition and ongoing maintenance of accessible public restrooms at PRCF parks and facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Welcome, Access, Quality   | 1.2, 3.1, 9.1       | Short-term  |          |  |
| 3.1.g | Continue to build upon and expand the Outdoor Recreation Program, include offerings in parks outside of the James River Park System and recruit from underrepresented groups.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Welcome, Equity            | 3.1, 5.2            | Short-term  |          |  |

**Make it easy for all Richmonders to find helpful, up-to-date information about the city's park and recreation resources and how to use them.**

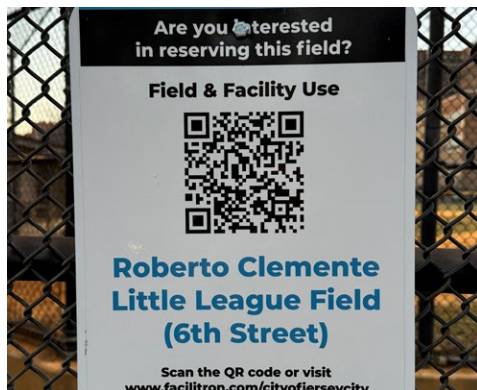
Strategy 3.2 calls for a new communications approach. PRCF will work with partners to make it easier for residents to find programs, events, and facility information—whether online.

Critical to this success will be the development of a mobile-friendly portal that will include a searchable program calendar, facility availability tools, and the ability to sign-up. The portal will be managed by trained recreation staff. PRCF will pilot the system at new community centers and refine it based on users' input.

By investing in new tools, staff support, and outreach partnerships, PRCF can make sure every Richmond resident knows how to find and use parks and facilities.

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.2.a | Hire a consultant to create a PRCF Branding, Communications and Signage Strategy to make it easier for Richmonders to find tailored and up-to-date information about the City's park and recreation resources and how to access them, in a variety of online and printed formats, including a more accessible website and physical signs. | Welcome, Equity   | 3.1, 5.2         | Short-term | SCCE     |  |
| 3.2.b | Create communications guidelines within the PRCF Branding, Communications and Signage Strategy that document multilingual communications strategies and requirements.                                                                                                                                                                     | Welcome           | 3.2              | Short-term | OSC      |  |





Examples of how physical signage can help residents know how to get involved or use facilities

## HOW STRATEGY 3.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy           | Start Time | Partners  | Type |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------|-----------|------|
| 3.2.c | Work with other City departments and non-profits to make new residents and new Americans aware of the PRCF resources available to them, with a focus on low-income housing and high-turnover rental housing.                                                                                                                                                                                                | Welcome, Equity, Quality | 3.2, 5.2, 11.2             | Short-term | DNCS, DPU |      |
| 3.2.d | Consider the feasibility of developing an easy to use public website. The website for residents would provide access to the central program registration portal, providing information on transparent operations, ways to get involved, and important news and events in a mobile-friendly and multi-lingual format                                                                                         | Welcome                  | 3.2                        | Short-term | OSC, OIRE |      |
| 3.2.e | Build a centralized portal managed by trained PRCF Recreation staff where Richmonders can find clear and up-to-date information about public recreation programming opportunities, including a calendar system for renting and checking the availability of facilities. Pilot the system at new community centers and build the portal into the public website.                                             | Welcome                  | 3.2, 12.2                  | Short-term | OSC       |      |
| 3.2.f | Create a new PRCF Communications and Marketing Director role that has the capacity to access, improve and publish PRCF content. PRCF as a department needs to have internal capacity to advertise services and assess the rate of success for different communication methods. The new position should be housed within PRCF, but should work in collaboration with the Office of Strategic Communications. | Welcome                  | 3.2                        | Short-term |           |      |
| 3.2.g | Develop educational programming and community partnerships to teach people of all ages how to use PRCF facilities and to build lifelong healthy habits.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Welcome                  | 3.1, 3.2, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2 | Short-term | DNCS      |      |

# Find new ways to make the James River Park System a destination for all Richmonders.

The James River Park System (JRPS) is one of Richmond's most celebrated public assets—but many community members don't feel like it's meant for them. Although the park system spans nearly 600 acres of accessible riverfront, use remains uneven. Black and lower-income residents are significantly less likely to visit JRPS, citing barriers like limited transportation, unclear access points, and a lack of welcoming, culturally relevant programming.

events that make JRPS feel more accessible, especially for new and infrequent users.

To support this effort, PRCF will launch a storytelling and outreach campaign that features real Richmonders sharing how they discovered JRPS, overcame concerns, and are connecting with

The James River should be a shared resource and refuge for all. Strategy 3.3 builds the partnerships, programs, and trust to make that vision a reality.



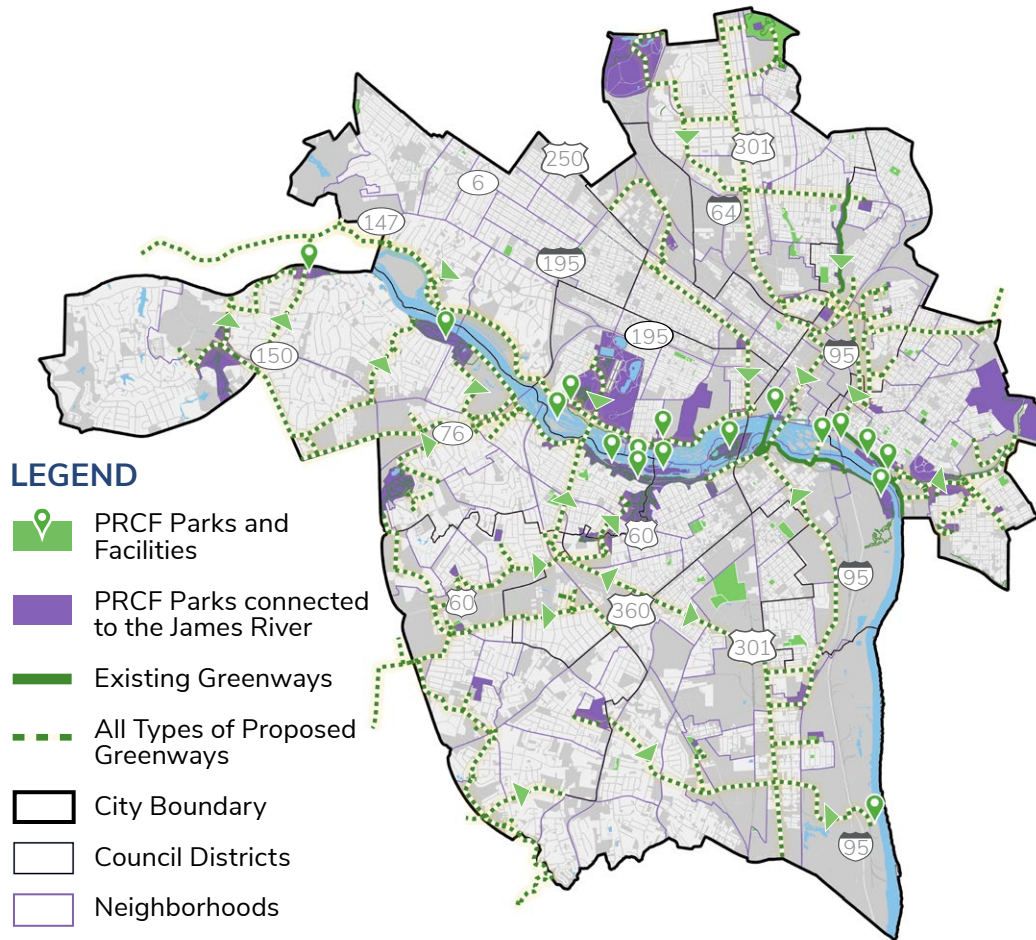
Review national best practices for increasing diversity in nature-based programming from the National Park Service and the [National Center for Outdoor and Adventure Education](#) [external link].

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Driving Principle | Related Strategy            | Start Time | Partners   | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.3.a | Continue to work with community ambassadors and identify new resources to develop tailored recreational and educational programming that makes the James River Park System more welcoming and accessible to all Richmonders, with a particular focus on communities who currently do not visit the James River parks. | Welcome           | 3.1, 3.3, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2. | Short-term | DNCS, JRPS |  |





## MAP 18: CONNECTING TO JAMES RIVER PARKS



The Vision Plan proposes to connect a total of 547 new acres of parkland to the James River.

### LEGEND

-  PRCF Parks and Facilities
-  PRCF Parks connected to the James River
-  Existing Greenways
-  All Types of Proposed Greenways
-  City Boundary
-  Council Districts
-  Neighborhoods
-  Residential Areas
-  Non-Residential Areas
-  Roads
-  Lakes, Rivers, Streams
-  Existing Trails



SOURCES: City of Richmond, VGIN, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Safegraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop



Pedestrians walk on the pedestrian bridge from Belle Isle Park



## HOW STRATEGY 3.3 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Driving Principle  | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners                        | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.3.b | Partner with community groups to host James River Park System orientation outings. Work with schools, faith groups, and local non-profits to organize welcoming, beginner-friendly visits to JRPS for community members unfamiliar with the park system. Provide mini-grants or staff support to help partners plan and lead culturally responsive outings that reflect the needs and interests of their communities. | Welcome            | 3.2, 11.2, 12.2  | Short-term | JRPS                            |    |
| 3.3.c | Launch a recurring "Welcome to the James" program for new and infrequent park users. Design and deliver free, low-barrier events that offer transportation, multilingual guides, and beginner-friendly experiences in the James River Park System. Rotate program locations to highlight different park entrances and amenities.                                                                                      | Welcome            | 3.2, 12.1        | Mid-term   | JRPS, OIRE, non-profit partners |    |
| 3.3.d | Use storytelling and media to normalize JRPS use among new audiences. Develop a communications campaign that features first-time or returning users sharing how they navigated the park system, overcame common concerns, and found welcoming experiences. Pair stories with practical tools such as maps, tips, and translated materials to support others in exploring JRPS for the first time.                     | Welcome            |                  | Mid-term   | JRPS                            |  |
| 3.3.e | Use close-to-home natural and water areas to introduce residents to nature-based recreation. The programs should build up personal confidence about being in nature and around large waterbodies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Welcome, Community | 12.3             | Mid-term   | JRPS                            |  |



A James River Park Staff Member with a youth participant.



Arthur Ashe mural at Battery Park



## BIG MOVE #4

# Cultural Preservation and Celebration



## Honoring Community and Culture

Parks and community centers are platforms for cultural expression, neighborhood memory, and shared joy. Richmond celebrates the voices and stories that define its people and places.

Richmond's parks and recreation system is a canvas for public life and collective identity. From art installations and storytelling events to community festivals and heritage sites, these spaces reflect the city's layered history and vibrant present. Cultural celebration in public spaces is more than entertainment—it fosters belonging, pride, and connection across generations.

Yet not all Richmond neighborhoods have been equally supported in preserving their histories or expressing their culture. Many communities, particularly those shaped by Black, Indigenous, immigrant, and working-class traditions, have lacked the resources or recognition to make their stories visible in the public realm.

*Richmond INSPIRE* envisions a park and recreation system that actively supports cultural expression across the city. This means uplifting local artists, honoring historical places and narratives, and investing in the infrastructure needed to host performances, workshops, and gatherings that are rooted in community identity.

This vision builds on existing models like the Dogwood Dell Festival of Arts, which showcases local talent through free, inclusive programming. It also draws inspiration from efforts like the future Shockoe Project, where thoughtful public space design supports truth-telling and remembrance of Black history in one of Richmond's most significant cultural landscapes.

By centering community-led storytelling and expanding the infrastructure needed to support local creativity, Richmond can transform everyday parks and recreation spaces into places where all people feel seen, connected,

and proud. Cultural expression will no longer be limited to special events or iconic destinations—it will become a lasting presence across neighborhoods, rooted in the stories and talents of Richmonders themselves.







Mural at Ann Hardy Park

### Strategies

Richmond INSPIRE calls for a stronger presence of culture and heritage in parks and community centers across the city. To bring this vision to life, PRCF will invest in the people, stories, and spaces that define each neighborhood. Strategies

focus on commissioning public art, honoring local history through design and programming, and equipping sites to host performances, exhibits, and cultural gatherings that reflect Richmond’s artistic diversity. To do this well, PRCF will collaborate with artists, historians, cultural organizations,

and community groups who bring deep knowledge and lived experiences.

| STRATEGIES |                                                                                                                    | PAGE |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 4.1        | In every project, showcase public art that preserves the cultural heritage of the city's places and neighborhoods. | 120  |
| 4.2        | Find new ways to spotlight local history and places of significance through park facilities and programming        | 122  |
| 4.3        | Give parks and community centers the infrastructure they need to support local artists and performances.           | 124  |



BIG MOVE #4

# Cultural Preservation and Celebration



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Festival of Arts & the Dell

68

Years of Events

30+

Events Each  
Summer

100%

Free Entry to PRCF  
Events at Dogwood Dell

Jubilation in June  
summer event

## The Legacy

Nestled in Byrd Park, Dogwood Dell has served as a community gathering place for decades. First planted with dogwoods in 1939, the site has grown into a cherished cultural landmark. Since 1956, the City's Festival of Arts has brought free performances to the amphitheater each summer, making art and celebration accessible to all Richmonders.

## Honoring the Legacy, Embracing the Future

Dogwood Dell's enduring role as a free, welcoming venue under the stars represents the spirit of Richmond's cultural heartbeat. Through continued programming, investment, and inclusion, the Festival of Arts stands as a living embodiment of belonging — where past traditions meet future aspirations in a celebration that truly reflects the city.

## A Platform for Local Culture

The Festival of Arts, now in its 68th year, reflects the diversity of Richmond's voices. PRCF works with local performers, community groups, and nonprofit partners like Friends of Dogwood Dell to showcase music, theater, dance, and multicultural events that resonate with the city's many identities.

Central to PRCF's mission is the celebration of Richmond's diverse artistic voices. The Festival of Arts amplifies stories that reflect the city's multifaceted identity. In collaboration with nonprofit partners like Friends of Dogwood Dell and dedicated volunteers, the City has cultivated a vibrant performance schedule that is as dynamic as the community it serves.

## What's Next

Looking toward the future, PRCF is committed to evolving the Dogwood Dell experience. Aspirational goals include introducing new types of performances that stretch traditional boundaries — from emerging musical genres to interdisciplinary collaborations and interactive audience experiences. The department also envisions capital improvements to the amphitheater itself to better support technical needs, enhance accessibility, and accommodate larger and more diverse productions.

*Richmond INSPIRE* calls for continued investment in existing spaces like Dogwood Dell and in new local spaces—where infrastructure supports creative expression, local history is celebrated, and the arts remain a vital force citywide.



STRATEGY 4.1

In every project, showcase public art that preserves the cultural heritage of the city’s places and neighborhoods.

Reflecting Neighborhood Identity

When people see their culture, history, and neighborhood identity reflected in parks and recreation, they’re more likely to feel at home. This strategy builds on PRCF’s strong history of community first programming—hosting community events, supporting local artists, and honoring places with deep meaning.

But there’s more to do. Many sites still can feel generic

or disconnected from the communities they serve. Strategy 4.1 calls for stronger partnerships with local artists and culture-bearers, more site-based programming, and new design elements—like murals, signs, and rotating installations—that highlight local stories and traditions.

Every park and facility has the potential to reflect the people around it. This strategy helps

PRCF celebrate the full range of Richmond’s communities, and ensure that everyone feels welcome where they live.

| HOW STRATEGY 4.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                          |                         |            |          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy        | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 4.1.a                          | Build on the Public Arts Commission's Percent-for-Art Program by setting PRCF-specific percent-for-art metrics that apply to all capital projects, including smaller projects below the Commission's \$250,000 threshold.                             | Welcome                  | 4.1                     | Short-term |          |  |
| 4.1.b                          | Fine-tune and document processes for including high-quality local art as an integral, defining piece of every park and recreation project.                                                                                                            | Welcome, Equity, Quality | 3.3, 4.1, 4.3, 5.2, 9.1 | Mid-term   | PAP, PAC |  |
| 4.1.c                          | Develop a sustainable art plan for maintaining and cycling public art on PRCF sites and incorporating space for art in future park and facilities projects. Work with the Public Arts Commission to develop and rotate art exhibits in PRCF's system. | Welcome, Quality         | 4.1, 4.3, 9.1           | Long-term  | PAP, PAC |  |



Community sculpture in Bellemeade Park



**Figure 24:** CEI Benchmarks - a one year exhibit of 20 painted public benches by public school students between grades 3-12.

#### NATIONAL CASE STUDY

## Temporary Public Art Program

New York City, NY

New York City Parks' Temporary Public Art Program supports rotating, site-specific artworks in parks across the city. Run by the Art & Antiquities division, the program invites artists and cultural groups to propose installations—typically on view for up to a year—that activate park spaces and reflect community identity. NYC Parks provides site guidance and handles permitting, while artists manage installation, maintenance, and removal. Arlington County, VA offers a similar art program.



STRATEGY 4.2

Find new ways to spotlight local history and places of significance through park facilities and programming.

Showcase Richmond’s Story

Richmond’s parks and recreation sites are filled with history—some visible, some hidden. This strategy calls for preserving and interpreting those stories through programming, partnerships, and design.

That includes continued work at sites like the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground and

the Trail of the Enslaved, and expanding efforts at cemeteries like Evergreen, East End, Forest View and Barton Heights. It also includes storytelling through public art, signage, and events that reflect lived experiences across the city.

Every park and facility can become a space for

remembrance. By lifting up local history in everyday ways, PRCF helps keep the city’s stories alive—and ensures all Richmonders see their past honored in the public realm.

| HOW STRATEGY 4.2 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                            |                          |            |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle          | Related Strategy         | Start Time | Partners                                                                                                          | Type                                                                                  |
| 4.2.a                          | Include in the PRCF Branding, Communications and Signage Strategy, best practices for interpretive and inclusive signage at parks and facilities to highlight local history and support heritage tourism.                                                                                           | Welcome, Equity, Community | 4.2, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 12.1 | Mid-term   | PDR, The Valentine, DHR, NPS, National Battlefields, ACWM, VCU, Slave Trail Commission, Richmond Regional Tourism |  |
| 4.2.b                          | Hire a qualified consultant to identify and document all city-owned historic and culturally significant sites, buildings, landscapes, and archaeological resources. Coordinate with other departments and agencies to ensure the inventory is comprehensive and aligned with citywide data systems. | Welcome, Quality           | 4.2, 9.1                 | Mid-term   | PDR, DHR                                                                                                          |  |



## HOW STRATEGY 4.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Driving Principle | Related Strategy     | Start Time | Partners                | Type                                                                                |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.2.c | Join a citywide working group to create a Historic Resource Best Use Study. Define clear criteria for which inventoried sites should be included in the park system. Recommend appropriate uses, goals, and strategies for each site based on community value, condition, and in coordination with the forthcoming the City's Cultural Heritage Resource Plan. | Welcome, Quality  | 4.2, 9.1             | Mid-term   | DHR, PDR                |  |
| 4.2.d | Develop oral history projects with a focus on PRCF's legacy and the role of parks, recreation, community facilities, and cultural landscapes in Richmonders' memories.                                                                                                                                                                                         | Welcome, Equity   | 4.2, 6.1, 6.2        | Long-term  | RPL, VCU, The Valentine |  |
| 4.2.e | Conduct facilities assessments and capital funding campaigns to identify city resources, grant funds, and partnerships to restore historic park houses and cultural landscapes.                                                                                                                                                                                | Welcome, Quality  | 4.2, 9.1, 11.2, 11.3 | Long-term  |                         |  |



Historic cobblestone pavers exposed from under damaged asphalt

## STRATEGY 4.3

# Give parks and community centers the infrastructure they need to support local artists and performances.

## Support Cultural Events

Many Richmonders are familiar with the city's major festivals and concerts—like those at Dogwood Dell. These events are beloved traditions that bring people

together. But *Richmond INSPIRE* also recognizes the importance of making space for smaller, local events and the artists who bring them to life.

This strategy focuses on expanding cultural programming into more neighborhoods, parks, and community centers—ensuring all residents can experience and

### HOW STRATEGY 4.3 MOVES FORWARD

| Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Driving Principle           | Related Strategy       | Start Time | Partners            | Type                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.3.a Create developing artist and cultural organization residency opportunities in underutilized city-owned spaces and buildings. Identify spaces that can house residencies and develop a pathway program to allow artists and organizations to apply for spaces.                                                     | Welcome                     | 4.3                    | Mid-term   | non-profit partners |    |
| 4.3.b Support community art, entertainment and performance in public spaces, by establishing low-cost programs that provide temporary access to facility space (such as Pine Camp and Hickory Hill) , and the use of open hours for informal use of performance spaces.                                                 | Welcome                     | 4.3                    | On-going   |                     |  |
| 4.3.c Create maker spaces and rotating outdoor galleries at parks and facilities to spotlight and support local artists.                                                                                                                                                                                                | Welcome, Quality, Community | 4.3, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2  | Short-term | PAC                 |  |
| 4.3.d Create a permanent position within PRCF to manage cultural programming and public art, and to streamline processes allowing artists, residents, and community-based arts' organizations to use PRCF facilities for cultural programming.                                                                          | Quality, Community          | 10.1, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2 | Short-term | PAC                 |  |
| 4.3.e Find new ways to integrate performance venues of varying types and sizes at PRCF sites, to support local performances and artists and to attract acts and visitors. Document the ways in which PRCF is already doing this, and improve the public marketing and accessibility of existing venues and programming. | Welcome, Quality, Community | 3.2, 9.1, 12.1, 12.2   | Short-term | PAC                 |  |





shape cultural life close to home. That means supporting youth and senior-focused events, offering resources for community-led gatherings, and making sure parks and facilities are equipped to host them.

To do this, PRCF will need to invest in flexible spaces, equipment, and staff support so events of all sizes can thrive. By elevating local voices and

creating opportunities across the city, Richmond's parks and recreation system can serve as a true cultural platform—one that reflects and celebrates the city's diversity in everyday ways.



Youth dancers preform at a holiday event



**Figure 25:** Historic Buildings on Governors Island open for organizations (Trust for Governors Island)

NATIONAL CASE STUDY

**Organizations in Residence**

*Governors Island, NY*

Governors Island's Organizations in Residence program transforms unused historic buildings into spaces for non-profits, artists, and cultural groups at low or no cost. In turn, these tenants offer public programming, exhibitions, and events that activate the park and expand access to the arts and resources. The program shows how cities can creatively repurpose civic infrastructure to support community impact.





# **'EQUITY' STRATEGIES**

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- ➔ **Why is Equity Important?**
- ➔ **Big Move #5: Community-Driven System Strategies**
- ➔ **Big Move #6: Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods Strategies**

# → Why is Equity Important?

Not every neighborhood in Richmond has the same access to parks and recreation. For decades, public investments bypassed many Black communities, leaving lasting gaps in access and quality. Today, those disparities still shape who benefits from parks and facilities.

Equity means investing more where the need is greater. It's about responding to real conditions—not treating every place the same, but making sure all Richmonders have the same chance to enjoy parks and recreation.

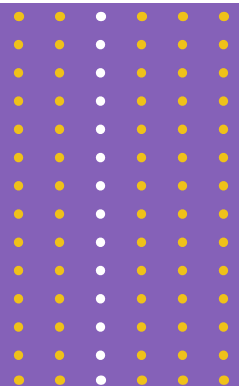
These strategies support two Big Moves:

- **Community-Driven System**, which aligns PRCF investments with community priorities and emphasizes transparency in funding and planning.
- **Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods**, which ensures that parks and recreation improvements strengthen communities without driving displacement or harm.

*Equity matters because every Richmond community deserves parks and facilities that reflect and serve them.*

## RICHMOND'S VISION FOR EQUITY

Richmond's parks and recreation projects are shaped by the community. They make neighborhoods stronger without pushing people out. The City is open about where it spends parks and recreation dollars.







## **BIG MOVE #5**

# **Community-Driven System**

This Big Move focuses on aligning PRCF investments with community values and needs by creating authentic engagement processes that lead to community-driven parks, facilities, and programs. It also emphasizes transparency in how department funds are allocated and used.

### **Strategies**

- 5.1** Align PRCF investments with community values, priorities, and needs.
- 5.2** Build authentic community engagement processes that result in community-driven, community-supported, and community-serving parks, facilities, and programming.
- 5.3** Be transparent in how department dollars are being put to use.



## **BIG MOVE #6**

# **Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods**

This Big Move focuses on implementing practical, multidisciplinary strategies to prevent displacement and address potential negative impacts of park and greenway development, while ensuring that every park and recreation project delivers measurable community benefits.

### **Strategies**

- 6.1** Implement proactive, multidisciplinary strategies to prevent parks-related displacement and to anticipate and mitigate other potential negative effects of park and greenway development.
- 6.2** Pursue and quantify community benefits in every park and recreation project.



## BIG MOVE #5

# Community-Driven System



## Community-Driven System Today

Richmond is making steady progress toward a more walkable, connected parks system. 87 percent of residents now live within a 10-minute walk of a park, greenway, or community center—well above the national average of 56 percent.

But access is about more than distance. It's also about safety, comfort, and the quality of what's nearby. When residents look for places to play, gather, or recharge, many still face barriers—especially in neighborhoods with fewer sidewalks, older facilities, or limited recreation options.

Only 81 percent of Richmonders live within walking distance of a park or facility in good condition. PRCF estimates it would take \$75 million just to replace or repair aging features like playgrounds, sports courts, fields, pools, and lighting—bringing them to a basic standard of safety and usability. That investment doesn't include the new amenities needed to expand access to the full range of recreation experiences.

Richmond also has less parkland than many of its peer cities. Just 7 percent of city land is dedicated

to parks, compared to the national median of 10 percent. To meet national benchmarks, Richmond must protect 312 additional acres today, and nearly 1,200 more acres by 2037 to serve a growing population.

At the same time, Richmond has a powerful opportunity to act. As new housing, infrastructure, and redevelopment projects take shape, PRCF can partner with other departments to add parks and trails in the places that need them most—especially in neighborhoods shaped by past disinvestment or divided by highways.

*Richmond INSPIRE* builds on the vision of Richmond 300, which calls for 100 percent of Richmonders to live within a 10-minute walk of quality open space. That goal prioritizes areas with high heat vulnerability and limited resources, helping ensure that every neighborhood has safe, welcoming, and connected parks.

With strong community support and a clear path forward,

Richmond can close these remaining gaps in the 10-minute walk to parks, replacing or repairing aging features, increasing park acreage, and addition of new parks and trails—and deliver on the promise of access for all.





Students from Maggie Walker Governor’s School during a volunteer clean up at Broad Rock Creek Park.

STRATEGIES

Richmond INSPIRE sets clear strategies to expand access, improve quality, and strengthen community connections through parks and public spaces. These strategies respond directly to what Richmonders shared

during workshops, surveys, and neighborhood conversations. By focusing on specific actions, the City and PRCF will close access gaps, upgrade existing parks and facilities, and make smart use of public land and future growth to serve every community more fully.

| STRATEGIES                                                                                                                                                         | PAGE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 5.1 Align PRCF investments with community values, priorities, and needs.                                                                                           | 134  |
| 5.2 Build authentic community engagement processes that result in community-driven, community-supported, and community-serving parks, facilities, and programming. | 136  |
| 5.3 Be transparent in how department dollars are being put to use.                                                                                                 | 138  |





BIG MOVE #5

# Community-Driven System



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Southside Park Partners

**40**

Acres of New  
Greenspace

**3**

Nonprofit  
Partners

**\$1 million**

U.S. Department of Labor  
Grant For New Parks Built  
by Richmond Residents

Arca Park community-  
painted sign

## Bringing Parks to Southside

Southside Richmond has long had fewer parks than other parts of the city, leaving many neighborhoods without access to safe, high-quality greenspace. The Southside Parks and Workforce Development Project begins to close this gap. Through a focused, community-driven approach, the City has been creating five new parks in historically underrecognized neighborhoods.

## Maximizing Funding

With a \$1 million U.S. Department of Labor grant, the City launched an ambitious effort to develop Broad Rock Creek Park, Hioaks Park, Rosemont Park, Ernest Road Park, and Reedy Creek Wetland. By pairing construction with workforce development, the initiative stretches limited resources while building economic opportunity for Richmonders.

## Investing in Richmonders

The Parks and Recreation Workforce Development Program provides paid, hands-on training in equipment operation, park construction, and green infrastructure. In partnership with the Office of Community Wealth Building, the program helps participants earn certifications, gain real-world experience, and access career pathways in the green workforce.

## Community Leadership

Three nonprofit partners help ensure that local voices guide every step of the project:

- **Southside ReLeaf** leads community engagement and ecological restoration at four of the new park sites, shaping the space through habitat improvements and resident feedback.
- **Virginia Community Voice** coordinates the ARCA (Art, Reconciliation, and Civic Advocacy) initiative at Broad Rock Creek Park. Since 2019, youth have co-designed and installed murals, benches, signage, and a healing garden, and continue to collaborate on new features.
- **Groundwork RVA** mobilizes its Community Resilience Crew to assess sites, remove invasive species, and guide design alongside neighbors. The team includes recent graduates trained in sustainable landscaping. While their Green Infrastructure and Arbor Care Apprenticeship program provides a paid training opportunity to earning certifications, job experience, and job placement support.

## What's Next

The Southside Parks and Workforce Development Project offers a model for future investment. By combining workforce development with park creation and placing community partners at the center, the City delivered high-impact improvements with limited funding. Moving forward, PRCF can apply this approach across Richmond—investing in historically underrecognized communities, expanding access to greenspace, and building local capacity to care for parks for generations to come.

STRATEGY 5.1

Align PRCF investments with community values, priorities, and needs.

Put Resources Where They’re Needed Most

PRCF and the City have long worked to give every neighborhood fair access to parks and community facilities. But without a tool built specifically for Richmond’s park system, staff often had to rely on internal knowledge or national tools—like ParkServe or the Climate Equity Index—that don’t reflect local park conditions, facility age, or community needs.

As part of this planning process, Richmond INSPIRE supported the development of a new tool: Equity Investment Zones. These

zones are based on local data and designed in partnership with PRCF staff and community stakeholders. They combine park access, condition, and safety data with indicators related to environmental pressures and public health to identify the areas of Richmond with the highest need for investment

This approach helps PRCF make more transparent, data-informed decisions and ensures that limited resources go where they are needed most. The methodology is replicable and can be updated as

new data or community priorities emerge. By adopting Equity Investment Zones, PRCF aligns its funding decisions with both local values and national best practices for equitable, healthy cities.

This strategy helps Richmond grow a park system that reflects real need—not just who speaks the loudest—and expands access to safe, vibrant public spaces across every neighborhood.

DEEPER DIVE



[Review Tempe, AZ case study: Making Space: An Equity Study for Parks and Recreation \[external link\].](#)

| HOW STRATEGY 5.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                   |                  |            |          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 5.1.a                          | Continue to use the community-driven PRCF project prioritization methodology to ensure that PRCF investments are prioritized in communities with the greatest need and with a history of underinvestment, rather than following a “squeaky wheel” approach to investment and maintenance decisions. | Equity            | 5.1, 5.3         | Short-term | DNCS     |  |



## MAP 19: EQUITY INVESTMENT ZONE (EIZ) MAP

### DEEPER DIVE

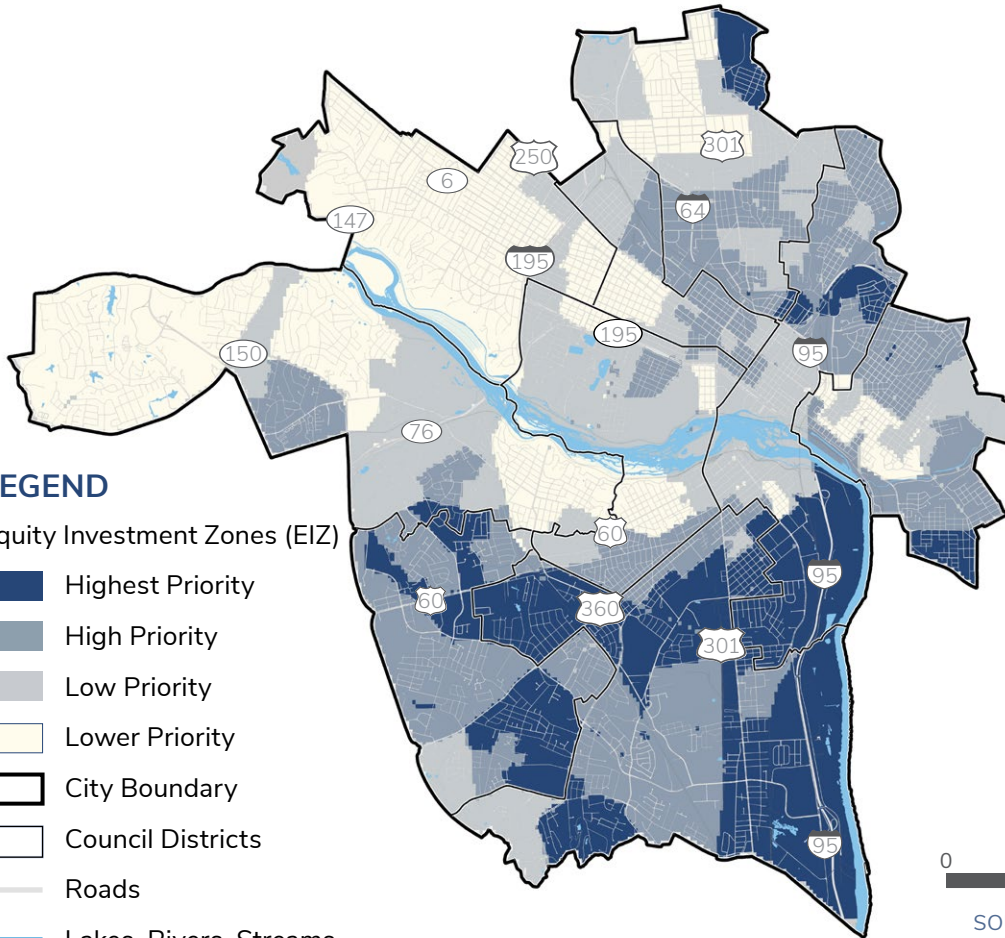


Review the EIZ methodology in Appendix F.

### LEGEND

#### Equity Investment Zones (EIZ)

- Highest Priority
- High Priority
- Low Priority
- Lower Priority
- City Boundary
- Council Districts
- Roads
- Lakes, Rivers, Streams



SOURCES: City of Richmond, VGIN, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Safegraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop

### HOW STRATEGY 5.1 MOVES FORWARD

| Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Driving Principle       | Related Strategy   | Start Time | Partners     | Type                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.1.b Encourage alignment of projects of other City departments to consider Equity Investment Zones in addition to other City tools for projects related to the parks and recreation system such as sidewalks, tree planting, and more.                          | Equity, Enviro., Access | 2.1, 5.1, 7.2      | On-going   | DPW, RPS, OS |  |
| 5.1.c Update the PRCF project prioritization methodology every five years through a public process and with stakeholder guidance, to ensure it is fair and continues to spotlight capital projects that reflect the equity values and priorities of Richmonders. | Equity, Access          | 1.1, 1.2, 5.1, 5.2 | Mid-term   | DNCS         |  |

## STRATEGY 5.2

# Build authentic community engagement processes that result in community-driven, community-supported, and community-serving parks, facilities, and programming.

## Make Planning Open, Consistent, and Community-Led

Richmonders want to be more involved in decisions about their parks and community centers—but current processes often fall short. While PRCF regularly hosts public meetings and outreach for large-scale projects, such as the design of new facilities or major renovations, smaller-scale efforts like playground replacements, court resurfacing, and facility repairs often move forward without public notice or input. These projects are typically driven by internal assessments, equipment condition, or available funding, and are not always communicated in advance. As a result, residents may be unaware of upcoming changes or miss opportunities to shape how improvements are made.

At the same time, the current system for collecting and

responding to community feedback is inconsistent. Residents often report park issues through RVA311 or by speaking with staff, but they rarely receive confirmation that problems have been resolved. This lack of follow-up makes it harder to build trust and long-term engagement.

In neighborhoods that have experienced past disinvestment, this gap is especially pronounced. Inconsistent engagement—particularly between large and small projects—leads to missed opportunities to gather input and build support at the neighborhood level.

To address these challenges, *Richmond INSPIRE* calls for a more consistent and transparent approach to community

engagement across all project types. PRCF will work closely with partners like the Office of Neighborhood and Community Services and the People's Budget Initiative which already helps build relationships and support public meetings in neighborhoods where trust in government may be low. ONCS can play an expanded role in year-round engagement, helping PRCF listen, respond, and stay accountable.

Improving communication loops, coordinating across departments, and learning from both successful and failed outreach efforts will help PRCF move toward a more community-driven system—where all Richmonders can see their input reflected in the places they use every day.



Powhatan Hill engagement event for *Richmond INSPIRE*

## HOW STRATEGY 5.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Driving Principle                | Related Strategy                       | Start Time | Partners                                      | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5.2.a | In partnership with other City departments, develop and implement best practices for collaborative park and facility planning and design. These practices should establish a consistent, well-documented process for interdepartmental coordination and inclusive community engagement—ensuring that residents, especially those from historically underrepresented groups, have a meaningful role in shaping public spaces. The resulting best practices should be referenced in and aligned with PRCF's Design and Management Manual to support consistent implementation across all projects. | Equity                           | 5.2                                    | Short-term | DNCS, OS, PDR, DPW, DPU                       |    |
| 5.2.b | Ensure all park plans, designs, and renovations use a holistic, community-driven design process. At minimum, consider system context, level of service, community needs, connectivity, shade, and accessibility. Document findings in a park-specific Design Intent Plan. Renovations and Capital Projects shall align to the Design Intent Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Equity, Access, Welcome, Enviro. | 1.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3, 5.2, 7.1, 8.1, 9.2 | On-going   | PDR, UDC                                      |    |
| 5.2.c | Coordinate with other City departments and align community outreach in order to avoid planning fatigue; identify efficiencies in project planning; and build the leadership capacity and impact of the community members who are engaged for City advisory committees and community partnership programs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Equity                           | 5.2                                    | Short-term | DNCS, OS, PDR, DPW, DPU, City Council Offices |  |
| 5.2.d | Work with other City departments, civic associations, non-profits, and service providers to create regular Open House programs at PRCF community centers, designed to introduce new and current residents to PRCF facilities and programming, to make all neighbors feel welcome, and to create new channels for regular community conversations and feedback.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Equity, Welcome                  | 3.2, 5.2                               | On-going   | DNCS, Service Providers, non-profit partners  |  |



## STRATEGY 5.3

# Be transparent in how department dollars are being put to use.

### Build Trust Through Transparency

Richmonders want to know how parks and recreation decisions are made—and how dollars are spent. Today, many residents find it difficult to access clear, up-to-date information about project timelines, maintenance schedules, or capital investments. This lack of transparency weakens trust, especially in neighborhoods that have seen decades of disinvestment.

In the past, PRCF operated with more localized oversight and responsiveness. District managers oversaw both recreation and maintenance staff, had their own budgets, and attended monthly public meetings to address resident concerns in real time. This structure allowed staff to respond quickly, make visible improvements, and maintain strong relationships with neighborhoods. Over time,

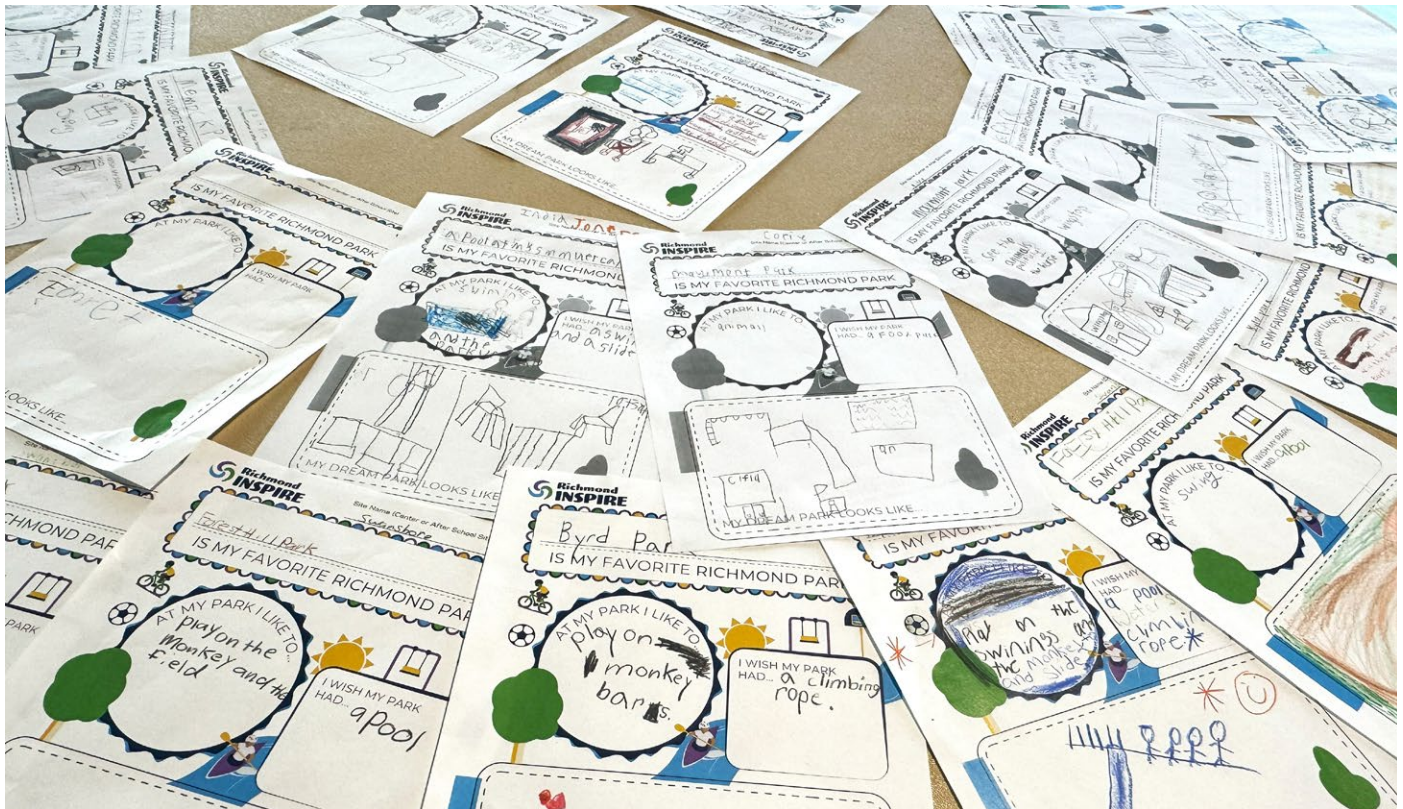
that local authority and service model was phased out, and some responsibilities—like grounds maintenance and tree care—were moved to other departments, reducing PRCF funding, staff responsiveness and making it harder for residents to know who to contact.

This strategy calls for restoring transparency and accountability by using the tools available today. PRCF will improve and expand its website and digital newsletter to provide regular updates on capital projects, funding allocations, and maintenance activities. These platforms will be optimized for accessibility and ease of use, with clear, searchable information about where projects stand and what's coming next.

The department will also begin publishing an annual capital and maintenance report in an easy to understand format and will partner with the Office of Neighborhood and Community Services (ONCS) to host open houses at community centers. These events will share information, welcome new residents, and create space for two-way dialogue.

Transparency also applies to daily operations. PRCF will conduct regular equity audits of maintenance spending, staffing, and response times to identify gaps and ensure every park and facility receives consistent care—regardless of location.

By making its work more visible and responsive, PRCF can build trust, strengthen relationships, and demonstrate how public dollars are serving all of Richmond's neighborhoods.



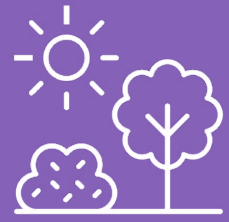
Children's coloring sheets that document their vision for the future of parks in Richmond

| HOW STRATEGY 5.3 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                   |                  |            |           |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners  | Type                                                                                  |
| 5.3.a                          | Develop easy to understand online and printed tools to help Richmonders follow the status of projects and what's to come, and report back to the community at annual Richmond 300 reports, events, and public presentations. Regularly measure and report on the progress of Richmond INSPIRE implementation        | Equity, Welcome   | 3.2, 5.1, 5.3    | Short-term | PDR, SCCE |  |
| 5.3.b                          | Conduct Routine Equity Audits of Maintenance Investment by tracking maintenance spending, response times, and staffing by geography and park type to identify gaps or imbalances. Use the findings to reallocate resources and ensure all communities receive consistent care and resources are aligned with needs. | Equity, Quality   | 5.3, 9.1         | Short-term |           |  |
| 5.3.c                          | Revise the department's Strategic Plan to align with the City's overall strategic plan, guiding principles, mission, values, and 3-5 year actions and goals. Include goals and measurable objectives.                                                                                                               | Equity, Welcome   | 3.2, 5.1, 5.3    | Short-term |           |  |



## BIG MOVE #6

# Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods



## Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods

Parks bring beauty, pride, and a sense of community to the neighborhoods they serve. In Richmond, however, not all neighborhoods have received the same level of investment in parks, greenways, and public spaces. In places shaped by redlining or infrastructure neglect, residents have waited years for safe, high-quality spaces to gather, play, and connect.

Now, as PRCF brings long-needed improvements to underinvested areas—especially on the Southside—those changes are making a visible difference. New parks and trails have helped restore access to nature, improve public space, and signal that neighborhoods matter. But in some cases, new investments have also coincided with rising property values and private development. While not the direct cause of displacement, these changes can increase pressure on longtime residents—especially renters—and shift who is able to remain.

Through the *Richmond INSPIRE* engagement process, residents called for investments that strengthen neighborhoods without pushing people out—and for a park system that reflects and respects those who have live there.

Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods acknowledges that beautiful parks must do more than improve the landscape—they must support lasting community belonging and stability.







Residents at Forest Hill Park gather around the tennis courts

STRATEGIES

As Richmond continues to invest in parks and public spaces, the City has an opportunity—and a responsibility—to ensure those improvements support long-time residents and reinforce neighborhood stability. The strategies that

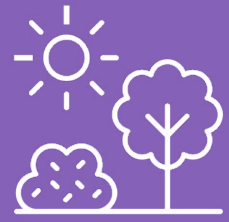
follow outline a more intentional approach to planning and decision-making. They reflect a growing commitment to equity, coordination, and shared benefit so that beautiful parks truly strengthen the communities around them.

| STRATEGIES                                                                                                                                                                                   | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 6.1 Implement practice, multidisciplinary strategies to prevent parks-related displacement and to anticipate and mitigate other potential negative effects of park and greenway development. | 144  |
| 6.2 Pursue and quantify community benefits in every park and recreation project.                                                                                                             | 146  |



BIG MOVE #6

# Beautiful Parks, Strong Neighborhoods



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

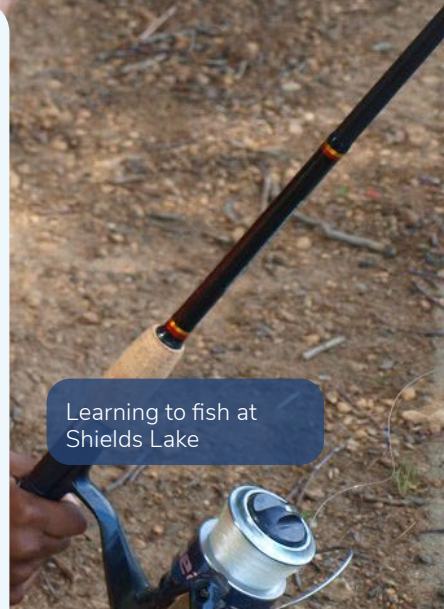
## Seeking Consensus for Equitable Growth

Investing in communities and the people who live there

Considering the long-term impacts of park and recreation investment

Cross-department conversations on how to grow the park system responsibly

Learning to fish at Shields Lake





## The Challenge

In 2020, Richmond City Council and the Mayor took a significant step toward equity by transferring key parcels of land to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities (PRCF). The goal was simple yet ambitious: create new parks in historically underserved neighborhoods—places where a 10-minute walk to a green space had long been out of reach.

This initiative sparked an outpouring of community engagement. Residents who had gone generations without access to nearby parks stepped forward to participate in visioning sessions, share stories, and advocate for what they wanted these spaces to become. Alongside this wave of public interest came renewed attention from the economic development sector. Long-vacant or underutilized adjacent properties began to be purchased, improved, and reinvested in—creating a ripple effect of positive change, but also raising important questions about who would benefit from this progress.

## Ongoing Conversations

Within PRCF, this moment has catalyzed ongoing conversations about *green gentrification*—development occurring after investment in greenspace—and the fine balance between revitalization and displacement. Can we build new parks while ensuring longtime residents remain in their homes? Can we foster economic opportunity and still protect affordability? We believe the answer is yes—but only if we are intentional, collaborative, and equity-driven in our approach.

Richmond's Department of Planning and Development Review is currently advancing a comprehensive zoning code update, a critical recommendation from the *Richmond 300 Master Plan*. This update aims to streamline development processes while embedding stronger protections for open space and housing affordability. It's part of a larger, citywide dialogue—one that is embracing bold ideas and shared responsibility.

## What's Next

High-quality parks are not just amenities—they are essential infrastructure for building resilient, connected communities. When designed thoughtfully and paired with policies that support long-term affordability, new green spaces can strengthen neighborhoods without displacing the very residents they aim to serve. *Richmond INSPIRE* calls for parks to be part of a broader strategy that includes affordable housing, access to nature, and opportunities for all residents to thrive.

Achieving this vision requires navigating complex systems, fostering trust across departments and neighborhoods, and addressing long-standing inequities. It is challenging—but it is possible.

*Richmond INSPIRE* is a call to action. This plan offers a foundation for continued coordination across City agencies and sustained public dialogue. Every new park, every trail connection, and every investment should bring Richmond closer to a future where beauty, stability, and opportunity are within reach for everyone.



STRATEGY 6.1

Implement proactive, multidisciplinary strategies to prevent parks-related displacement and to anticipate and mitigate other potential negative effects of park and greenway development.

Prevent Displacement, Deliver Community Benefits

New parks and recreation projects can bring big benefits—but they can also bring risk. In some neighborhoods, public investment may raise property values and rents, contributing to the displacement of longtime residents. This is especially true in areas that have faced historic underinvestment and are now seeing rapid change.

Strategy 6.1 calls for a proactive, multidisciplinary approach to prevent green gentrification and protect neighborhood stability. That includes joining a citywide anti-displacement working group, using equity scorecards to evaluate project impacts, and working with partners on housing and affordability.

This strategy also strengthens how PRCF captures and tracks the benefits of its work. Each capital project should set clear goals—economic, cultural, social, and environmental—and measure progress after completion. In this way, parks and recreation investments can strengthen communities without pushing them out.

| HOW STRATEGY 6.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                   |                  |            |                               |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners                      | Type                                                                                  |
| 6.1.a                          | Join an Anti-Displacement Working Group with members from across City departments and external stakeholders. Develop and implement concrete, proactive, multidisciplinary strategies to prevent green gentrification, the process whereby long-time residents are priced out of their neighborhoods following the installation of new park amenities that make nearby housing more sought-after and more expensive. | Equity            | 5.2, 6.1         | Short-term | DNCS, PDR, DED, DPW, HCD      |  |
| 6.1.b                          | Work with other City departments in the development and implementation of an equity scorecard to evaluate PRCF planning and design projects, and to mitigate potential negative effects such as increased property values, cultural displacement, and increased regulation of public space.                                                                                                                         | Equity            | 5.2, 6.1         | Mid-term   | DNCS, PDR, DED, DPW, HCD, RPS |  |



Kids hold up their completed watermelon paintings from a PRCF painting class.



Senior residents participate in a Mardi Gras-themed casino event

STRATEGY 6.2

Pursue and quantify community benefits in every park and recreation project.

Deliver Lasting Benefits With Every Project

Every park and recreation project should leave communities stronger than before. That means going beyond physical improvements to include clear, measurable community benefits—economic, social, environmental, and cultural.

This strategy calls for setting community benefit goals during the early stages of each project. Whether a new greenway, facility upgrade, or public-private partnership, PRCF and its partners will work with community members to define what success looks like—and how to track it after the project is complete.

PRCF will also expand its role in supporting Richmond’s green workforce. With the right training, guidance, and hiring practices, parks and facilities can serve as pathways to employment—especially in environmental stewardship, green infrastructure, and maintenance. The department will work with conservation corps and job placement programs to help Richmonders gain skills and secure jobs, including within the City itself.

By embedding long-term benefits into each project, PRCF can help ensure that investments don’t just change a space—they support the people who live there.

| HOW STRATEGY 6.2 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                   |                  |            |                    |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners           | Type                                                                                  |
| 6.2.a                          | For future park and facility design and planning projects, set realistic goals and metrics during the engagement process to capture the projects’ environmental, social, cultural, and economic benefits. Document as a part of the site’s master plan. | Equity, Welcome   | 3.2, 5.2. 6.2    | Short-term | OS, DED, DNCS, RPS |  |



## HOW STRATEGY 6.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy          | Start Time | Partners                | Type                                                                                |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.2.b | Develop a clear pathway for participants in PRCF-supported workforce development programs to transition into part-time, full-time, or seasonal positions. Continue to use PRCF sites as training grounds to build skills in green infrastructure, landscape stewardship, and maintenance of environmentally sensitive areas. Coordinate with conservation corps and job placement programs to align training with hiring needs, and address barriers, such as background check requirements, that may prevent qualified participants from becoming City or PRCF employees. | Equity, Enviro., Quality | 6.2, 8.2, 9.1, 10.1, 11.2 | Short-term | OCWB, DED, DPW, RPS, OS |  |
| 6.2.c | For new development projects using economic development incentives, integrate parks, open space, green infrastructure, and recreation outcomes as part of community benefits agreements.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Equity, Quality          | 6.2, 11.2                 | Mid-term   | OCWB, DED, HCD          |  |



# 'ENVIRONMENT' STRATEGIES

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- Why is the Environment Important?
- Big Move #7: Cool, Healthy, Resilient City Strategies
- Big Move #8: Green Design, Sustainability, and Stewardship Strategies



# → Why is the Environment Important?

Richmond's parks and recreation system plays a vital role in the city's response to climate change. As neighborhoods face more heat, flooding, and air pollution, parks and facilities help cool the air, manage stormwater, and protect the health of people and ecosystems alike.

Parks act as critical, natural infrastructure. Trees, native plants, and green spaces clean the air, slow down runoff, and reduce flooding during storms. Community centers can serve as Resilience Hubs during emergencies—offering shelter, information, and support. Together, these spaces help Richmond adapt to a changing climate while improving daily life.

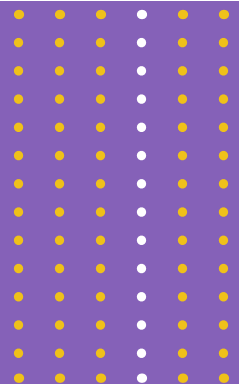
This chapter outlines strategies that support two Big Moves:

- **Cool, Healthy, Resilient City**, by using green design to create cleaner, safer, more climate-resilient communities.
- **Green Design, Sustainability, and Stewardship** by connecting environmental goals with community health, safety, and leadership.

*The environment isn't separate from people—it shapes how we live. Richmond INSPIRE helps ensure that parks and recreation strengthen both the city's natural systems and the well-being of its residents.*

## RICHMOND'S VISION FOR ENVIRONMENT

Richmond's parks help keep the city cooler, greener, healthier, and better prepared for the future. The City leads the way in green design and stewardship of the environment.





## BIG MOVE #7



# Cool, Healthy, Resilient City

This Big Move aims to enhance the environmental impact of every PRCF site by using public lands, facilities, and rights-of-way to restore Richmond's environment. It also focuses on fostering environmental stewardship through park based communications and programming that help users connect with nature.

### Strategies

- 7.1 Increase the impact of every PRCF site in providing ecosystem services.
- 7.2 Use public lands, facilities, and rights-of-way to restore Richmond's environment.
- 7.3 Use park-based communications and programming to foster environmental stewardship and help PRCF users connect to nature.
- 7.4 Restore and protect Richmond's natural waters



## BIG MOVE #8



# Green Design, Sustainability, and Stewardship

This Big Move seeks to position PRCF facilities as a model for green design and sustainability, while also establishing the department as a leader in sustainable and restorative landscape maintenance practices.

### Strategies

- 8.1 Make PRCF facilities a model for green design and sustainability.
- 8.2 Make PRCF a model for sustainable and restorative landscape maintenance practices.



## BIG MOVE #7

# Cool, Healthy, Resilient City



## Resilient City

As the city faces hotter summers, stronger storms, and greater environmental stress, Richmond's public lands are increasingly essential. When designed and maintained with intention, parks and preserves help cool neighborhoods, absorb stormwater, filter pollution, and create habitat for wildlife. In many communities, they are the most accessible places to experience nature and provide some of the most effective green infrastructure in Richmond.

Richmond's landscape, including its hills, river, wetlands, and wooded corridors, provides a strong foundation for resilience. Realizing this potential requires continued investment in ecological restoration, green infrastructure, and long-term stewardship. Many existing parks still rely on conventional lawn-and-shrub planting and lack features like rain gardens, strategic tree canopy preservation, or permeable surfaces. Where green infrastructure has been installed, it often underperforms due to

limited maintenance capacity or unclear responsibilities between City departments.

Public park agencies like PRCF are uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. With the right resources, training, and coordination, PRCF can shift toward sustainable land care practices that lower long-term costs, protect natural systems, and keep communities healthier and cooler year-round. This effort requires investment in both physical improvements and the staff, systems, and partnerships needed for long-term care. Whether through stream restoration, tree planting, or habitat protection, Richmond's public lands can do more than mitigate climate impacts—they can help the city thrive in spite of them. These spaces are already part of the city's environmental safety net. The next step is making sure they're built and cared for with that purpose in mind.







Public natural spring at Wayside Spring Park

STRATEGIES

The following strategies focus on maximizing the environmental value of PRCF sites—from boosting tree cover and installing green infrastructure to restoring waterways and fostering nature-based programming. They also

look beyond park boundaries, encouraging cross-departmental collaboration and community participation to expand impact across Richmond’s public lands. *Richmond INSPIRE* recommends expanding workforce training, clarifying roles for BMP and

green infrastructure maintenance, and growing community-based stewardship. These actions will help Richmond build a park system that supports both people and the planet.

| STRATEGIES                                                                                                                   | PAGE |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 7.1 Increase the impact of every PRCF site in providing ecosystem services.                                                  | 156  |
| 7.2 Use public lands, facilities, and rights-of-way to restore Richmond's environment.                                       | 159  |
| 7.3 Use park-based communications and programming to foster environmental stewardship and help PRCF users connect to nature. | 161  |
| 7.4 Restore and protect Richmond's natural waters                                                                            | 162  |





BIG MOVE #7

# Cool, Healthy, Resilient City



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Cool the City

**773**

Trees planted in 2025

**111**

Community Events in 2025

Planting new trees in parks



## Facing the Heat

Richmond is getting hotter. With more extreme heat days each year, neighborhoods with limited tree cover, aging infrastructure, and little access to green space face the greatest risk. These areas are not only warmer, but also more vulnerable to health impacts, flooding, and poor air quality. As the climate changes, the role of public parks is also evolving.

## Parks as Cooling Infrastructure

PRCF is turning Richmond's parks, trails, and recreation centers into vital pieces of the city's climate resilience strategy. Through targeted investments, the department is adding trees, installing shade structures, applying cool surface materials, and using nature-based design to manage stormwater and reduce urban heat. These improvements create safer, more comfortable spaces for residents while advancing long-term environmental goals.

## Tools and Partnerships

This work builds on the Richmond Cool Kit—a resource developed by the Office of Sustainability that outlines 25 practical strategies to reduce heat and improve community resilience. PRCF is applying these strategies across its park system, supported by a growing team of trained staff, including three certified Envision Sustainability Professionals (ENV-SP) professionals. With strong interdepartmental coordination, Richmond is embedding sustainability into everyday capital projects.

## Building Local Capacity

PRCF's resilience efforts go beyond infrastructure. Community stewardship programs train youth and local residents to plant and care for green infrastructure, creating pathways to jobs in forestry, landscaping, and environmental management. These partnerships deepen public understanding of climate issues while building neighborhood pride and capacity.

## What's Next

PRCF will continue to expand tree canopy in areas with the greatest heat and environmental need, building toward a goal of planting more than 1,000 trees citywide by 2029. As planting efforts continue, the program will increase the City's capacity to grow and maintain trees through its municipal nursery and strengthen long-term maintenance practices.



## Increase the impact of every PRCF site in providing ecosystem services.

Every PRCF site—no matter its size or location—has the potential to contribute to a healthier, more climate-resilient Richmond. From large natural areas to neighborhood parks and community centers, these spaces can support clean water, cooler temperatures, healthy soils, and thriving native habitats. They can also play a key role in slowing and absorbing stormwater, helping reduce runoff, local flooding, and acting as natural sound barriers for neighborhoods.

To support this work, the strategy introduces new tools and standards. A Facility

Partnerships are also key. Strategy 7.1 encourages collaboration with local watershed organizations, urban agriculture groups, forestry partners, and the broader community to align site improvements with regional environmental goals. Together, these efforts ensure every PRCF site helps reduce risk, restore nature, and strengthen neighborhood resilience.



NRPA provides tools and resources known as the Green Infrastructure Framework as a part of the Great Urban Parks Campaign (GUPC) [external link].





Libby Hill Park steep terraced hillside. Steep hills are great candidates for introducing land management best practices.

| HOW STRATEGY 7.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                   |                          |            |              |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Driving Principle                 | Related Strategy         | Start Time | Partners     | Type                                                                                  |
| 7.1.a                          | With community and stakeholder engagement, conduct a Park Shade Audit and Action Plan to ensure that every PRCF play and gathering area is protected by shade in the summer. Implement 10-Year Plan projects in Equity Investment Zone (EIZ).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Enviro., Welcome, Equity, Quality | 3.1, 5.2, 7.1, 7.2, 9.1  | Short-term | DPW          |   |
| 7.1.b                          | Convert underused lawns and impervious surfaces at PRCF sites into gardens that improve environmental performance, and visual appeal, and mitigate noise. Include specific guidance in the PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual for how to match garden types—such as native habitat gardens, meadows, drought-tolerant plantings, food-producing gardens, or horticultural demonstration beds—to each site's soil, light, irrigation, maintenance capacity, and available partnerships. Coordinate planning with local groups and community garden advocates where applicable. | Enviro., Equity, Quality          | 6.2, 7.2, 7.1, 9.1, 11.1 | Short-term | OS, Bee City |  |
| 7.1.c                          | Participate in local watershed planning efforts and quantify the impact of existing and future PRCF sites and facilities in measuring sound decibels, capturing stormwater, protecting the watershed, and slowing run-off.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Enviro., Equity                   | 6.2, 7.1, 7.2            | Short-term | DPU          |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 7.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Driving Principle                   | Related Strategy                 | Start Time | Partners                                                                                    | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7.1.d | Inventory existing stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) on all PRCF properties. Develop maintenance plans for each, and secure the staffing and resources needed to maintain the functionality of all existing and future BMPs.                                                                                                                                  | Enviro., Quality                    | 7.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 | Short-term | DPW, DPU                                                                                    |    |
| 7.1.e | Within the new PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual, develop and implement strategies for carbon sequestration on PRCF land, including through urban agriculture and sustainable forest management methods.                                                                                                                                 | Enviro., Equity, Quality, Community | 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 9.1, 13.1         | Short-term | OS                                                                                          |    |
| 7.1.f | Within the new PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual, develop land restoration and management plans and metrics for all PRCF Natural Area sites, to ensure the long-term protection and restoration of native habitats such as wetlands, forests, and riparian corridors. Build on the James River Park Natural Resources Management Manual. | Enviro., Quality                    | 7.1, 7.2, 9.1                    | Short-term | DPU, OS, Friends of James River Park, Invasive Species Management Team, non-profit partners |    |
| 7.1.g | Report annually on the successes and challenges of transitioning the operations and design of PRCF sites to green design best practices. Report to the public in an easy-to-digest, graphic heavy and metric-based format.                                                                                                                                              | Enviro.                             | 7.1                              | Short-term |                                                                                             |  |
| 7.1.h | Develop a review process within the development of public projects to include an assessment of natural resource impacts and require addressing and/or protecting nature resources.                                                                                                                                                                                      | Enviro.                             | 7.1, 8.1                         | Mid-term   |                                                                                             |  |
| 7.1.i | Work with regional and state partners to develop urban wood programming that teaches about managing urban tree canopies and how to reuse harvested wood. Work with partners such as RVA Urban Wood. Tie new programming into staff training on urban canopy care.                                                                                                       | Enviro.                             | 7.1                              | Mid-term   | RVA Urban Wood, Virginia Department of Forestry                                             |  |
| 7.1.j | Build on and incorporate best practices of existing policies such as Richmond Cool Kits to increase the ecological benefit of PRCF sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Enviro.                             | 7.1                              | Short-term | OS                                                                                          |  |



## STRATEGY 7.2

# Use public lands, facilities, and rights-of-way to restore Richmond’s environment.

### Manage Public Land

Parks and public spaces are part of the city’s ecological infrastructure. Strategy 7.2 focuses on how Richmond can better use the public land it already owns, while also acquiring and protecting more of the natural systems that support a healthy, climate-resilient city.

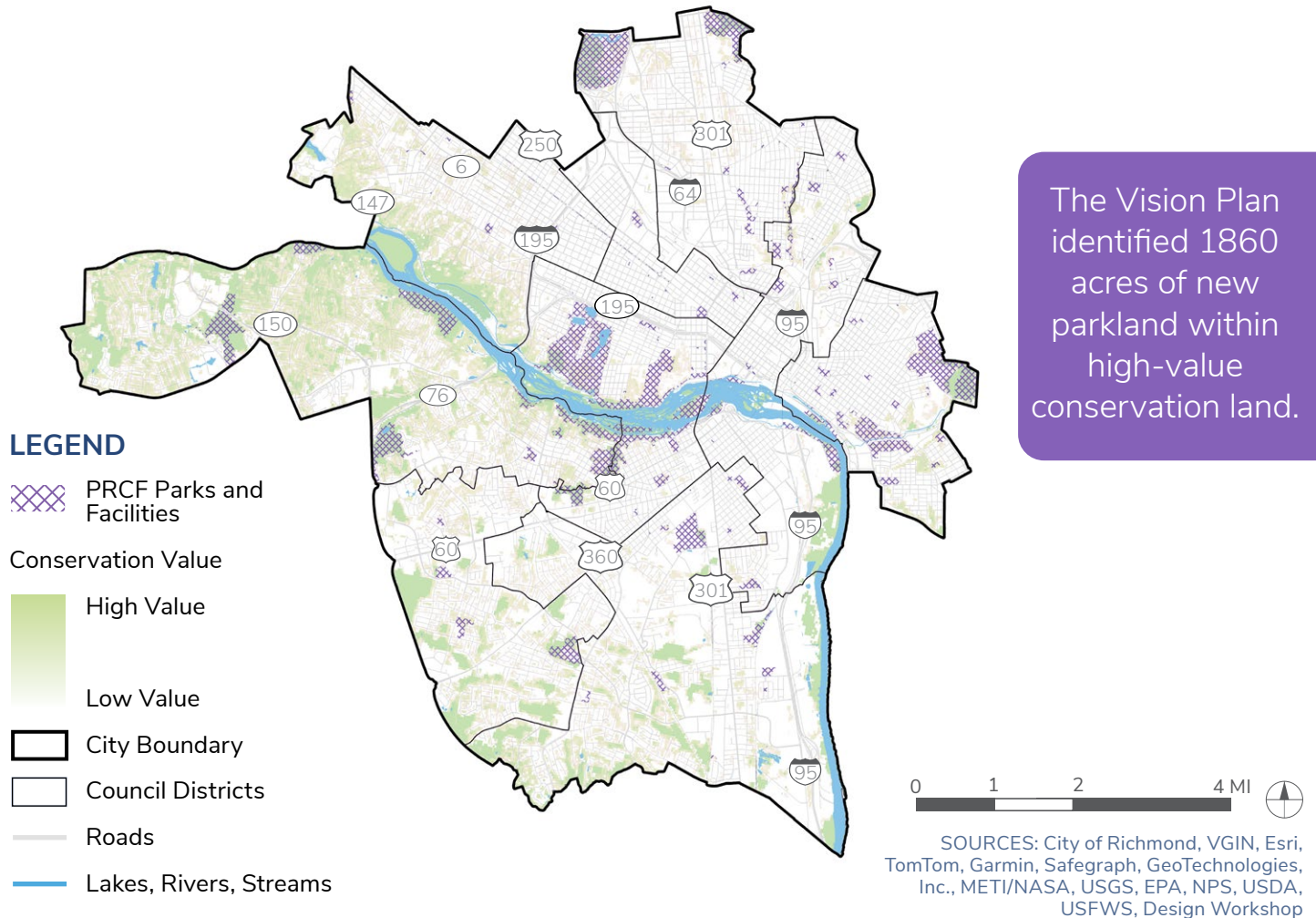
Maximizing the environmental value of existing parks,

community centers, and public rights-of-way means integrating tree canopy goals, resilience strategies, and sustainable land management into everyday operations. At the same time, PRCF must continue working with partners to secure additional land—especially in areas with mature forest, critical habitat, or cultural landscapes.

Public land offers some of the greatest opportunities to reduce urban heat, slow flooding, and restore natural systems across neighborhoods. Through stronger interdepartmental coordination and citywide planning, Richmond can ensure these spaces are protected, connected, and positioned to provide long-term environmental benefit.

| HOW STRATEGY 7.2 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                   |                     |            |                                           |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Driving Principle | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners                                  | Type                                                                                  |
| 7.2.a                          | Prioritize the acquisition of new parkland, open space and greenway corridors that connects and protects significant natural areas and habitats.                                                                                                          | Enviro., Access   | 2.2, 7.1, 7.2       | On-going   | MWCLT, JRA, ACB, Maymount Foundation, CBF |  |
| 7.2.b                          | Work with Urban Forestry and in the Richmond Tree Plan to make PRCF sites part of the strategy for improving the health of the urban forest. Establish tree canopy coverage goals by park classification, and work toward a PRCF system-wide goal of 60%. | Enviro., Quality  | 7.1, 7.2, 9.1, 11.1 | Short-term | DPW                                       |  |
| 7.2.c                          | Work across departments to update the Tree Canopy Masterplan and adopt the plan's recommendations as a part of the PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Plan and Design Best Practices.                                              | Enviro., Quality  | 7.2, 9.1            | Short-term |                                           |  |
| 7.2.d                          | Within the future Tree Canopy Masterplan, include recommendations for the protection of trees and tree canopy on public property.                                                                                                                         | Enviro., Quality  | 7.2, 9.1            | Short-term |                                           |  |

## MAP 20: PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREAS



### HOW STRATEGY 7.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                   | Driving Principle          | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners            | Type |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|------|
| 7.2.e | Work with conservation partners to continue to acquire easements to protect natural areas, mature tree canopy and heritage resources.                                                          | Enviro., Access            | 1.4, 7.2            | Short-term | non-profit partners |      |
| 7.2.f | Participate in the climate vulnerability and risk assessment of all City property (including buildings and parcels). Identify and prioritize PRCF properties for specific resilience projects. | Enviro., Equity, Community | 6.2, 7.1, 7.2, 14.1 | Mid-term   | OS                  |      |

STRATEGY 7.3

Use park-based communications and programming to foster environmental stewardship and help PRCF users connect to nature.

Inspire Stewardship of Natural Spaces

Environmental stewardship begins with education. Residents are more likely to care for the environment when they understand its value and see how it supports daily life in their neighborhoods. Strategy 7.3 focuses on helping Richmonders connect to nature through visible, consistent, and engaging communication.

PRCF can use programs, signs, and marketing tools to demonstrate how parks reduce heat, filter water, support wildlife, and strengthen community wellbeing. These tools can also show how residents play a role

in that system—through small actions, shared responsibility, and long-term care. Strengthening this message builds a culture where Richmonders expect to see nature in their neighborhoods and take pride in protecting it.

By expanding public education and outreach, PRCF can turn everyday park experiences into opportunities to teach, inspire, and foster lasting commitment to Richmond’s environment.

| HOW STRATEGY 7.3 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                   |                  |            |                     |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners            | Type                                                                                  |
| 7.3.a                          | Bolster resources to improve communication materials and programming strategies that foster environmental stewardship, promote natural resource management best practices, and help PRCF users connect to nature. | Enviro., Welcome  | 3.2, 7.2, 7.3    | Short-term | OS, SCCE            |  |
| 7.3.b                          | Celebrate and educate residents on the natural areas and innovative approaches PRCF takes to manage and enhance natural resources through signage and other communication methods.                                | Enviro.           | 7.3              | Short-term | non-profit partners |  |



## STRATEGY 7.4

# Restore and protect Richmond's natural waters.

### Prioritize the River City's Waterways

Richmond's rivers, streams, springs, and canals are defining features of the city's landscape—and some of its most sensitive ecological resources. Strategy 7.4 focuses on protecting and restoring these natural waterways while expanding access to the water through thoughtful planning and design.

Across the city, PRCF manages parkland that borders rivers, creeks, and wetlands. These areas (riparian corridors) provide habitat, reduce flooding, and offer some of the city's most scenic recreation experiences. But they also face risks from erosion, runoff, aging infrastructure, and development pressure. This strategy works to ensure that Richmond's natural waters are protected through land management policies, strengthened maintenance

practices, and collaborative planning.

In addition to restoring riparian corridors and improving riverfront access, this strategy highlights several unique opportunities. It calls for exploring the reopening of Richmond's historic drinking water springs—natural sources once equipped with infrastructure that allowed residents to gather fresh water. It also outlines the potential for rewatering and activating sections of the historic canal, both to preserve cultural infrastructure and to expand blueway and greenway recreation. These efforts reflect a broader vision where water is celebrated as a public resource and integrated into everyday experiences.

Together, these actions support a future where Richmond's waterways are not only protected, but actively contribute to public life, ecological health, and climate resilience.



The James River which divides Richmond into the Northside and Southside



A sign along the Canal Walk describing rules and partners who support the Canal Walk

| HOW STRATEGY 7.4 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                          |                     |            |               |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners      | Type                                                                                  |
| 7.4.a                          | Build on PRCF's strategy to protect, restore, reforest, and expand natural resources in environmentally sensitive areas such as along the James River and in other riparian corridors by documenting these strategies in the Management Manual and through Design Standards.                                                   | Enviro., Quality         | 7.2, 7.4, 9.1       | Short-term |               |   |
| 7.4.b                          | Develop policies that reserve appropriate riverfront and canal-facing sites for public amenities and access. Require any new development along the river and canals to provide for public park and recreational access.                                                                                                        | Enviro., Quality         | 7.4, 11.2           | Long-term  | PDR           |  |
| 7.4.c                          | Partner with DPU to develop a City of Richmond Stream Daylighting Feasibility Study to explore opportunities to daylight and de-culvert streams as part of larger greenway and conservation planning efforts. In the study, identify best practices for stream daylighting and renaturalizing waterways.                       | Enviro., Access, Quality | 2.2, 7.2, 7.4, 11.1 | Mid-term   | PDR, DPW, DPU |  |
| 7.4.d                          | Advocate and partner with relevant agencies to create an action plan to maintain and activate a continuous length of historic canal. Include in the action plan roles and responsibilities, new policies and procedures to provide increased public access, activation plans, and strategies for blueway and greenway creation | Enviro., Quality         | 7.2, 7.4, 9.1       | Short-term | DPW           |  |

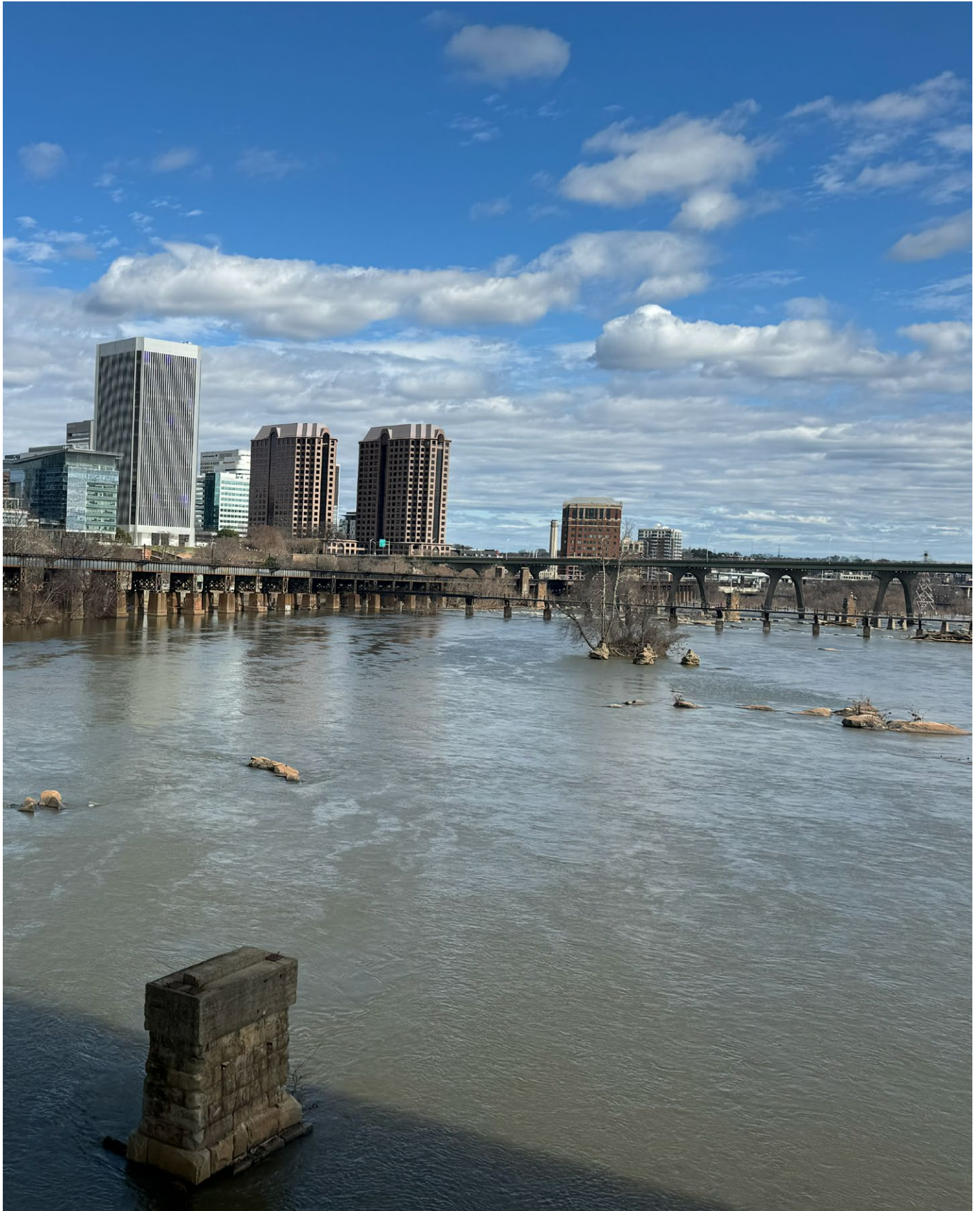


The historic pump house at Pump House Park along the Kanawha Canal

## HOW STRATEGY 7.4 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy   | Start Time | Partners       | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7.4.e | Encourage partner-operated waterways, water-side trails, and canal-adjacent parks to be maintained and designed using best practices documented within the Historic Canal Action Plan. Document any findings relevant to PRCF within PRCF's Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual and PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards. | Enviro., Quality         | 7.4, 11.2          | Mid-term   | PDR, DPW       |  |
| 7.4.f | Develop a working group with relevant partners to create an action plan for reopening the natural springs throughout parks in Richmond. The action plan should identify costs, clear roles and responsibilities, feasibility, timeline, water quality studies, and physical improvements.                                                                      | Enviro.                  | 7.4, 7.2           | Mid-term   | RHHD, DEQ, DPU |  |
| 7.4.g | Update and implement the Richmond Riverfront Plan and the James River Park Master Plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Enviro., Welcome, Equity | 3.3, 5.2, 7.2, 7.4 | Mid-term   | PDR            |  |





Downtown Richmond and the James River from the Belle Isle Suspension Bridge



## BIG MOVE #8

# Green Design, Sustainability, and Stewardship



## Green Design and Sustainability

Sustainability begins with how parks are designed and maintained. Green infrastructure—such as rain gardens, native meadows, permeable paving, and solar panels—helps manage stormwater, reduce heat, support habitat, and lower long-term maintenance costs. These features also bring environmental performance into everyday public spaces, allowing PRCF to lead by example.

PRCF and various agencies have partnered to install green infrastructure at parks and community centers across the city. Tree planting, stream restoration, and stormwater management features already support the goals of the RVA Clean Water Plan and improve neighborhood conditions.

To make these practices more effective and widespread, PRCF needs clear standards and trained staff. Most sites still rely on high-maintenance lawns and traditional landscaping. These approaches require many labor hours, but do not require specialized labor. In contrast, sustainable landscapes often require fewer staff hours but must be maintained by staff with specific skills. PRCF does not yet have the internal capacity to support green infrastructure at scale due to gaps in skillset.







Native gardens in Bellemeade Park. Bellemeade Park is partially maintained by Groundwork RVA, a youth program

STRATEGIES

The strategies that follow focus on embedding sustainability into every part of PRCF’s work—from how buildings are designed to how landscapes are maintained. They aim to reduce energy use, improve stormwater management, and protect natural systems while making

environmental performance visible and measurable. To support these goals, *Richmond INSPIRE* recommends updating internal policies, investing in staff training, and adopting sustainable practices that are consistent, scalable, and tailored to Richmond’s environment. By aligning daily operations with

long-term environmental goals, PRCF can lead by example and set a new standard for sustainability in public spaces.

| STRATEGIES                                                                             | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 8.1 Make PRCF facilities a model for green design and sustainability.                  | 170  |
| 8.2 Make PRCF a model for sustainable and restorative landscape maintenance practices. | 173  |





BIG MOVE #8

# Green Design, Sustainability, and Stewardship



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Advancing Green Design

Partnering to  
Increase Green  
Design



5

Recent Green  
Design Projects

Solar panels being  
installed onto the roof  
the new TB Smith  
Community Center

## Advancing Green Infrastructure

As Richmond modernizes its park system, the City is taking a more integrated approach to environmental sustainability—where green infrastructure is not an afterthought, but a foundation. PRCF, in partnership with the Department of Public Utilities' Stormwater Division (RVA H2O), is demonstrating how parks can serve both people and ecosystems. Together, the departments are embedding nature-based solutions into parks, community centers, and open space throughout the city.

## Green Design in Action

Several recent projects show how this partnership is transforming public land:

- Blackwell Playground was redesigned through a multi-partner effort that introduced permeable parking, bioretention areas, a nature play area, and a community garden. Located in a dense urban neighborhood, the project manages stormwater while also serving as a model for green design and environmental education.
- Pine Camp saw the restoration of a severely eroded stream, reconnecting a middle school and community center through trails, native plantings, and an outdoor classroom. The project addressed

safety while creating a hands-on environmental learning space.

- Broad Rock Creek is undergoing simultaneous stream restoration and park planning to address invasive species and ecological degradation. The project reflects community input and emphasizes coordinated design.
- Bryan Park is restoring natural stream flows by removing high-hazard dams to comply with safety regulations. These efforts support habitat restoration while inviting residents to engage with natural water systems.
- TB Smith and Luck's Field Community Centers have added permeable parking lots and stormwater BMPs, offering visible examples of sustainability in high-use public spaces.

## Shared Goals and Impact

These projects demonstrate how early coordination between PRCF and RVA H2O leads to more cohesive, cost-effective outcomes. Rather than retrofitting parks with isolated green features, both departments are now planning jointly to maximize stormwater performance and deliver community benefits. These efforts directly support the City's RVA Clean Water Plan and the *Richmond INSPIRE* vision of a more equitable and resilient park system.

## What's Next

Future projects will continue to integrate stormwater management from the earliest stages of park design—ensuring that sustainability is built into the foundation of each site. With community education and shared implementation as key priorities, PRCF and RVA H2O aim to make green infrastructure a familiar, visible part of everyday public life. These partnerships are helping Richmond lead by example—where every park is a step toward a healthier, more resilient city.

STRATEGY 8.1

Make PRCF facilities a model for green design and sustainability.

Lead by Example in Green Design

PRCF facilities have the potential to serve as visible, everyday models of environmental leadership. From energy-efficient buildings to stormwater systems, each site can show what sustainable infrastructure looks like in action—while reducing emissions, conserving resources, and improving resilience.

This strategy outlines steps to embed green design standards into all future capital projects,

guided by frameworks like Sustainable SITES, LEED, and the Living Building Challenge. It also introduces new tools to help staff design and maintain green infrastructure systemwide. Actions call for improvements such as solar power, water conservation technologies, electric vehicle infrastructure, microgrids for resilience hubs, and low-impact lighting that reduces harm to nocturnal species.

Through interdepartmental coordination and targeted planning, PRCF can build a portfolio of parks and community facilities that reflect Richmond’s sustainability goals—while also lowering long-term costs and creating more resilient, high-performing public spaces.

DEEPER DIVE



[Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional certification program teaches regional landscape best practices \[external link\].](#)

| HOW STRATEGY 8.1 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                   |                  |            |              |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners     | Type                                                                                  |
| 8.1.a                          | Model environmental and sustainable best practices in all future site and facility design and construction projects, referencing such resources as Sustainable SITES, LEED, and the Living Building Challenge. | Enviro., Quality  | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1    | On-going   | DPW, OS, PDR |  |





Lawn area in Little John Park located along I-95

## HOW STRATEGY 8.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Driving Principle | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners                     | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.1.b | Within the new PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual, develop a Green Infrastructure Manual to allow PRCF to implement, model, and maintain green infrastructure at all current and future park sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Enviro., Quality  | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1, 11.1 | Short-term | DPU, DPW, OS                 |    |
| 8.1.c | Work with partners and resources from DPW and the Office of Sustainability to model best practices at PRCF sites for waste reduction, composting, recycling, and reuse of materials.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Enviro., Quality  | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1, 11.1 | Short-term | DPW, OS                      |  |
| 8.1.d | Model water conservation technologies and best practices at PRCF sites and facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Enviro., Quality  | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1       | Short-term | DPU, OS                      |  |
| 8.1.e | Model best practices for tree selection, planting, and care at PRCF sites. Use regionally appropriate guidelines to inform species selection based on hardiness, soil conditions, water availability, climate change, and long-term maintenance needs. Prioritize biodiversity and disease resistance to reduce vulnerability to pests and climate stressors. Ensure proper planting techniques and follow-up care to support healthy growth and reduce hazards such as limb drop, poor structure, or root damage. Where tree conditions pose a life or safety risk, establish clear criteria for inspection, intervention, and removal. | Enviro., Quality  | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1       | Short-term | DPW, OS, non-profit partners |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 8.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Driving Principle           | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.1.f | Participate in the Municipal Energy Efficiency Program to benchmark and reduce the carbon footprint of PRCF operations and to ensure PRCF staff and facilities model best practices in sustainable operations, design, and maintenance.      | Enviro., Quality            | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1       | Short-term | DPW      |    |
| 8.1.g | Model local renewable energy generation at PRCF sites and publicize the environmental and economic benefits.                                                                                                                                 | Enviro., Quality            | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1       | Mid-term   | DPU, OS  |    |
| 8.1.h | Develop a plan to transition the PRCF vehicle fleet and equipment to modes of transportation that are zero-emission.                                                                                                                         | Enviro.                     | 7.3, 8.1            | Long-term  | DPW      |    |
| 8.1.i | Work with the Office of Sustainability to develop and implement a strategy for installing public electric vehicle charging stations at PRCF sites.                                                                                           | Enviro.                     | 7.3, 8.1            | Mid-term   | OS       |    |
| 8.1.j | Model light pollution and energy efficiency best practices by upgrading PRCF lighting to DarkSky-compliant LED or solar fixtures with hooded designs that reduce glare and protect nocturnal species.                                        | Enviro., Quality            | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1       | Mid-term   | DPU      |  |
| 8.1.k | Develop micro-grids with on-site energy storage to ensure that community centers can function and provide a safe space during and after severe weather events and other outages. Prioritize centers designated as Community Resilience Hubs. | Enviro., Quality, Community | 7.3, 8.1, 9.1, 14.1 | Mid-term   | DPU, OS  |  |

STRATEGY 8.2

Make PRCF a model for sustainable and restorative landscape maintenance practices.

Raising the Bar on Land Management

Sustainable design is only effective if it is matched by sustainable maintenance. Many green infrastructure features—such as rain gardens, native meadows, and tree plantings—require less day-to-day labor than conventional landscapes, but they depend on trained staff who know how to care for them properly. Right now, PRCF does not have enough staff or internal systems to support this work at scale.

This strategy focuses on building the skills, systems, and staffing capacity needed to manage PRCF landscapes in a way that supports long-term environmental performance. It includes actions to train staff in green infrastructure and urban canopy care, reduce the presence of invasive species, and promote best practices in sustainable lawn and garden maintenance. It also calls for the creation of a horticulturist team and a regional working group to better coordinate stewardship efforts across jurisdictions.

By investing in skilled staff and restorative maintenance, PRCF can reduce costs, improve ecosystem health, and lead by example—showing how thoughtful care of parks and natural spaces can support a healthier, more resilient Richmond.

| HOW STRATEGY 8.2 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                   |                           |            |          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle | Related Strategy          | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 8.2.a                          | Assess operations to identify quick wins that both reduce expenses and improve the sustainability of parks and facilities.                                                                                                                                          | Enviro.           | 7.2, 8.2                  | Short-term |          |  |
| 8.2.b                          | Work with regional and state partners to develop policies that train staff to learn urban canopy best practices and develop pathways for reuse of cut trees and vegetation.                                                                                         | Enviro., Quality  | 7.2, 8.2, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1 | Short-term | DPW, VDF |  |
| 8.2.c                          | As a part of continuing education, train staff and host training workshops to learn best practices to install and maintain green infrastructure on public sites and rights-of-way. Partner with regional experts such as the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional. | Enviro., Quality  | 8.2, 10.1                 | Short-term |          |  |



## HOW STRATEGY 8.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners     | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.2.d | Within the new PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual, create a management plan for the control and minimization of the presence and impacts of invasive species on all PRCF properties, taking climate change into account.                                                                | Enviro.           | 7.1, 8.2, 9.1    | Short-term | OS           |    |
| 8.2.e | Create a regional working group that includes neighboring counties, non-profits, and federal or state agencies to develop a more connected regional system of protected natural areas and reduce habitat fragmentation.                                                                                               | Enviro.           | 8.2              | Mid-term   |              |    |
| 8.2.f | Work in partnership with other departments to model best practices at PRCF sites for sustainable lawn and garden design and maintenance, such as pesticide-free and organic practices, native and drought-resistant plant species, rain gardens, food production, and practices for building habitat and soil health. | Enviro., Quality  | 7.3, 8.2, 9.1    | Mid-term   | DPW, DPU, OS |    |
| 8.2.g | Work in partnership with other departments to add a horticulturist team and expand training for existing PRCF staff in order to build the capacity needed to model sustainable lawn and garden design and natural area maintenance across the system.                                                                 | Enviro., Quality  | 8.2, 10.1        | Mid-term   | DPW, DPU, OS |  |





Environmental conditions at Ancarrow's Landing



Mowed lawn at Battery Park including a mowed wet area with a drainage ditch, a challenging condition to mow



8





# **'QUALITY' STRATEGIES**

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- ➔ **Why is Quality Important?**
- ➔ **Big Move #9: Standard of Excellence Strategies**
- ➔ **Big Move #10: World-Class Staff Strategies**
- ➔ **Big Move #11: Sustainable Funding and Partnership Strategies**

# → Why is Quality Important?

Great parks and facilities don't just happen—they're made, maintained, and cared for by people. Whether it's a clean restroom, a working water fountain, or a freshly cut field, the everyday experience of a park often depends on the staff behind the scenes. When those basic pieces are missing, residents notice. In fact, many Richmonders said that poor maintenance—like broken fixtures, lack of shade, or safety concerns—is the main reason they don't use certain parks more often. On average, residents rated the system just 3.1 out of 5. But broken amenities don't always mean staff aren't doing their jobs—they may point to bigger operational challenges, like outdated systems for tracking maintenance needs or limited staffing and resources. PRCF staff need the right tools and support to do their jobs well, and to keep public spaces safe, clean, and welcoming.

What residents see—whether a trash can is emptied or a water fountain works—is only part of what quality really means. Quality goes beyond appearances. It's about how a space functions, how it feels, and whether it meets the needs of the people using it. A beautiful new playground won't get much use if there's no shade nearby. A community center can't feel welcoming if the bathrooms are closed or programs are hard to access. Quality is about trust—knowing that when you visit a park or facility, it will be clean, comfortable, and ready for you.

To improve quality, Richmond needs clear standards for how parks and facilities should look, function, and be cared for—no matter where they are in the city. That includes how they're designed, how they're maintained, and how the staff who run them are supported.

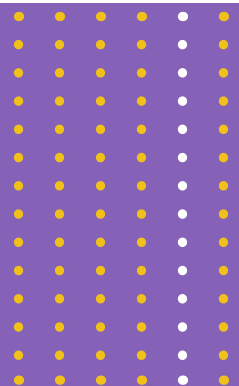
This chapter outlines strategies that support three Big Moves:

- **Standard of Excellence**, by creating citywide design, maintenance, and amenity standards.
- **World-Class Staff**, by investing in training, recruitment, and retention for PRCF teams
- **Sustainable Partnerships**, by building collaboration and long-term support for funding and stewardship.

Quality isn't a luxury—it's the foundation for a parks and recreation system that residents can count on every day.

## RICHMOND'S VISION FOR QUALITY

Richmond's parks and community centers are well-built, well-cared for, and meet clear standards. The City invests in staff, funding, and partnerships to keep them strong for the future.





## BIG MOVE #9

# Standard of Excellence

This Big Move aims to implement written guidelines to ensure citywide standards for quality, amenities, and maintenance.

### Strategies

**9.1** Implement new written guidelines to ensure citywide standards for quality, amenities, and maintenance.

**9.2** Use operations planning and asset management to maintain quality and extend the life of PRCF facilities.



## BIG MOVE #10

# World-Class Staff

This Big Move focuses on investing in facilities, equipment, and staff recruitment, training, and retention to support PRCF staff as skilled stewards, experts, and community ambassadors.

### Strategies

**10.1** Continue to invest in facilities; equipment; and staff recruitment, training, and retention programs that support PRCF staff as system stewards, experts, and community ambassadors.

**10.2** Modernize staff facilities, equipment, and technologies to support efficient, high-quality operations across the PRCF system.



## BIG MOVE #11

# Sustainable Partnerships

This Big Moves aims to improve maintenance efficiency with City departments, formalize public-private partnerships, build community support for parks, and identify sustainable funding for their creation and management.

### Strategies

**11.1** Coordinate with other City departments to clarify maintenance roles and build new operational efficiencies.

**11.2** Formalize public-private partnerships and build community capacity to help the City create, maintain, and manage high-quality parks and community facilities.

**11.3** Identify new, sustainable funding sources for the creation and ongoing management of high-quality parks, community facilities, and programs.





## BIG MOVE #9

# Standard of Excellence



## Standard of Excellence

Every park, trail, and community facility in Richmond should reflect a consistent standard of quality—regardless of where it is, how new it is, or how often it's used. But today the City lacks a shared set of expectations for how each PRCF space should look, feel, and function. As a result, quality varies widely across the system. Some parks thrive with regular upkeep and a full range of amenities, while others go without basic needs like shade, lighting, or safe play equipment. These gaps are most visible in communities that have long faced disinvestment.

PRCF has already taken a strong first step by developing a Parks Maintenance and Operational Standards Plan. The plan outlines expectations by amenity—such as benches, playgrounds, and restrooms—which provides a solid foundation for systemwide care. But even the same amenity can require different levels of maintenance depending on where it's located, how often it's used, and what type of park it's in. A picnic area in a downtown plaza might need daily attention, while a similar setup in a quiet wooded park might require less frequent

upkeep. *Richmond INSPIRE* builds on the existing plan by recommending a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach—one that accounts for park type, usage patterns, and community expectations.

This is about more than design—it's about trust. When residents see a clean, well-lit, and welcoming park, it tells them their neighborhood matters. When maintenance staff have clear guidance and consistent resources, they can focus on doing their best work. Richmond's parks, trails, and centers serve different functions, but they should all meet a standard of excellence that reflects the City's care for its communities.





Restroom building (locked at the time of this photo) and basketball courts at Chimborazo Playground

# Strategies

Raising the standard of excellence across Richmond’s parks and recreation system starts with defining what quality looks like—and giving staff the tools to deliver it. Written guidelines for design, amenities, and maintenance help ensure that every space is welcoming, safe, and functional, no matter the neighborhood or park type.

These standards not only support consistent care, but also give community members a clearer sense of what to expect and how to advocate for improvements. But setting a standard is only one piece of the puzzle. Maintaining that standard over time takes planning, coordination, and data. PRCF needs a systemwide approach to track assets, assess conditions, and identify

when repairs, upgrades, or replacements are needed. Smarter operations and stronger maintenance systems can extend the life of facilities, reduce costly emergencies, and help the department plan more proactively.

| STRATEGIES                                                                                                   | PAGE |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 9.1 Implement new written guidelines to ensure citywide standards for quality, amenities, and maintenance.   | 184  |
| 9.2 Use operations planning and asset management to maintain quality and extend the life of PRCF facilities. | 188  |



BIG MOVE #9

# Standard of Excellence



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Gun Violence Prevention Program

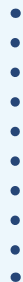
10

Hours Of Weekly  
Activities



2

Pilot Middle  
Schools



Groundbreaking  
Staff-created Model

Relaxing by the  
James River



### Staff-Led Solutions

PRCF staff—many of whom have deep community ties and lived experience—designed and launched the Gun Violence Prevention Program with support from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Office of Children and Families. The program focuses on middle school students from Martin Luther King Jr. and River City Middle Schools, offering 10 hours per week of structured, supportive, and enriching activities.

Participants take part in cultural outings, art and service projects, and recreation that helps build confidence, social skills, and belonging. Students have attended NBA games, visited museums in Washington, D.C., and engaged in hands-on learning that broadens their worldview.

Weekly workshops led by Challenge Discovery Projects support social-emotional learning and cover real-life topics like conflict resolution and navigating peer pressure. Trusted partner, ChildSavers provides trauma-informed training and peer grief support, while Communities in Schools assists with student recruitment and family engagement. PRCF also provides meals, winter break supplies, clothing, and equipment—removing barriers to participation.

This groundbreaking model was built by City staff who stepped up to create safe, welcoming spaces that support Richmond youth with dignity and intention.

### The Challenge

In 2019 and 2020, Richmond faced a troubling rise in youth gun violence, particularly impacting middle school-aged students in vulnerable neighborhoods. Traditional responses to violence often centered on fear and punishment, leaving young people without safe spaces or meaningful support during critical after-school hours. PRCF recognized an urgent need to address this crisis with empathy, opportunity, and consistency.

### Impact

The program continues to demonstrate deep relational impact. Students who once hesitated to engage now ask when they'll return to volunteer or paint the next park bench. Youth from across the city are building friendships that break through territorial and generational barriers.

The initiative has created spaces free from violence, hunger, and isolation—places where students feel seen, supported, and encouraged to grow. While the tragic deaths of two youth participants underscores the urgency of this work, the program remains a powerful model for earlier intervention and sustained community care.

### What's Next

PRCF is preparing to expand the program into high schools with a ninth-grade-specific model. This new phase will maintain continuity with trusted staff and offer support during a critical time in youth development. The long-term vision is a safer, more connected Richmond—where parks and recreation help prevent violence by offering purpose, structure, and opportunity.

The Gun Violence Prevention Program is a reminder that a Standard of Excellence isn't only about design or infrastructure—it's about the leadership, compassion, and creativity of the people who serve communities at PRCF.

## STRATEGY 9.1

# Implement new written guidelines to ensure citywide standards for quality, amenities, and maintenance.

### Setting the Standard

Richmond's parks and recreation system includes everything from wooded trails and skateparks to historic cemeteries, rain gardens, and active recreation centers. Each space serves a different role—but they all deserve the same level of care, thought, and consistency. Strategy 9.1 ensures that every park and facility is designed, maintained, and improved using clear, transparent standards grounded in community values and professional best practices.

This strategy begins with updating PRCF's design guidelines to reflect today's needs and tomorrow's challenges. That means assessing current standards for gaps around equity, sustainability, climate resilience, and evolving recreation preferences—and then developing new guidance organized by park classification and site type. Future projects will use these standards to ensure that all spaces, whether brand new or decades old, are welcoming, accessible, and built to a consistent level of quality.

Maintenance guidance is just as essential. This strategy calls for the development of a comprehensive Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual

that includes expectations for both active and passive landscapes. From lawns and pollinator gardens to cultural landscapes and green infrastructure, staff and partners will have clear instructions—and the training, tools, and procurement strategies they need to carry them out. Written standards will also guide newer programs like parklets and historic preservation, helping the City manage these spaces with intention and transparency.

Richmond INSPIRE also recognizes the need to preserve and honor the city's most meaningful public places. This strategy supports long-term stewardship of historic PRCF properties and city-owned cemeteries through new action plans and cultural landscape studies. These efforts ensure that restoration decisions reflect local knowledge, community partnership, and national preservation standards.

Together, these written tools create a shared definition of quality across the system. Strategy 9.1 helps PRCF set clear expectations—for residents, staff, and partners—and gives the department what it needs to meet them.

#### DEEPER DIVE



[Review the Chapter 10, Site Design Standards for considerations on written guidelines](#)

#### DEEPER DIVE



[Review CAPRA accreditation standards for examples on appropriate documents and policies to improve operations \[external link\].](#)



## HOW STRATEGY 9.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Driving Principle                 | Related Strategy                  | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.1.a | Complete a study of all existing design guidelines to identify outdated practices, equity issues, or missing topics (e.g., climate resilience, emerging recreation needs). Target these areas as critically needed areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Quality, Access, Welcome, Enviro. | 1.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1 | Short-term | PDR      |    |
| 9.1.b | Develop new community-driven and transparent PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards by park classification. Include guidance on accessibility, equity, sustainability, safety, and aesthetics.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Quality, Equity, Enviro.          | 5.2, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1                | Short-term | DPW      |    |
| 9.1.c | Apply the PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards in all projects to ensure a consistent level of quality across all PRCF facilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Quality, Equity, Enviro.          | 5.2, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1                | Short-term | DPW      |    |
| 9.1.d | Develop a comprehensive Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual. Include management guidelines and metrics by park classification and land typology—covering lawns, gardens, cemeteries, cultural landscapes, green infrastructure, and habitat areas. Incorporate procurement strategies, facility and equipment distribution plans, and training to ensure staff understand and implement the guidelines. Address internal and external partnerships, including contracted services. Review and update the manual every five years to track progress and reflect evolving best practices. | Quality, Enviro.                  | 7.1, 7.2, 8.2, 9.1                | Short-term | DPU, DPW |    |
| 9.1.e | Apply the PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards to ensure developed park sites are shaped as cohesive, well-designed public spaces. Over time, prioritize improvements that strengthen layout, accessibility, comfort, and visual quality to support a welcoming and inclusive park system.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Quality, Access, Welcome, Enviro. | 1.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.3, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1 | Short-term | PDR      |  |



## HOW STRATEGY 9.1 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Driving Principle                   | Related Strategy              | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.1.f | Using the Friends of East End Cemetery cultural landscape study as a reference and model, develop a City of Richmond Cemetery Preservation Study and Action Plan, including identification of partnerships and funding sources, for the identification, protection, preservation, and if needed acquisition of abandoned and neglected cemeteries, especially Black cemeteries.                                                                                                                                           | Quality, Welcome,                   | 4.2, 9.1, 11.1, 11.2          | Short-term | PDR      |    |
| 9.1.g | Create and promote a set of clear design and maintenance standards for the Parklet Program to support the development of safe, attractive, and consistent parklets across the city                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Quality, Access                     | 1.3, 9.1, 11.1, 11.2          | Short-term | PDR      |    |
| 9.1.h | Review and update the PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards every five years based on community input, design trends, and implementation outcomes.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Quality, Equity, Enviro.            | 5.2, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1            | Short-term | DPW      |    |
| 9.1.i | Update the PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Standards with learned best practices identified in all Richmond INSPIRE studies and assessments.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Quality, Welcome, Equity, Community | 4.2, 5.2, 6.1, 6.2, 9.1, 12.1 | Mid-term   |          |  |
| 9.1.j | <p>Develop a PRCF Historic Preservation Action Plan that outlines steps for long-term preservation and maintenance of PRCF-owned historic resources. Identify funding sources, partner organizations, and responsible staff. Initiate Cultural Landscape Reports for all historic landscapes using National Park Service best practices, and use the reports to guide future management decisions.</p> <p>Advocate to incorporate PRCF facilities into Cultural Heritage Stewardship long-term planning and guidance.</p> | Quality, Welcome                    | 4.2, 9.1, 11.1, 11.2          | Mid-term   | PDR      |  |

## Community Engagement Feedback



3.1 Avg.

How Well Parks and Community Facilities are Maintained (5 to 1)



2.9 Avg.

How Well Parks and Community Facilities are Meeting User's Needs or Standards (5 to 1)

Top 3

Ranked as 'Very Important Facilities' by Survey Respondents

- Picnic Pavillion / Shelter / Shade
- Restrooms
- Unpaved Walking / Biking Trails



New fitness equipment at Broadrock Sports Complex

STRATEGY 9.2

Use operations planning and asset management to maintain quality and extend the life of PRCF facilities.

Ensuring Long-Term Quality

The long-term success of any park or facility depends on what happens after it opens. Daily care, timely repairs, and clear roles all shape whether a space remains welcoming and functional over time. Strategy 9.2 focuses on improving how Richmond plans for and manages the ongoing operations of its parks and recreation system—starting at the project level and scaling up to the system as a whole.

This strategy begins by embedding maintenance and operations planning into the design process. All new parks and facilities will require Operations Plans before advancing to construction. These plans will outline expected staffing levels, facility needs, and maintenance responsibilities, helping PRCF

anticipate future demands and ensure resources are aligned from the start. Community partners and nonprofit organizations will also be invited to contribute, especially when they play an ongoing role in operations.

To support this shift, PRCF will develop a consistent set of tools and workflows. Maintenance plans will be stored centrally, updated regularly, and integrated with the City’s asset management system. A proactive maintenance calendar will schedule routine tasks like irrigation checks or roof inspections, and internal protocols will ensure that key decisions—such as when to escalate repairs or redesign failing features—are clearly documented. Over time, these systems will help PRCF prioritize high-impact repairs,

avoid costly breakdowns, and plan more effectively for capital upgrades.

Finally, this strategy improves coordination across the system. City departments will work together to clarify who maintains what, and to align work plans that support efficiency and consistency. New protocols will guide decisions about when amenities should be replaced, removed, or deferred—ensuring that changes are grounded in site plans, equity goals, and public engagement.

By building these practices into everyday planning and maintenance, PRCF can extend the life of its assets, reduce long-term costs, and deliver the high-quality experience that Richmonders expect and deserve.

| HOW STRATEGY 9.2 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                   |                  |            |          |                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 9.2.a                          | Require that all new parks and facilities have an Operations Plan that includes projected staffing levels, space and facilities needed for operations, and operation plans prior to advancing to construction documentation. | Quality           | 9.1, 9.2         | Short-term |          |  |



## HOW STRATEGY 9.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle       | Related Strategy   | Start Time | Partners      | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.2.b | Ensure that all new park and community facility projects include maintenance plans and identification of supporting maintenance resources prior to construction documentation. Document these plans in the project's Operation Plan to ensure long-term upkeep is considered early in the design process.                                                                           | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2           | Short-term | PDR           |    |
| 9.2.c | Involve non-profits and supporting organizations to participate in the development of Operations Plans. The PRCF Partnership and Volunteer Coordinator will coordinate between applicable groups and PRCF.                                                                                                                                                                          | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2, 11.2     | Short-term |               |    |
| 9.2.d | Collaborate with other City departments to clarify and document maintenance and facility responsibilities. Reconfigure assignments as needed to improve efficiency, align workflows, establish standard operating procedures, and prevent service gaps.                                                                                                                             | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2, 11.1     | Short-term | DPW, RPS, DPU |    |
| 9.2.e | Include a proactive maintenance calendar in the Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual. Schedule recurring tasks—such as irrigation checks, roof inspections, playground audits, and turf assessments—to reduce long-term repair costs. Ensure this schedule is integrated into the Total Asset Management System to support systemwide tracking and planning. | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2, 11.1     | Short-term |               |  |
| 9.2.f | Designate and maintain a centralized system for storing maintenance and operation plans, both digitally and physically. Ensure staff have efficient, reliable access to up-to-date records.                                                                                                                                                                                         | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2           | Short-term |               |  |
| 9.2.g | Establish a formal decision-making process to determine when ongoing repairs or maintenance at a site should escalate to a full redesign or be transitioned into a capital improvement project (CIP). This process should include clear roles, thresholds or triggers based on asset condition, frequency of repair, user demand, and equity considerations.                        | Quality, Access, Equity | 1.2, 5.2, 9.1, 9.2 | Short-term |               |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 9.2 MOVES FORWARD

|       | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Driving Principle       | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.2.h | Record and monitor site-level decisions, planning documents, and long-term goals using the central planning and asset management system. Develop internal protocols for when and how site data must be updated and require responsible staff to complete entries after key planning meetings, project approvals, or completed upgrades. Provide training to ensure interdepartmental access and accountability.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2         | Short-term |          |    |
| 9.2.i | Assess the implementation of Operations Plans after the completion of the project to inform the development of future plans and to assess the effectiveness of the current implementation and staffing.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2         | Mid-term   |          |    |
| 9.2.j | Use technology and workflows integrated into the new central asset management system to schedule and manage timely repair and replacement of park and facility assets. Prioritize actions based on each asset's lifecycle stage, physical condition, user impact, and cost-efficiency. Ensure the system includes updated data on all major asset types (e.g., playgrounds, courts, HVAC, pathways), and set a regular schedule for staff to review and update records.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Quality                 | 9.1, 9.2, 10.1   | Mid-term   |          |   |
| 9.2.k | Expand the formal decision-making process to include clear protocols for replacing, removing, or deferring amenities during routine maintenance. Ensure that any replacement aligns with the site's Design Intent Plan, level of service standards, and park classification guidelines. The addition of new amenities should only occur through the site planning process, which provides a structured opportunity for community engagement and equitable decision-making. Include criteria for when amenities may be removed without replacement, such as when they are no longer supported by the site plan and the surrounding area remains adequately served. Assign planning and design staff to review proposed changes and maintain systemwide consistency. | Quality, Access, Equity | 1.2, 5.2, 9.1    | Mid-term   |          |  |





BMX Park at Gillies Creek Park





## BIG MOVE #10

# World-Class Staff



## Staff Today

Parks and recreation is a people-powered system. Every clean park, well-run program, and trusted community space depends on PRCF staff. They lead public programs, maintain landscapes, mentor youth, and create a sense of belonging across Richmond—often with little visibility or recognition.

Many staff take deep pride in their work. As one employee shared during staff engagement, “I value the direct impact on my community and city that my work does. Being able to improve and enrich the lives of my neighbors and family is very important to me, and drives my passion and work.” But despite that passion, structural challenges make the work harder than it should be.

Some seasonal roles are expected, like lifeguards or summer camp staff. But many positions are filled by temporary contract workers who are not City employees. Even when a full-time position opens to replace a long-standing temp role, temp staff who apply can’t be guaranteed placement at the location where they have been working.

Lack of resources, communication, and unclear advancement pathways compound these barriers. Staff often lack consistent access learning opportunities, modern tools, or support. As older employees retire, the department risks losing institutional knowledge without a strong pipeline of future leaders and succession planning.

To build a stronger future, PRCF must invest in its people. That means shifting toward a more stable workforce, modernizing hiring and operations, and creating clear pathways for growth. When staff feel supported, able to be lifetime learners, and equipped to succeed, every park, program, and public interaction gets better.

## Strategies

Strengthening PRCF’s workforce starts with treating staff as essential to the system’s success. Strategy 10.1 focuses on recruiting and retaining qualified employees, creating clear pathways for growth, and





A PRCF coach works with youth football participants during a game

supporting staff with the training and recognition they deserve. It also recommends limiting reliance on temporary positions for critical public-facing roles—ensuring that Richmonders can build long-term careers in parks and recreation.

But even the most dedicated staff need the right tools to succeed. Strategy 10.2 calls for modernizing staff facilities, updating equipment, and

improving access to technology that supports day-to-day operations. From field offices and storage yards to internet access and maintenance tracking systems, these behind-the-scenes investments make a visible difference across the system.

Together, these strategies help PRCF build a workforce that is well-prepared, well-equipped, and proud to serve as stewards

of Richmond's parks, facilities, and communities.

| STRATEGIES |                                                                                                                                                                                      | PAGE |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 10.1       | Continue to invest in facilities; equipment; and staff recruitment, training, and retention programs that support PRCF staff as system stewards, experts, and community ambassadors. | 194  |
| 10.2       | Modernize staff facilities, equipment, and technologies to support efficient, high-quality operations across the PRCF system.                                                        | 198  |

## STRATEGY 10.1

# Continue to invest in facilities; equipment; and staff recruitment, training, and retention programs that support PRCF staff as system stewards, experts, and community ambassadors.

### Investing in Staff

Parks and recreation staff do more than maintain spaces—they welcome residents, run programs, respond to emergencies, and carry institutional knowledge across decades of service. Strategy 10.1 supports this essential workforce by investing in long-term systems for recruitment, training, and internal advancement.

This strategy begins by building a stronger foundation for staffing. A new PRCF Staffing Manual and updated organizational chart will clarify staff roles, expectations, reporting structures, and advancement pathways. These tools will also help identify gaps or inefficiencies in the current system, allowing PRCF to adjust staffing models as new positions and responsibilities emerge. Standardized annual reviews will align performance goals with professional development and ensure that every employee has opportunities to grow.

Training is a core priority. PRCF will establish internal training tracks and certifications in key areas—such as tree care, irrigation, green infrastructure,

public engagement, and historic resource stewardship—to support succession planning and elevate staff expertise across the system. New policies will also support lifelong learning and recognize continuing education as a pathway to advancement.

To improve operations and internal communication, this strategy recommends gradually building in-house capacity for HR, marketing, procurement, and IT support. These investments will help reduce delays and give staff access to the tools and resources they need to succeed.

Strategy 10.1 also outlines a pathway to reduce reliance on temporary contract roles for frontline positions. Temporary roles can prevent staff from accessing benefits or building long-term careers with PRCF—even when they've served in the same role for years. This strategy recommends a citywide policy to convert eligible contract positions into part-time, full-time, or seasonal City roles when justified by operational needs. Supporting those transitions through mentorship, training, and internal

promotion policies will help PRCF strengthen internal talent and improve staff retention over time.

Finally, this strategy expands training and coordination around emergency preparedness. Parks and recreation staff are often called on to respond quickly during extreme weather or citywide crises. Clarifying their roles and providing consistent training will help ensure that they're equipped to lead when Richmond needs them most.

Strategy 10.1 invests in PRCF staff as ambassadors, experts, and system stewards—recognizing that a stronger workforce leads to a stronger system.



## HOW STRATEGY 10.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.1.a | Update PRCF Staffing Manual to effectively community staffing structures, roles, policies, and performance standards. Consider contracting the initial redevelopment of the manual, with established regular internal update intervals and staff input.                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Quality           | 9.2, 10.1        | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.1.b | Train and connect staff to an clear, easy-to-use organizational chart that outlines staff responsibilities and internal pathways for advancement. Include an audit and update of existing job descriptions, reporting lines, and pay levels to support transparency and internal mobility.                                                                                                                                                                            | Quality           | 10.1, 11.1       | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.1.c | Continue to evaluate and update PRCF's organizational chart to consider and reflect new staff positions developed from the recommendations of this plan and its supporting studies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Quality           | 10.1             | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.1.d | Implement a structured, mutually beneficial annual review process that supports professional growth and organizational alignment. Tie performance discussions to the responsibilities outlined in the PRCF Staffing Manual and the staff member's position in the organizational chart. Use the review process to identify advancement opportunities, including pathways into new roles, specializations or expanded responsibilities and pay grade classifications . | Quality           | 10.1, 11.1       | Short-term |          |   |
| 10.1.e | Develop policies to support lifelong learning and professional growth, including staff specialization pathways, job shadowing, enhanced position title, and recognition for continuing education.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Quality           | 10.1             | Short-term |          |  |
| 10.1.f | Create internal training tracks or certification programs in key maintenance and operations areas such as tree care, irrigation, green infrastructure, and historic resource stewardship. Use these tracks to build staff expertise and support succession planning for critical skill areas.                                                                                                                                                                         | Quality           | 10.1             | Short-term |          |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 10.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.1.g | Establish in-house PRCF staff for IT, HR, Marketing, Procurement, and Risk Management functions to improve operational efficiency and internal communication. Coordinate with other City departments to streamline shared processes related to hiring and procurement.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Quality           | 10.1, 11.1       | Short-term | DHR, DPS |    |
| 10.1.h | Reevaluate hiring policies to allow job postings for specific locations, enabling candidates to better understand the roles and site context. Maintain flexibility for select floating or citywide positions where needed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Quality           | 10.1             | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.1.i | Conduct an annual assessment of overall staff performance and department-wide staffing needs to identify inefficiencies, gaps, or shifting resource demands.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Quality           | 10.1             | Mid-term   |          |    |
| 10.1.j | Increase City investment in training and retention programs to support new professional pathways and support long-term staff development across all levels of PRCF.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Quality           | 10.1             | Mid-term   |          |  |
| 10.1.k | Establish a City policy that allows temporary PRCF positions, currently filled by staffing agencies, to be converted into part-time, full-time, or seasonal City staff roles when justified by operational needs. This transition would provide more stable employment, strengthen staff commitment, and allow for potential access to benefits. Define clear criteria and a consistent review process for converting positions, and ensure alignment with budget, staffing plans, and departmental priorities. As part of this policy, identify and address any conflicts between temporary agency hiring practices and City employment requirements, such as background checks or onboarding procedures, to support a smooth and equitable transition. | Quality           | 10.1             | Mid-term   |          |  |

## HOW STRATEGY 10.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.1.l | Provide support resources such as training, mentorship, and job coaching to help temporary staff build skills and successfully transition into long-term careers with PRCF. Align these efforts with broader workforce development goals to strengthen internal talent and improve staff retention. | Quality           | 10.1             | Mid-term   |          |  |
| 10.1.m | Expand participation in the citywide emergency preparedness working group. Train PRCF staff on their roles during emergencies, including protocols for deployment, communication, and resource coordination.                                                                                        | Quality           | 10.1             | Mid-term   |          |  |



## STRATEGY 10.2

# Modernize staff facilities, equipment, and technologies to support efficient, high-quality operations across the PRCF system.

### Setting Staff up for Success

Delivering quality parks and programs depends not just on people—but on the systems that support them. Strategy 10.2 focuses on modernizing PRCF's behind-the-scenes infrastructure, from field offices and digital tools to maintenance equipment and technology access. These operational upgrades are critical to improving service, reducing delays, and helping staff do their best work.

This strategy begins with a systemwide audit of staff facilities, offices, and operations yards. Many staff work in outdated spaces without reliable internet access or sufficient storage. A dedicated assessment will identify needed improvements and recommend space standards to guide future growth—ensuring that PRCF's internal facilities can keep pace with its expanding public system.

Technology upgrades are a major focus. From scheduling maintenance tasks to managing community events, staff rely on digital tools to keep parks running smoothly. Strategy 10.2 calls for investing in devices, training, and software platforms—like eBuilder, RecTrac, and 311—so staff can access and coordinate work orders, project updates, and

performance data more easily. These tools must be tailored to PRCF's specific workflows and regularly evaluated to ensure they're working as intended.

To support this modernization, PRCF will establish a new internal IT position dedicated to parks and recreation operations. This role will help staff troubleshoot issues, integrate systems, and streamline reporting across teams. In parallel, the department will assess current technology use at staff workspaces to understand bottlenecks, equipment needs, and barriers to communication—and use those insights to shape a smarter, more responsive system.

Lastly, the strategy ensures that assets requiring specialized care—such as irrigation systems, playground inspections, or tree management—are overseen by certified staff or qualified contractors. These skilled roles are critical to maintaining high standards and reducing costly long-term repairs.

Strategy 10.2 invests in the daily systems that power PRCF's work. By modernizing staff spaces, tools, and workflows, the department can strengthen internal efficiency and deliver high-quality service across every park and facility in Richmond.

### DEEPER DIVE



[Review national examples for technology for parks operations in the City Parks Alliance Parks and Technology Report \[external link\].](#)



## HOW STRATEGY 10.2 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.2.a | Conduct a PRCF Staff Facility Audit and Action Plan to identify needed improvements for staff facilities and offices, including improved technology and reliable Internet access. Develop space standards to ensure that staff facilities, maintenance operations shop space, and storage areas grow to keep pace with the growth of the system. | Quality           | 9.1, 10.1, 10.2  | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.2.b | Create a PRCF IT position. The position should support increased operations efficiencies, digital tools, and faster reporting and performance metrics.                                                                                                                                                                                           | Quality           | 10.1, 10.2, 11.1 | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.2.c | Invest in new devices, training, and technologies—such as optimized PRCF-specific buildout and adoption of eBuilder, 311 and RecTrac—to improve department communication and efficiencies through integrated online work orders, maintenance plans, and interdepartmental coordination.                                                          | Quality           | 10.1, 11.1       | Short-term |          |    |
| 10.2.d | Implement a Technology Improvement Assessment at facilities and staff work spaces to understand current equipment that is available, current workflows, and current bottlenecks to address in the new system.                                                                                                                                    | Quality           | 10.1, 11.1       | Short-term |          |  |
| 10.2.e | Assess the implementation of technology regularly to ensure staff have the tools they need to be efficient.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Quality           | 10.1             | Short-term |          |  |
| 10.2.f | Ensure certified staff or qualified contractors are available for assets that require specialized care, including inspection, treatment, and repair.                                                                                                                                                                                             | Quality           | 10.1             | Short-term |          |  |
| 10.2.g | Utilize visitation and programming data to assess facilities operations and document the value of parks and recreation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Quality           |                  | Short-term |          |  |



## BIG MOVE #11

# Sustainable Funding and Partnerships



## Funding and Partners

Richmond's parks and recreation system has grown rapidly in recent years, fueled by an influx of one-time capital investments. PRCF secured more American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding than any other City department—an achievement that led to major improvements in new parks, trails, and community centers, especially in areas with the highest need. These investments reflect growing public support and recognition of the system's value.

But building new spaces is only part of the challenge. As the system expands, so do the costs to operate, maintain, and staff it over time. *Richmond INSPIRE* identified an estimated \$75 million in deferred maintenance needs, and PRCF must now turn its attention to the harder question: how to sustain a growing system with reliable, long-term funding.

The department already receives strong support from partners, volunteers, and other City agencies—but these relationships aren't always clear or consistent. Some maintenance and operations responsibilities

are shared across departments, but the roles and resources involved can be opaque. *Richmond INSPIRE* recommends strengthening interdepartmental coordination to reduce service gaps and improve efficiency.

At the same time, community energy is high. Neighborhood groups, Friends of Parks organizations, and volunteers are eager to support park projects, but don't always know how to connect with PRCF. Staff members who manage these partnerships have built strong relationships, and the department has an opportunity to expand those efforts into a more coordinated and accessible framework.

“Better partnerships with the business community could help cover upgrade costs. This could involve allowing businesses to display advertising signs or other promotional materials in exchange for their support.”

*Anonymous Richmond INSPIRE Engagement Response*







Children wait in line to receive packed lunches as a part of the free Summer Food Service Program

## Strategies

Richmond INSPIRE recommends a shift from short-term investments to long-term stewardship—ensuring that every park, trail, and community center remains safe, welcoming, and well cared for. These recommendations focus on building the internal systems, external partnerships,

and sustainable funding needed to support a growing and equitable parks and recreation system.

The strategies that follow outline how PRCF can clarify roles and responsibilities across departments, strengthen partnerships with community groups and nonprofits, and

identify consistent revenue sources to support both operations and growth. Together, these efforts help Richmond build a resilient foundation—one where public resources are used efficiently, local energy is supported, and parks and community spaces can thrive over time.

| STRATEGIES |                                                                                                                                                               | PAGE |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 11.1       | Coordinate with other City departments to clarify maintenance roles and build new operational efficiencies.                                                   | 204  |
| 11.2       | Formalize public-private partnerships and build community capacity to help the City create, maintain, and manage high-quality parks and community facilities. | 206  |
| 11.3       | Identify new, sustainable funding sources for the creation and ongoing management of high-quality parks, community facilities, and programs.                  | 208  |



BIG MOVE #11

# Sustainable Funding and Partnerships



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Building Partners

**75+**

miles of multi-use  
trails expanded  
through partners

**6k+**

counted  
volunteer hours  
in 2024

**\$100s**

of thousands of dollars  
raised for park and  
recreation improvements  
by partners

Community  
organizations at  
a resource fair at  
Southside Community  
Center



### The Opportunity

A great park system depends on great partnerships. In Richmond, a wide range of organizations—from neighborhood groups and nonprofits to corporate sponsors and volunteer teams—help care for public spaces, raise funds, and deliver essential programs. Active partner organizations are investing time, money, and care into Richmond’s parks every day. Their collective impact is redefining what sustainable park management looks like and ensuring Richmond’s park system is more equitable, resilient, and vibrant for generations to come.

### The Work

PRCF’s partnership model is built on trust, collaboration, and mutual investment. Across the city, this approach is taking root:

- Friends of Bryan Park raises significant funds for ecological restoration, including recent work at Azalea Pond that improved water quality and enhanced park aesthetics.
- Friends of East End and Evergreen Cemeteries led efforts to integrate two historic Black cemeteries into the PRCF system. With grant support, they’re shaping preservation strategies rooted in community memory.
- Neighborhood associations like Church Hill and the Fan District fundraise and mobilize volunteers to care for gardens, install native plants, and maintain identity-rich spaces.

- Friends of the James River Park and RVA MORE offer strategic planning, fundraising, and maintenance support for trails and natural areas.
- Capital Trees, through projects like the Low Line and Hotchkiss Green, demonstrates how design, funding, and implementation can be led in partnership.
- Corporate partners like CarMax and ONE adopt parks and fund youth recreation, while Verdant RVA, Richmond Community ToolBank, and Manchester Alliance provide tools and capacity for grassroots action.
- Program partners like Fitness Warriors, Venture Richmond, and the Richmond Tennis Association activate sites with health, culture, and play.

These relationships reflect PRCF’s evolving approach to shared responsibility, where community organizations help shape, fund, and sustain Richmond’s public spaces in partnership with City staff.

### What’s Next

As Richmond’s park system improves, so must its partnerships. PRCF will continue to refine how it engages with and supports partner organizations—providing clearer coordination, responsive communication, and opportunities to align goals. Richmond INSPIRE is activating a future-forward model of public service—one where nonprofit allies, neighborhood associations, grassroots advocates, and corporate sponsors work alongside city leaders to shape, fund, and maintain Richmond’s green spaces.



**Coordinate with other City departments to clarify maintenance roles and build new operational efficiencies.**

Together, these tools help Richmond reduce service gaps, prevent miscommunication, and make the most of limited resources. When City departments and PRCF operate from the same data and systems, every park and public space benefits

## HOW STRATEGY 11.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle        | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11.1.a | Participate in the development of a centralized digital inventory of all City-owned facilities, including pavement and site elements. Support the implementation of a Total Asset Management system to coordinate maintenance, repair, and capital improvements. Ensure asset condition data is regularly updated as part of daily operations and made accessible across City departments.                                                          | Quality, Access, Enviro. | 1.3, 7.2, 9.1, 11.1 | Mid-term   | DPW      |    |
| 11.1.b | Train staff in mobile software that can regularly update the Total Asset Management data through their day-to-day work. Ensure to catalogue new park improvements as they are installed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Quality                  | 11.1                | Short-term |          |    |
| 11.1.c | Create and optimize a central online system that manages the relationship between scheduling of facilities, staffing needs, customer registration, operating cost, and scheduled maintenance. Ensure the system is easy to use, multi-lingual, mobile friendly, and can integrate into staffs' everyday workflow. Integrate a calendar system and facility availability. Explore if existing software can be utilized or if new software is needed. | Quality                  | 11.1, 12.2, 3.2     | Mid-term   |          |    |
| 11.1.d | Evaluate best tool to schedule and automate maintenance requests using the central online system.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Quality                  | 11.1                | Mid-term   |          |  |

## STRATEGY 11.2

# Formalize public-private partnerships and build community capacity to help the City create, maintain, and manage high-quality parks and community facilities.

### Strengthen Partnerships

PRCF relies on its partners. Volunteers, nonprofits, and community-based organizations already play a vital role in stewarding Richmond's parks and community spaces. From organizing events and planting gardens to maintaining trails and raising funds, these partners bring capacity and care that PRCF could not achieve alone. *Richmond INSPIRE* recognizes the importance of these contributions—and recommends new ways to celebrate, support, and sustain them.

This strategy begins by investing in the PRCF staff who coordinate partnerships and volunteer programs. These individuals serve as the bridge between City operations and community efforts, and they need time, visibility, and tools to help residents connect. By advertising opportunities clearly and simplifying partnership processes, PRCF can make it easier for individuals and organizations to get involved.

At the same time, stronger partnerships require clear expectations. Strategy 11.2 calls for a consistent, transparent framework to guide formal agreements—outlining roles, responsibilities, and points of contact for each partner. Whether through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), visual documentation, or other tools, formalizing these relationships ensures that everyone involved knows how to work together and what to expect.

This strategy also addresses long-term care of shared spaces. In new developments or community-led projects, responsibilities for maintaining open space are often unclear. PRCF will support sustainable approaches to stewardship, including land donations, conservation easements, or shared responsibility models with homeowner associations and land trusts.

By strengthening support for partnership staff, clarifying collaboration processes, and celebrating the contributions of local partners, Richmond can expand its impact and build lasting systems of shared stewardship.

*“Voluntary organizations and volunteers play a crucial role in supporting parks, not only through their time and effort but also through fundraising to enhance park amenities.”*

*Anonymous Richmond  
INSPIRE Engagement  
Response*





PRCF AmeriCorps team members

## HOW STRATEGY 11.2 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11.2.a | Grow community awareness and build the capacity of the PRCF staff who manage partnership and volunteer programs and support and build the capacity of Friends groups. Support these staff in advertising and streamlining the processes that allow residents and community-based organizations to partner with PRCF.                   | Quality, Welcome  | 3.2, 10.1, 11.2  | Short-term |          |   |
| 11.2.b | Establish shared-use and public-private agreements for private and publicly-owned urban outdoor space.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Quality           | 9.2, 11.1, 11.2  | Mid-term   | DPW, DPU |  |
| 11.2.c | Update existing policies to create a transparent framework to formalize public-private partnerships and memoranda of understanding for park and public space management. Define partner roles, responsibilities, points of contact, and partnership boundaries. Include visual documentation when appropriate to simplify the process. | Quality           | 9.2, 11.1, 11.2  | Mid-term   | DPW, DPU |  |
| 11.2.d | Collaborate with public, private, and nonprofit partners to support the long-term maintenance and shared stewardship of common open space, using tools such as joint ownership, conservation easements, land trusts, or other partnership-based approaches that expand greenspace access.                                              | Quality           | 9.2, 11.2        | Mid-term   | PDR      |  |

## STRATEGY 11.3

# Identify new, sustainable funding sources for the creation and ongoing management of high-quality parks, community facilities, and programs.

## Funding the Future of Parks and Recreation

To maintain a high-quality system, PRCF must move beyond short-term funding cycles and toward a more reliable foundation of financial support. Strategy 11.3 focuses on building this foundation—strengthening internal capacity, expanding access to grants, and identifying long-term tools to support both operations and growth.

*Richmond INSPIRE* calls for clearer policies that allow PRCF to receive sponsorships and donations, track financial performance, and evaluate the sustainability of new and existing programs. These efforts help ensure that every investment—from a new park to a seasonal program—can be maintained well over time. Private gifts to be parks and recreation can be great for Richmond, but PRCF needs to ensure that they are able to maintain the gift overtime,

especially large gifted facilities such as athletic fields.

However, the strategy also emphasizes the importance of external funding. By coordinating grant efforts across the City and creating a dedicated role within PRCF, the department can pursue more opportunities that align with community needs—especially for capital improvements and affordable programming. At the same time, Richmond must explore new revenue sources that reflect the scale of its ambitions, from impact fees and tax districts to creative public-private partnerships.

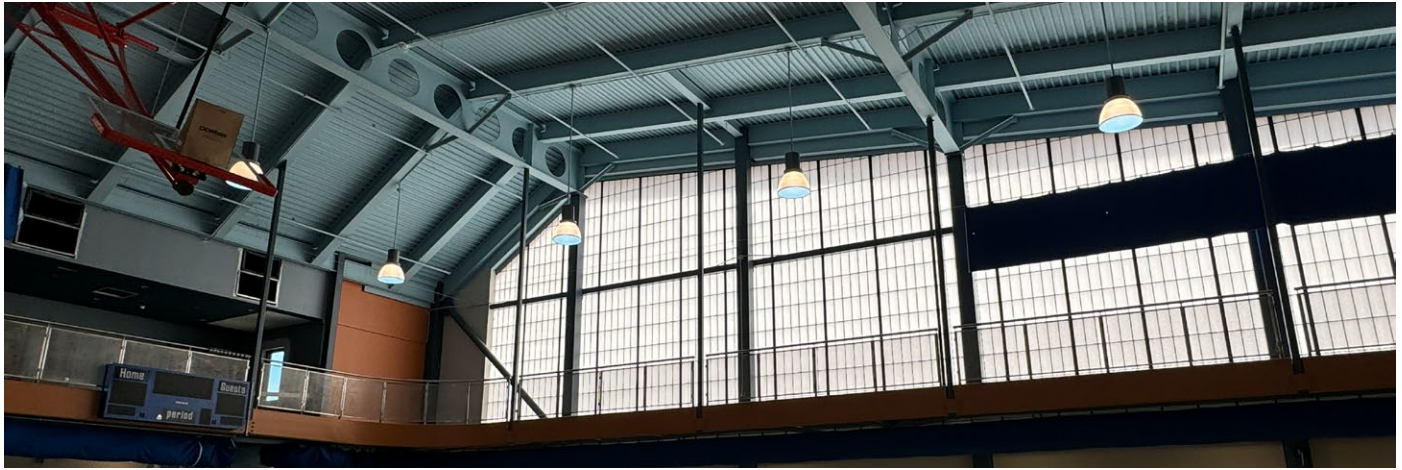
Together, these actions move the system toward greater financial resilience—so that every park and facility can serve Richmonders not just today, but for generations to come.

### FUNDING STRATEGIES



[Dive deeper into funding strategies in Chapter 10, Implementation.](#)





New APRA funded gymnasium under-construction in Thomas B. Smith Community Center in Spring 2025

## HOW STRATEGY 11.3 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Driving Principle | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11.3.a | Create an ordinance that permits PRCF to collect donations and sponsorships to fund maintenance and operations of specific programs and sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Quality           | 11.3             | Short-term |          |    |
| 11.3.b | Continually evaluate existing facilities and programs operations and finances to assess the financial sustainability of all proposed projects and programs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Quality           | 11.3             | Short-term |          |   |
| 11.3.c | Develop a coordinated grant strategy to support PRCF programs and projects. Increase use of the City's shared portfolio-level grant writer to pursue funding that aligns with PRCF goals and <i>Richmond INSPIRE</i> recommendations. To fully implement the plan, establish a permanent PRCF grant writing position focused on identifying, coordinating, and applying for private, regional, state, and federal grants that fund capital projects and offset the cost of free or highly discounted programs. | Quality           | 11.3             | Short-term |          |  |
| 11.3.d | Commission a study to identify realistic pathways for new dedicated funding sources for the creation and maintenance of new and existing parks, open space, and greenways.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Quality           | 9.1, 11.3        | Short-term | CAO, PDR |  |
| 11.3.e | Coordinate with other City departments to strategically pursue state and federal funding for public infrastructure projects, including parks, community facilities, highway caps and greenways.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Quality           | 11.3             | Mid-term   | CAO      |  |



9



# **'COMMUNITY' STRATEGIES**

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- **Why is Community Important?**
- **Big Move #12: Recreation and Programming for All Strategies**
- **Big Move #13: Park-Based Agriculture Strategies**
- **Big Move #14: Community Resilience Hubs Strategies**

# → Why is Community Important?

Parks and community centers are powerful tools for connection. They bring neighbors together, support wellness, and create space for shared joy and learning. In Richmond, these spaces have long played a vital role in strengthening community bonds—and they continue to do so today.

But not every Richmonder feels included. Some residents face barriers to joining programs. Others live in areas with limited access to fresh food or few spaces designed for community gathering. In an era of rising heat, social isolation, and economic uncertainty, parks and community centers must play an even greater role in building a Richmond that is healthy, connected and resilient.

This chapter focuses on activating the full potential of PRCF parks and community facilities to serve every neighborhood and every resident. Through expanded programs, stronger partnerships,

and better support systems, Richmond will grow a park and recreation system that unites, nourishes, and protects.

To achieve that vision, Richmond *INSPIRE* introduces three community-driven Big Moves:

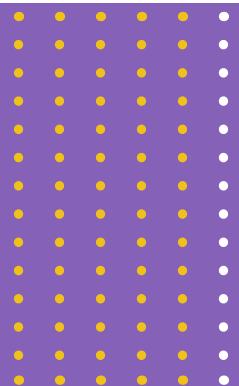
- **Recreation and Programming for All** invests in diverse and inclusive park and community center programs, strengthens partnerships with providers, and finds new ways to build community in these spaces.
- **Park-Based Urban Agriculture** promotes sustainable, park-based food systems to ensure citywide access to fresh, healthy food.
- **Community Resilience Hubs** reimagine PRCF community centers as trusted places for resilience—offering social, environmental, and emergency support when it's needed most.

Together, these Big Moves strengthen the social fabric of

Richmond—ensuring that parks and community centers remain welcoming, supportive, and essential for all.

## RICHMOND'S VISION FOR COMMUNITY

Richmond's parks and community centers bring people together with activities for all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Recreation centers help build stronger, safer neighborhoods.







## BIG MOVE #12

# Recreation and Programming for All

This Big Move invests in diverse and inclusive park and community center programs, strengthens partnerships with providers, and finds new ways to build community and unite people in these spaces.

### Strategies

**12.1** Continue to invest in park- and community center-based programming that is diverse and inclusive for Richmond residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

**12.2** Strengthen partnerships with other programming providers.

**12.3** Find new ways to build community and bring people together at Richmond's parks and community centers.



## BIG MOVE #13

# Park-Based Urban Agriculture

This Big Move aims to ensure citywide access to fresh food by promoting sustainable, park-based urban agriculture initiatives throughout Richmond.

### Strategies

**13.1** Guarantee fresh produce access citywide through sustainable, park-based urban agriculture.



## BIG MOVE #14

# Community Resilience Hubs

This Big Move seeks to convert each PRCF community center into a Community Resilience Hub, providing resources and programs to strengthen social and physical resilience.

### Strategies

**14.1** Make every PRCF community center a Community Resilience Hub, with physical assets and programming that promote social and physical community resilience.



## BIG MOVE #12

# Recreation and Programming for All



## Recreation and Programming for All

Generations of Richmonders have found joy, support, and belonging through PRCF's community centers and recreation programs. These services—ranging from sports and dance to summer camps and senior fitness—have helped shape neighborhood traditions and build lasting relationships between staff and community members. During community engagement, many residents emphasized how important PRCF programs are to their households. This legacy of recreation remains a defining strength of the department.

### Current Services

PRCF currently delivers a broad slate of core services, including aquatics, after school programs, summer camps, athletics, cultural arts and dance, outdoor and nature activities, fitness, therapeutic recreation, senior services, and federal food programs. Staff deliver these offerings directly and also partner with third-party providers or offer rentals, creating a flexible

model that supports both responsiveness and innovation. Program staff are working to ensure services remain affordable and widely accessible, but participation and awareness still vary across neighborhoods.

To improve consistency, PRCF is advancing tools to evaluate program quality and track participation more reliably. Technology can support these efforts and help staff better understand resident interests and needs. Developing a program planning framework—such as a program pyramid that categorizes offerings by benefit level—can help align future programs with community goals. Regular reviews of program life cycles will allow PRCF to phase out outdated offerings and create space for new or expanded services.

As PRCF builds on their community-focused mission, the department is strengthening its role as a trusted provider of high-quality programs that reflect the full diversity of Richmond's communities. Strengthening internal coordination, evaluating

program performance more consistently, and supporting systemwide staff learning opportunities can help staff align offerings with evolving community needs. These improvements will ensure PRCF's programs continue to grow with the people they serve.

### Strategies

Creating a more accessible, inclusive, and responsive recreation system requires coordination, investment, and consistent community feedback. PRCF cannot do this work alone—it must work closely with community members, partner organizations, and other City departments to deliver programs that are meaningful and easy to access.





Youth participants of a PRCF recreation program speak to previous Mayor Levar Stoney

The following strategies focus on expanding opportunities for all Richmonders to connect with recreation. They emphasize reducing common barriers—like cost, communication gaps, and scheduling conflicts—while deepening the reach and relevance of PRCF’s core services. Each strategy also supports internal improvements,

such as enhancing staff roles, refining program evaluation processes, and using digital tools to streamline registration and outreach.

Together, these actions will strengthen the City’s ability to meet residents where they are. Whether through a dance class at the neighborhood rec center,

a pop-up nature program in a local park, or a citywide event that brings communities together, the goal is the same: to ensure every Richmond resident can find programs that reflect their interests, fit their schedule, and support their well-being.

| STRATEGIES |                                                                                                                                                                  | PAGE |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 12.1       | Continue to invest in park- and community center-based programming that is diverse and inclusive for Richmond residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. | 218  |
| 12.2       | Strengthen partnerships with other programming providers.                                                                                                        | 220  |
| 12.3       | Find new ways to build community and bring people together at Richmond’s parks and community centers.                                                            | 222  |





BIG MOVE #12

# Recreation and Programming for All



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Inclusive Programs

New  
Programming



Increased Users for  
Therapeutic and  
Adaptive Programming

Power Soccer at  
Broadrock Elementary  
School



## Inclusive Programs

### The Need

For years, many Richmonders with disabilities lacked access to parks and programs designed with their needs in mind. Without inclusive staffing or intentional planning, recreation often left people out. PRCF is working to change that.

### Making Change

PRCF is expanding access to inclusive recreation across Richmond. During the summer, the department supports children with disabilities in traditional camps by hiring Therapeutic Recreation Assistants, adjusting staff ratios, and developing individualized inclusion plans.

Year-round, PRCF offers therapeutic programs that support physical, social, and emotional well-being, which include:

- Page Turners, a weekly reading program for adults with disabilities
- Roll and Tumble, a gymnastics program for young children with and without disabilities
- Pontoon Boat Rides, nature-based recreation offered with Beyond Boundaries RVA
- Creative Connections, monthly recreation therapy for older adults at Linwood Robinson
- Coping Through Leisure, a mental health-focused program with Interceding Consultants
- Inclusive social events, including Bingo Night, Game Show Night, and the Sneaker Ball

- The Rec Program, inclusive open gym
- Just Craftin' Around, arts and crafts

These programs are hosted in libraries, community centers, and on the James River, reinforcing the importance of neighborhood-based care and access

### Program Impact

Each year, PRCF's Therapeutic Recreation programming reaches hundreds of Richmonders who otherwise may have been excluded from traditional recreation opportunities. These programs are not only well-attended—they are deeply valued by participants and caregivers. Events like the Sneaker Ball have become signature moments, celebrating community in fun, dignified, and inclusive ways. The department's work reflects a growing citywide commitment to equitable, neighborhood-rooted recreation.

### Partnerships

Many Therapeutic Recreation programs are made possible through collaboration. PRCF delivers many programs in collaboration with community partners. Beyond Boundaries RVA supports nature-based outings, Interceding Consultants lead mental health-focused recreation, and the Richmond Public Library provides space for inclusive reading programs. The Positive Vibe Foundation co-hosts evening social events like Bingo Night and the Sneaker Ball. These partnerships extend PRCF's reach and help embed inclusion across the city.

### What's Next

PRCF will continue to expand its inclusive recreation footprint. Key goals include increasing public awareness of offerings, growing staff training, and embedding inclusive strategies into all recreation programs—not just specialized ones. Through these efforts, PRCF aims to build a system where every child, adult, and elder—regardless of ability—can connect, play, and thrive.

## STRATEGY 12.1

# Continue to invest in park- and community center-based programming that is diverse and inclusive for Richmond residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

## Recreation is Core to Richmond

Recreation programs are core to PRCF's identity. For many residents, these offerings are a vital part of daily life and a key reason they value Richmond's parks and community centers. During the *Richmond INSPIRE* planning process, community members voiced strong appreciation for PRCF's long-standing services and expressed interest in more flexible, visible, and accessible programming. One participant noted, "I would like to see programs offered at various times throughout the day. I know people who miss out on many of these opportunities simply because they're working during the usual scheduled hours." Others called for expanded offerings and more inclusive spaces that welcome people of all ages and abilities.

This strategy focuses on reducing barriers to participation and ensuring core services meet the evolving needs of Richmonders. Actions include modernizing registration and payment systems, promoting scholarship programs more clearly, and streamlining how low-income families access free and

discounted programming. PRCF will also strengthen feedback loops by conducting ongoing participant surveys, hosting annual partner and stakeholder meetings, and including high-priority recreation questions in the City's existing survey tools. These efforts will help PRCF better understand program performance, identify gaps, and align offerings with demand.

Improving marketing procedures in partnership with the City's Office of Strategic Communications will help ensure programs are promoted in advance and reach a wider audience. PRCF will also develop a formal Program Plan to guide internal consistency and growth. This plan will outline earned revenue goals, if any, seasonal activation strategies, and a program pyramid that categorizes offerings by public benefit and service level. Together, these steps will help PRCF reach more residents, make better use of public resources, and continue providing meaningful recreation opportunities across the city.



## HOW STRATEGY 12.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Driving Principle           | Related Strategy     | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12.1.a | Improve registration and advertisement of free programs and streamline the process for low-income families to access free and discounted programming.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Community, Welcome, Quality | 3.1, 11.3, 12.1      | Short-term |          |    |
| 12.1.b | Create ongoing feedback and improvement loops for PRCF and partner recreation, athletics, out-of-school time, and summer camp programs. Use participant surveys, enrollment and demographic data, annual partner and stakeholder meetings, and five-year citywide random sample surveys to assess access, understand who is being served, and guide program adjustments. Include high-priority PRCF programming questions in the annual citywide community survey and coordinate with public and private partners across the City's human services portfolio to refine offerings over time. | Community, Welcome, Equity  | 3.2, 5.2, 12.2, 12.1 | Short-term |          |    |
| 12.1.c | Work with the Office of Strategic Communications to improve marketing procedures and timelines for flyer generation, social media requests, and outreach to better highlight and increase turnout for PRCF programs and events.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Community, Welcome, Equity  | 3.2, 5.2, 12.1       | Short-term | SCCE     |   |
| 12.1.d | Develop a formal PRCF Program Plan, including earned value strategies, if any, program service-level pyramid, seasonal activation plans, and formalized processes and goals for program proposal, implementation, evaluation, and calculation of direct value provided by free or low cost programs to residents.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Community                   | 12.1                 | Short-term |          |  |

## STRATEGY 12.2

# Strengthen partnerships with other programming providers.

### Strong Partnerships

Richmonders participate in recreation programs offered by PRCF, schools, faith-based organizations, nonprofits, and private providers. Without strong coordination, these offerings can feel disconnected, hard to find information about, or difficult to access. This strategy builds a more unified recreation network by improving collaboration, increasing transparency, and expanding access to information.

PRCF will convene public and private providers on a regular basis to coordinate programming and align resources with neighborhood needs. The new Programming Coordinator position will lead this effort by managing partner relationships, streamlining communication across PRCF teams, and coordinating with external providers. This staff member will also oversee participant-focused assessments that evaluate how well programs—whether offered by PRCF or partners—align with community interests and needs. Feedback from these assessments will help the department improve citywide program delivery, identify geographic or service gaps, and determine where partner-led

programs may be best suited to fill unmet needs.

PRCF will also leverage the proposed centralized digital, mobile-friendly portal to streamline scheduling and coordination between programming partners and PRCF.

Together, these improvements will make it easier for Richmonders to find and participate in the programs that meet their needs and easier for recreation providers to serve the city more effectively.



**Figure 26:** Walnut Bluffs Nature Play Area, proposed through the CAPP program

#### NATIONAL CASE STUDY

### CAPP: Community Partnerships to Activate Parks

Austin, TX

Austin's Community Activated Park Projects (CAPP) program gives residents, nonprofits, and community groups a clear process to propose and lead improvements in public parks. Managed by the City's Parks and Recreation Department, the program offers step-by-step guides, review criteria, and staff support to help partners implement projects—ranging from public art and gardens to trails and community events—that reflect neighborhood needs and enhance park spaces.





A group participates in yoga on the lawn at Forest Hill Park

| HOW STRATEGY 12.2 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                             |                       |            |          |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Driving Principle           | Related Strategy      | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 12.2.a                          | Convene public and private recreation programming providers to coordinate efforts and resources and to ensure that community needs are being met.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Community, Quality          | 11.2, 12.1, 12.2      | Short-term |          |  |
| 12.2.b                          | Create a permanent position, Programming Coordinator, within PRCF to manage programming partnerships, conduct participant program assessments as a part of the PRCF Program Plan, recruit private partnerships to fill programming gaps, and to streamline processes allowing residents to access programming and allowing partners to coordinate programs and facilities. | Community, Quality          | 10.1, 12.2            | Mid-term   |          |  |
| 12.2.c                          | Within the new centralized portal and calendar recommended in 3.2.e, provide recreation partners, that align with the PRCF Program Plan, the ability to reserve facilities and coordinate program scheduling and registration. Richmonders can find clear information on public and partner recreation opportunities within the centralized portal.                        | Community, Welcome, Quality | 3.2, 10.1, 12.2, 12.3 | Mid-term   | SCCE     |  |

STRATEGY 12.3

Find new ways to build community and bring people together at Richmond’s parks and community centers.

Grow and Promote Community Events

Special events play a powerful role in bringing people together and showcasing Richmond’s unique character. From neighborhood festivals to nationally recognized races, these experiences strengthen community identity, build civic pride, and invite residents to celebrate in public space. Events like the beloved Dogwood Dell Festival of the Arts and Jubilation in June offer free, family-friendly programming that reflects Richmond’s cultural richness and sense of place.

To expand the reach and impact of these experiences, PRCF will establish a permanent position dedicated to event coordination and promotion. This staff member will manage logistics for park- and facility-based events and serve as a liaison to local and regional organizers. In addition to supporting grassroots programming, the role will position Richmond as a destination for large-scale recreational events—such as the Monument Avenue 10K or international competitions like the Union Cyclists International (UCI) Bike Race.

By supporting both community traditions and high-profile events, PRCF can offer more opportunities for Richmonders to connect with one another, experience public space in new ways, and take pride in a parks system that celebrates the city’s diverse stories and energy.

| HOW STRATEGY 12.3 MOVES FORWARD |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                    |                  |            |          |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Driving Principle  | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
| 12.3.a                          | Designate and clearly communicate a PRCF point of contact for park- and community-facility-based special events to improve coordination, attract new sports and recreational events, and provide a clear entry point for organizers seeking to host tournaments, races, and other signature activities in Richmond’s parks, such as the (UCI) Bike Race and the Monument Avenue 10K. | Community, Quality | 10.1, 12.3, 13.1 | Mid-term   |          |  |

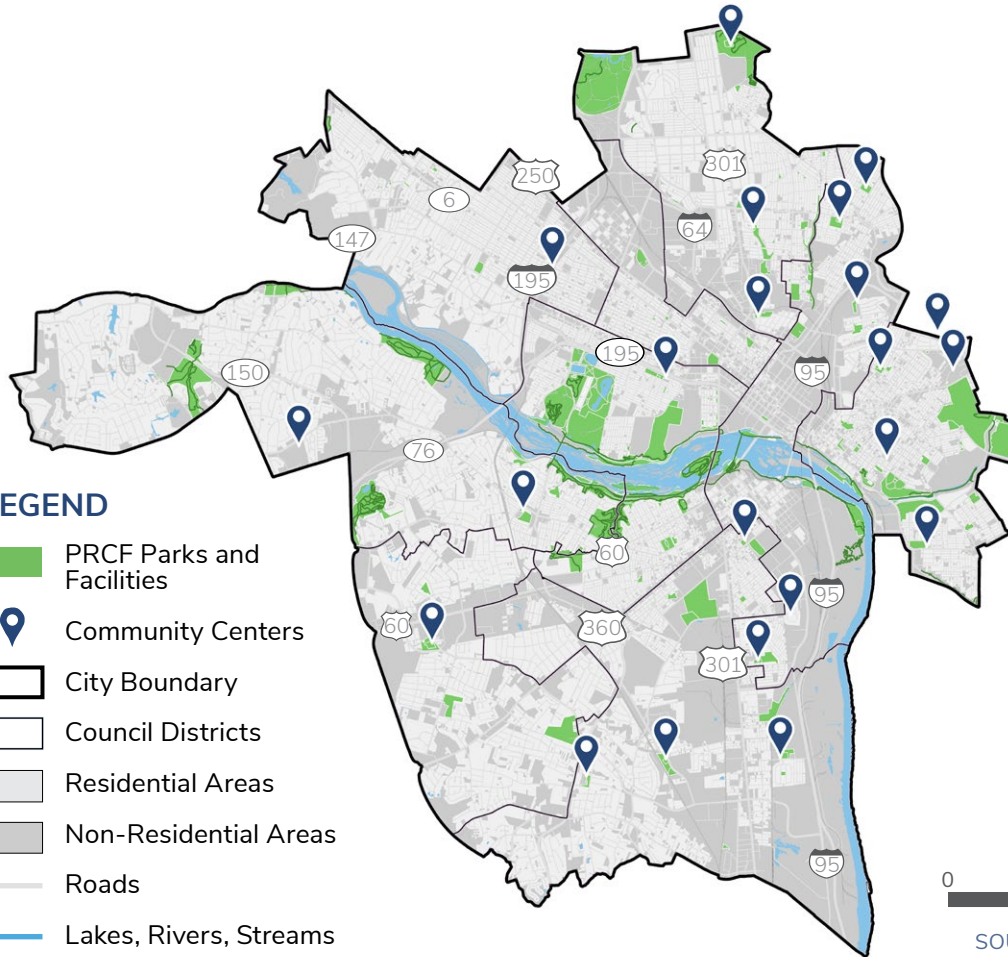
## MAP 21: COMMUNITY CENTERS

# 21

Community Centers provide programming and resources for Richmonders

### LEGEND

-  PRCF Parks and Facilities
-  Community Centers
-  City Boundary
-  Council Districts
-  Residential Areas
-  Non-Residential Areas
-  Roads
-  Lakes, Rivers, Streams
-  Existing Trails



SOURCES: City of Richmond, VGIN, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Safegraph, GeoTechnologies, Inc., METI/NASA, USGS, EPA, NPS, USDA, USFWS, Design Workshop



## BIG MOVE #13

# Park-Based Urban Agriculture



## Urban Agriculture Today

In Richmond, parks and community centers are places to grow produce. Across the city, community gardens, orchards, and edible landscapes connect residents to healthy food, cultural traditions, environmental education, and neighborhood leadership. These spaces reflect a deep local history of self-reliance, mutual aid, and community stewardship.

Since 2011, the Richmond Grows Gardens program has supported community-led agriculture on public land. Managed by PRCF, the program provides garden plots, materials, and technical support for more than 30 active garden sites citywide. Richmonders consistently voice strong support for urban agriculture and want gardens in every neighborhood park. Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth affirms this vision, calling for expanded community gardens and urban food production as part of a healthier, more resilient city. To support this effort, the City developed a Community Garden Handbook to guide best practices

in garden design, maintenance, and leadership.

Still, many residents face challenges accessing the benefits of urban agriculture. Most gardens have limited space, and not all residents know how to get involved. No system currently exists to share or sell garden-grown produce across neighborhoods, there is no clear guidelines for establishing farmers markets, and coordination between garden sites and the broader food system remains limited. As a result, even communities with active gardens may still lack reliable access to fresh, affordable food.

These challenges reflect broader food justice issues. Many Richmond neighborhoods—particularly those shaped by historic disinvestment—do not have full-service grocery stores or regular farmers markets. According to the Richmond City Health District, more than 60,000 residents live in food deserts, where healthy food is scarce. These conditions

contribute to high rates of diet-related illnesses, including diabetes and high blood pressure, and disproportionately affect Black and underrepresented communities.

Urban agriculture alone cannot solve these issues, but it remains a powerful tool. New PRCF community centers include commercial-grade kitchens that allow residents to learn how to grow, prepare, and share healthy meals. These spaces support intergenerational learning, promote nutrition education, and build community ownership of food systems. With the right investments and partnerships, PRCF can grow a stronger network of gardens, kitchens, and food education programs that nourish Richmond from the ground up.







Community Garden at Alice Fitz Playground

STRATEGIES

Urban agriculture is a proven tool for improving community health, increasing food access, and strengthening environmental resilience—but it requires coordination, long-term support, and deep community involvement to succeed. Richmonders are already leading the way, transforming parks and public land into productive spaces for growing food and building

community. Many gardens take shape on underused land—vacant parcels, park edges, and overlooked public spaces—where residents recognize opportunity and take initiative.

PRCF will continue supporting community-led gardens by reducing administrative barriers, expanding access to tools and water infrastructure, and providing technical guidance. Staff will also work to increase the availability of community

kitchens, which allow residents to prepare food, host nutrition classes, and share preservation practices. By strengthening these systems, PRCF can help ensure that more residents—across more neighborhoods—have access to the full range of opportunities urban agriculture provides.

| STRATEGIES                                                                                      | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 13.1 Guarantee fresh produce access citywide through sustainable, park-based urban agriculture. | 228  |





BIG MOVE #13

# Park-Based Urban Agriculture



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## Richmond Grows Gardens

Suite of tools and programs  
to permit urban agriculture in  
Richmond



18

Richmond Grows  
Gardens

A community-led  
garden at a PRCF park

### The Challenge

Richmond faces ongoing challenges around food security, equitable access to healthy food, and the need to repurpose underutilized land in ways that strengthen neighborhoods. Many communities lack nearby grocery options and spaces that foster intergenerational connection or environmental stewardship.

### Initiatives Underway

PRCF is advancing a comprehensive urban agriculture strategy that turns these challenges into opportunities. At the center is the **Richmond Grows Gardens** program, which transforms vacant and city-owned parcels into thriving community gardens. Expanding into park-adjacent spaces, these gardens now benefit from utilities and staff support that increase long-term success. More than food production, they have become spaces for wellness, education, and cultural expression.

Innovation also extends into nontraditional spaces, such as public rights-of-way. The **Old Hopkins Road project** demonstrates how landscaping community gateways can enhance neighborhood identity, improve walkability, and contribute to a connected green infrastructure network.

To support sustainable practices, **PRCF is piloting compost drop-off sites at gardens** and public facilities in partnership with the Central Virginia Waste Management Authority. These sites give residents simple ways to reduce waste, improve soil health, and support local food production.

Another initiative, the **Whitcomb Site, is envisioned as a hub for tree cultivation**, compost production, and garden support. With investment in irrigation and infrastructure, this four-acre parcel could anchor citywide efforts, supplying bulk compost, supporting cooling initiatives like Cool the City, and offering training for community groups.

PRCF is also building capacity through new programs like **Fruit Tree Stewards**, which trains volunteers to care for and harvest fruit trees. Produce can then flow into food justice partnerships—feeding community kitchens, supporting jam-making programs, or strengthening neighborhood events. Annual training for garden stewards is also being developed, ensuring residents have the skills to manage and sustain gardens well into the future.

### What's Next?

The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF) is advancing a comprehensive urban agriculture strategy through *Richmond INSPIRE*. These efforts are transforming how Richmonders engage with public spaces—supporting food security, environmental stewardship, and community empowerment.



## STRATEGY 13.1

# Guarantee fresh produce access citywide through sustainable, park-based urban agriculture.

## Support Urban Agriculture

Richmond's urban agriculture network has become a foundation for community resilience, self-determination, and health equity. But its reach remains limited. Strategy 13.1 aims to transform urban agriculture from a patchwork of individual gardens into a citywide system that connects growing, processing, and sharing food across public spaces. This shift requires new policies, deeper partnerships, and expanded infrastructure that reflect the realities of food insecurity and the creativity of Richmond's gardeners.

This strategy positions PRCF sites—parks, community centers, and underused public land—as places where residents not only grow food, but access it. Community pantries, produce stands, and market gardens can serve as vital links in a more localized and just food system. Kitchens at new

community centers can support cooking, preservation, and food education—extending the impact of gardens from planting through food preparation.

To sustain this work, PRCF must support both the physical and social infrastructure of urban agriculture. That means investing in staff, volunteers, and training programs that build community leadership and technical expertise. It also means creating formal systems for fruit tree stewardship, defining pathways for produce distribution, and removing legal barriers to selling and sharing what residents grow.

Urban agriculture in Richmond already reflects generations of cultural knowledge, land care, and mutual aid. Strategy 13.1 strengthens and scales that foundation—ensuring that fresh food access is not a privilege, but is available to all communities.

“Let’s create community garden spaces in public parks! With food prices going up, having access to fresh seasonal food would make a huge difference for local communities.”

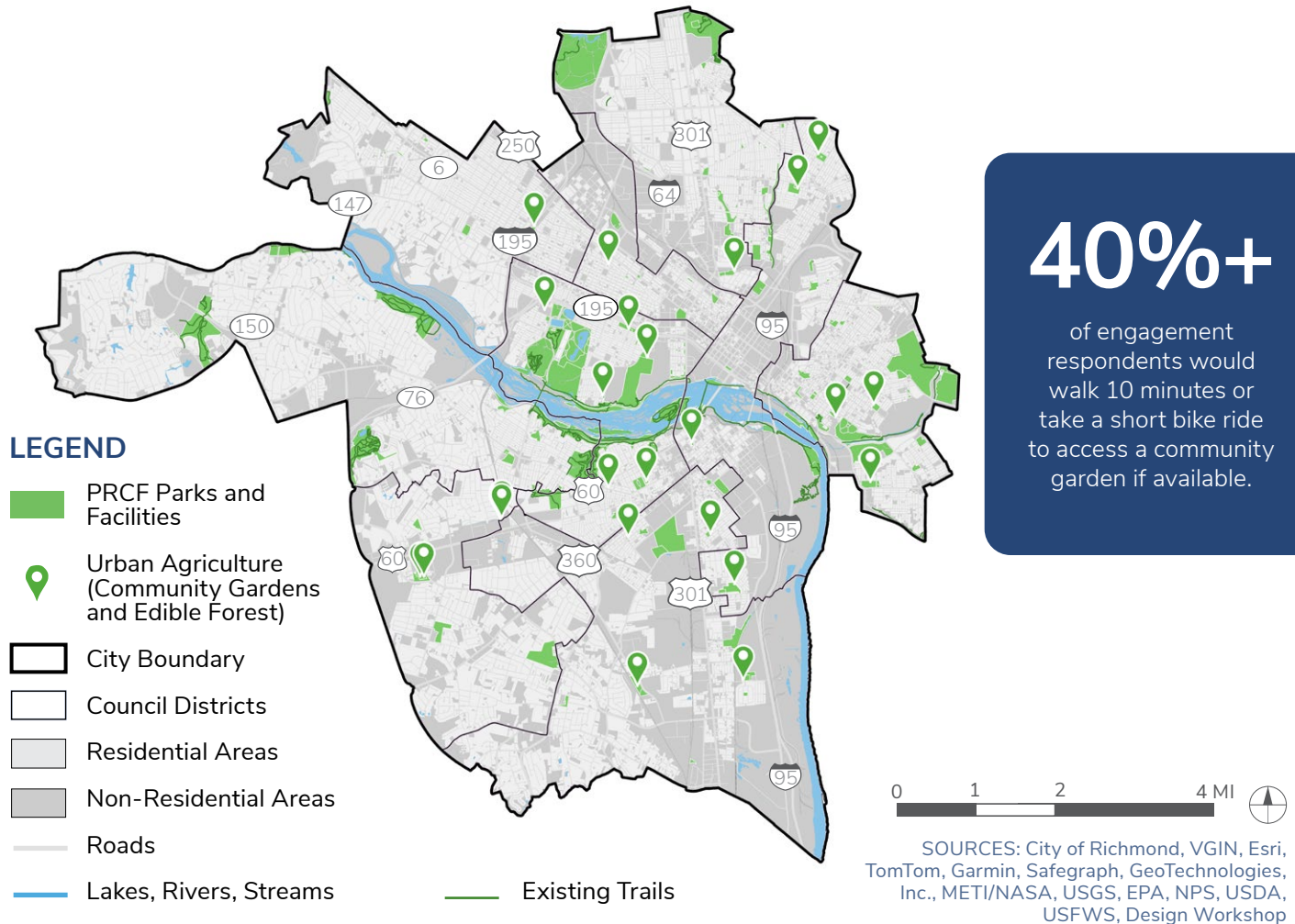
*Anonymous Richmond  
INSPIRE Engagement  
Response*



## HOW STRATEGY 13.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Driving Principle  | Related Strategy      | Start Time | Partners                                               | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13.1.a | Identify changes needed in the community garden ordinances for sale of produce grown in community gardens.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Community          | 13.1                  | Short-term | PDR                                                    |    |
| 13.1.b | Explore partnerships to create new opportunities for growing, processing, and distributing produce grown on PRCF sites to Richmond Public Schools.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Community, Quality | 11.2, 13.1            | Short-term | RPS                                                    |    |
| 13.1.c | Expand access to fresh food, community pantries, and farmers' markets at PRCF sites and facilities, particularly in low-income areas and areas with poor access to fresh food. Define processes for using PRCF sites to sell and distribute fresh produce and food.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Community, Equity  | 6.2, 13.1             | Mid-term   | OOS                                                    |    |
| 13.1.d | Expand the Richmond Grows Gardens urban agriculture program. Through the expansion, partner with food justice community organizations and include an apprenticeship training program. Increase funding for additional staffing, maintenance, and materials. Encourage non-edible species to be native plants. Create staff-and-volunteer working groups charged with overseeing different areas of urban agricultural expertise, to support program growth and to build community capacity. | Community, Quality | 9.1, 10.1, 11.2, 13.1 | Mid-term   | Federal Foods Program, Richmond City Health Department |    |
| 13.1.e | Pilot inclusion of edible fruiting trees and shrubs in park landscapes, from inclusion of fruit and nut trees in tree plantings to installing orchards. Include the Fruit Tree Stewards program to assist.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Community, Quality | 9.1, 13.1             | Mid-term   |                                                        |  |
| 13.1.f | Establish a Fruit Tree Steward program with trained PRCF staff and community volunteers to maintain fruit and nut trees and to organize the harvest and processing of fruit to support food access initiatives and distribution.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Community, Quality | 10.1, 11.2, 13.1      | Mid-term   |                                                        |  |
| 13.1.g | Update the Richmond Grows Gardens Community Garden Handbook to include best practices for garden design, volunteer garden funding opportunities, policies for market stands, and methods for the sale and donation of produce grown.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Community, Quality | 9.1, 13.1             | Mid-term   | Richmond Grows, Bee City USA Richmond                  |  |

## MAP 22: URBAN AGRICULTURE



### HOW STRATEGY 13.1 MOVES FORWARD

| Action Items                                                                                                                                        | Driving Principle  | Related Strategy | Start Time | Partners | Type |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------|----------|------|
| 13.1.h Create opportunities for funding technical support, tools, and processes for all of Richmonds residents to participate in urban agriculture. | Community, Quality | 11.2, 11.3, 13.1 | Long-term  | OOS      |      |
| 13.1.i Transfer city-owned community gardens to PRCF to allow for consistent oversight.                                                             | Community          | 13.1             | Short-term | PDR      |      |





Learning how to prepare food at Southside Community Center's Teaching Kitchen



Mediator Program with RPD teaching how to garden and grow food



PRCF's Federal Foods program provides meals to children



## BIG MOVE #14

# Community Resilience Hubs



## Community Resilience Today

PRCF community centers have long served as vital neighborhood anchors—places where residents of all ages gather to learn, play, celebrate, and find support. These spaces host afterschool programs, fitness classes, cultural performances, community meals, teen lounges, and everyday social connection. Many sites also offer gardens, homework help, and partner services such as job training or health screenings. Community members rely on these centers not only for recreation, but for care, stability, and belonging.

As Richmond addresses both long-standing social inequities and the increasing impacts of climate change, community centers must evolve to meet a broader set of needs. When designed with intention, these spaces can operate as Community Resilience Hubs—multifunctional public facilities that support residents year-round and provide critical infrastructure during emergencies. A resilience-focused center can offer power, cooling, communications, and shelter during disruptions, while continuing to provide

culturally relevant programs, access to food and services, and intergenerational gathering space throughout the year.

The Resilience Hub model, developed by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network, calls for facilities that support residents before, during, and after disruptions—strengthening local capacity while reducing vulnerability. This model blends physical upgrades such as generators and water access with community-focused elements like kitchen spaces, education programs, and the celebration of cultural identity. Resilience Hubs create opportunities for neighbors to connect, share resources, and maintain continuity in times of crisis and calm alike.

PRCF has already begun putting this model into action. Three new community centers currently in development include features such as health clinics, commercial-grade kitchens, teen and homework spaces, gardens, community lounges, showers, and emergency backup power. These facilities are designed to host both everyday programming

and citywide response operations. More importantly, they reflect a vision of resilience rooted in community life—spaces that nourish physical health, cultural expression, and local leadership.







The community game room at Randolph Community Center

## Strategies

PRCF has already taken major steps toward making new community centers more resilient, inclusive, and multifunctional. But transforming the full system into Community Resilience Hubs will require significant investment, coordination, and long-term planning. These steps include assessing existing buildings for needed upgrades, designating which centers are official Resilience Hubs within the PRCF system, and expanding programming that supports

environmental, physical, and social resilience. Additional actions call for improved staff training, clearer roles in emergency preparedness, and regional coordination to align with best practices and other City departments.

The following strategy outlines a path toward achieving this vision. Strategy 14.1 calls for every PRCF community center to operate as a Community Resilience Hub—with the infrastructure and programming needed to support residents in both crisis and calm. By investing in key upgrades—

such as cooling systems, emergency backup power, water access, and internet—Richmond can ensure that every neighborhood has a place to turn when conditions are hardest, while also strengthening daily connections through learning, wellness, and cultural programming.

| STRATEGIES                                                                                                                                                    | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 14.1 Make every PRCF community center a Community Resilience Hub, with physical assets and programming that promote social and physical community resilience. | 236  |



BIG MOVE #14

# Community Resilience Hubs



A Closer Look at Richmond's Active Initiatives

## ARPA Community Centers

4

Major Community Center  
Projects

\$70

Million in APRA  
funding

New Lucks Field  
Community Center  
under construction in  
Spring 2025, and view  
from future rooftop  
basketball court to  
Downtown (top).



### New Generation of Centers

As part of its bold commitment to equity, health, and climate resilience, the City of Richmond's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF) is transforming how public spaces serve residents—both every day and in times of crisis. With nearly \$70 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, PRCF is renovating and constructing community centers in historically under-resourced neighborhoods, creating a new generation of *Community Resilience Hubs*

### ARPA Centers

These new and upgraded centers—Southside, TB Smith, Luck's Field, and Calhoun—are intentionally located in communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Each facility is designed to meet everyday recreational and wellness needs while doubling as critical infrastructure during climate or public health emergencies. Equipped with backup generators, showers, and operational partnerships with the Richmond Henrico Health District (RHHD), these hubs are ready to provide power, sanitation, testing, vaccinations, and essential support in future emergencies.

- » **Southside Community Center** (9th District) is a flagship model of this dual-purpose approach. It combines renovation with a new build to include two full-size gyms, a boxing gym, the region's largest indoor playground, an indoor walking track, skate park, a teaching kitchen, and a large community garden with a fruit tree orchard. These features support physical activity, social connection, and food access—core components of community resilience.

- » **TB Smith Community Center** (8th District), co-designed with residents from the Davee Gardens neighborhood, reflects the vision of its community. It includes dedicated spaces for teens and seniors, a teaching kitchen, new sports fields, a splash pad, and an indoor walking track. These amenities foster intergenerational engagement and build neighborhood health and cohesion.
- » **Luck's Field Community Center** (7th District) was also shaped through extensive community engagement. Its standout features include a rooftop basketball court and community garden, media center for teens, a teaching kitchen, a gymnasium, indoor walking track, and RHHD office suite. These investments create a welcoming space for recreation, learning, and health access under one roof.
- » **Calhoun Community Center** (3rd District), currently transitioning from the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority to PRCF, will undergo a comprehensive renovation. Planned improvements include a restored indoor pool, updated gymnasium, community meeting rooms, and office space for nonprofit and health district partners. This transformation will reinvigorate a vital civic asset.

Beyond their immediate services, these community centers are envisioned as anchors of long-term resilience and opportunity. They will incorporate energy-efficient systems and green infrastructure, such as stormwater best management practices (BMPs), while cultivating partnerships that bring programs, jobs, and healing into public space.

### What's Next?

Each center reflects a community-driven process and a shared belief: public spaces should be responsive, inclusive, and transformative. These hubs aren't just buildings—they are lifelines, learning centers, gathering places, and beacons of possibility.

By aligning emergency preparedness, everyday wellness, and environmental sustainability, PRCF's Community Resilience Hubs exemplify the Richmond INSPIRE Parks Master Plan's aspirational goals. They are models for how public investment can restore trust, empower neighborhoods, and prepare Richmond for a more resilient and equitable future.



## STRATEGY 14.1

# Make every PRCF community center a Community Resilience Hub, with physical assets and programming that promote social and physical community resilience.

## Create Community Resilience

Richmond's community centers already serve as hubs of neighborhood life—offering public programs, social connection, and access to essential resources. Strategy 14.1 takes the next step by intentionally shaping these facilities into Community Resilience Hubs: trusted, well-equipped spaces that support residents through everyday challenges and especially during times of disruption.

This strategy calls for a citywide transformation of PRCF community centers. PRCF will conduct a comprehensive assessment of all existing facilities to determine the physical, environmental, and social upgrades needed for each center to function as a Resilience Hub. Based on these findings, the department will designate official hub locations and implement infrastructure improvements such as emergency power, internet access, and cooling systems—prioritizing investments in

communities most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Resilience Hubs are not just defined by physical assets—they rely equally on people, programs, and relationships. This strategy expands tailored programming that strengthens health, social ties, and environmental awareness, and ensures it reflects the needs and culture of each neighborhood. Staff will receive training in outreach, engagement, and emergency preparedness, with the authority and flexibility to adapt programming over time. PRCF will also work with other City departments to define its role in coordinated response efforts and ensure clear protocols are in place to serve the community.

A citywide map of community centers overlaid with Urban Heat Island data can serve as a valuable tool to identify geographic gaps in access to Resilience Hubs and guide future siting decisions. By formalizing this model and investing in

both infrastructure and human capacity, Strategy 14.1 ensures that every PRCF community center remains a source of safety, stability, and connection—no matter the conditions outside.

### DEEPER DIVE



[Review the Urban Sustainability Directors Network Guide to Developing Resilience Hubs \[external link\].](#)



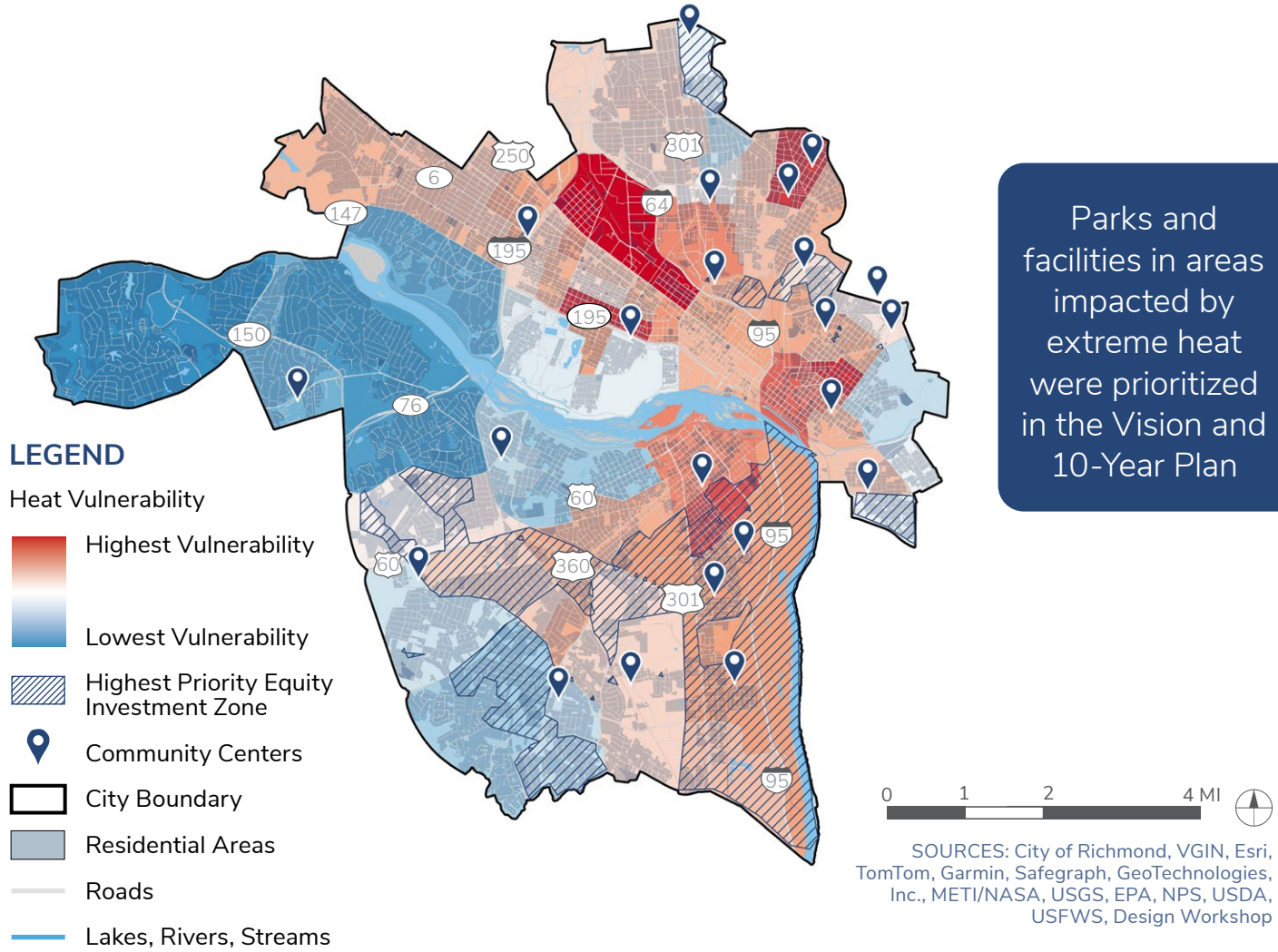


Double Dutch outside Hotchkiss Field Community Center

## HOW STRATEGY 14.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Driving Principle                    | Related Strategy                                                 | Start Time | Partners | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14.1.a | Conduct a functionality assessment of existing community centers to identify improvements needed to function as “Community Resilience Hubs”, consider energy, environment, and social improvements. Implement recommendations of the assessment.                                                                                                                  | Community                            | 14.1                                                             | Short-term |          |    |
| 14.1.b | Build on current PRCF community center design to officially designate certain PRCF community centers into ‘Community Resilience Hubs’ that promote social and physical community resilience through tailored programming, events, and facilities, including infrastructure to operate during emergencies. Create Emergency Action Plans for compliant facilities. | Community, Welcome, Enviro., Quality | 3.1, 5.2, 6.2, 7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2, 13.1, 14.1 | Short-term | OOS      |  |
| 14.1.c | Develop strategic programming that ties into Community Resilience Hubs. The programming should support social, physical, community, and environmental resilience and should reflect the community context.                                                                                                                                                        | Community                            | 12.1, 14.1                                                       | Short-term |          |  |
| 14.1.d | Train community center staff in community outreach and engagement. Empower staff to adapt programming to meet evolving community needs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Community, Quality                   | 10.1, 14.1                                                       | Short-term | DNCS     |  |

## MAP 23: COMMUNITY CENTERS WITH URBAN HEAT ISLAND





## HOW STRATEGY 14.1 MOVES FORWARD

|        | Action Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Driving Principle                   | Related Strategy    | Start Time | Partners                                               | Type                                                                                  |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 14.1.e | Offer free community internet access at all PRCF community facilities and at all developed park sites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Community                           | 14.1                | Long-term  |                                                        |    |
| 14.1.f | Expand digital sign-in to all sites and community centers to reduce entry time, allow for simpler access, and to allow for visitation reporting.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Access, Community                   | 14.1                | Mid-term   |                                                        |    |
| 14.1.g | Develop a PRCF Cooling Study and Action Plan to make PRCF parks and community facilities places of refuge in the midst of rising temperatures, through features such as pools, and splash pads. Focus investments in communities with fewest resources that are most affected by the Urban Heat Island effect and OOS Climate Equity Index. Partner with OOS to leverage existing opportunities. | Community, Welcome, Equity, Enviro. | 4.2, 6.2, 7.1, 14.1 | Short-term | OOS                                                    |    |
| 14.1.h | In coordination with other City departments, clarify PRCF's emergency preparedness role and ensure a highly effective and coordinated response.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Community, Quality                  | 11.1, 14.1          | Short-term | OEM, OS, Virginia Department of Emergency Management   |  |
| 14.1.i | Train Community Resilience Hubs staff in emergency preparedness and emergency shelter operations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Community, Quality                  | 10.1, 14.1          | Short-term |                                                        |  |
| 14.1.j | Join an emergency preparedness regional working group to understand regional best practices and demonstrate how PRCF can contribute. Reflect the best practices in community resilience hub operations and coordination (See Implementation H).                                                                                                                                                  | Community                           | 14.1                | Short-term |                                                        |  |
| 14.1.k | Work with disaster relief agencies to designate Community Resilience Hubs as emergency shelters and continue to improve future center designs to better accommodate the infrastructure needed to support in emergencies.                                                                                                                                                                         | Community                           | 14.1                | Mid-term   | Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Red Cross |  |

10



# IMPLEMENTATION

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- Operational Playbook
- Budget and Staffing
- Funding Strategies
- CAPRA Checklist
- Site Design Standards



## Introduction

*Richmond INSPIRE* captures the community's ambitious long-term vision for parks and recreation in Richmond. So how do the City and the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (PRCF) get started? What needs to happen in the next 10 years? What must happen first?

In the same way that the 10-Year Project Map offers the near-term to-do list for *Richmond INSPIRE*'s capital projects, the Implementation chapter offers the organizational and operational to-do list—those things that PRCF and its partners should seek to accomplish during the next 10 years, when these outcomes should be completed, and who's in charge.

## Operational Playbook

The following pages translate the *Richmond INSPIRE* Action Items—organized in previous chapters by community-driven plan principles—into specific target outcomes for PRCF and its City and external partners.

Each table represents a different kind of outcome, organized by PRCF area of expertise, and sorted by timeline. Each outcome is supported by at least one *Richmond INSPIRE* Action Item.

Combined, these tables offer PRCF a high-level operational playbook for plan implementation.

### New Plans and Studies

*Richmond INSPIRE* offers a system-level view of PRCF sites, facilities, programming, and operations; additional data and more detailed review are needed to inform implementation of many of the plan's Action Items.

Table 9 lists the 25 additional PRCF plans and studies called for by *Richmond INSPIRE*. Many of these plans can be completed by PRCF staff, and others can be contracted out. These efforts will build on the momentum of *Richmond INSPIRE*, guide the important finer details of plan implementation, and lay the groundwork for an even stronger, more sustainable, and more effective PRCF.

### New PRCF Positions

*Richmond INSPIRE* recommends 10 new PRCF positions that are needed to address operational inefficiencies identified by staff, meet public demand for new or improved programming, and improve customer service.

The specific positions in Table 10 are recommended to fill current observed operational gaps. The Budget and Staffing section later in this chapter addresses the need for PRCF to continually assess its overall staffing levels and to make the case for new FTEs to support a growing and evolving system.

**Table 9: Richmond INSPIRE New Plans and Studies**

| OUTCOME                                                                                   | TIMING     |          |         | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                           | Short Term | Mid Term | Ongoing |                       |
| Administration                                                                            |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Organizational Chart                                        | ●          |          |         | 10.1.b                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF-DPW Operational Review and Action Plan                      | ●          |          |         | 9.2.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Staffing Manual Update                                      |            | ●        |         | 10.1.a                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Funding Study                                               | ●          |          |         | 11.3.d                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Strategic Plan                                              | ●          |          |         | 5.3.c                 |
| Facilities and Planning                                                                   |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Park and Community Facility Design Guidelines               | ●          |          |         | 9.1.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Universal and Inclusive Design Audit and Action Plan        | ●          |          |         | 3.1.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Park Activation Audit and Action Plan                       | ●          |          |         | 3.1.c                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Park and Recreation Access Community Audits                 | ●          |          |         | 2.1.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Community Resilience Hub Study and Action Plan              | ●          |          |         | 14.1.a                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Cooling Study and Action Plan                               | ●          |          |         | 14.1.g                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Park Shade Audit and Action Plan                            | ●          |          |         | 7.1.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Public Restroom Strategy                                    | ●          |          |         | 3.1.f                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Engagement Best Practices                              | ●          |          |         | 5.2.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Historic Preservation Action Plan                           |            | ●        |         | 9.1.j                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Update to Richmond Grows Gardens Handbook                        |            | ●        |         | 13.1.g                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Site Emergency Action Plans                                 |            | ●        |         | 14.1.b                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Phase I Environmental Site Assessments                           |            |          | ●       | 1.4.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF New Park and Facility Operation Plans                       |            |          | ●       | 9.2.a                 |
| Operations and Maintenance                                                                |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Stormwater BMP Inventory and Maintenance Plans              | ●          |          |         | 7.1.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual | ●          |          |         | 9.1.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Staff Facility Audit and Action Plan                        | ●          |          |         | 10.2.a, 10.2.d        |
| Recreation and Programming                                                                |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Program Plan                                                | ●          |          |         | 12.1.d                |
| Marketing and Communications                                                              |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Branding, Communications and Signage Strategy               | ●          |          |         | 3.2.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF 'Green' Design Transition Annual Reports                    |            |          | ●       | 7.1.g                 |
| Arts and Culture                                                                          |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Public Art Plan                                             |            | ●        |         | 4.1.c                 |

**Table 10: Richmond INSPIRE New PRCF Positions**

| OUTCOME                                               | TIMING     |          |         | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|
|                                                       | Short Term | Mid Term | Ongoing |                       |
| Administration                                        |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology       | ●          |          |         | 10.2.b, 10.1.g        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resources              | ●          |          |         | 10.1.g                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and Communications | ●          |          |         | 3.2.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Procurement                  | ●          |          |         | 10.1.g                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management              | ●          |          |         | 10.1.g                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grantwriter                  | ●          |          |         | 11.3.c                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Programming Coordinator      | ●          |          |         | 12.2.b                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Events Coordinator   | ●          |          |         | 12.3.a                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts and Culture Coordinator | ●          |          |         | 4.3.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horticulturist               |            | ●        |         | 8.2.g                 |

### New Processes and Policies

Richmond INSPIRE recommends 17 new or improved departmental processes or policies needed for plan implementation. Some of these processes and policies stem from new plans listed in Table 9; others are standalone PRCF or intradepartmental efforts.

Either way, PRCF should assign at least one point person to oversee development and track the progress of these new processes and policies, listed in Table 11.

### New Projects and Programs

Richmond INSPIRE recommends 11 new projects and programs to jumpstart plan implementation and to make a wide range of PRCF programming more accessible in the near term to Richmonders of diverse interests, abilities, and backgrounds.

The specific projects and programs listed in Table 12 are based on staff, stakeholder, and community feedback shared during the *Richmond INSPIRE* engagement process. Future and continuous fine-tuning of PRCF programs will be driven by new five-year community surveys and by the new PRCF processes for program proposal and evaluation.

**Table 11: Richmond INSPIRE New Processes and Policies**

| OUTCOME                                                                                                       | TIMING     |          |         | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                                               | Short Term | Mid Term | Ongoing |                       |
| Administration                                                                                                |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved Hiring Policies                                                             | ●          |          |         | 10.1.h                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved Staff Professional Growth and Goal Setting                                  | ●          |          |         | 10.1.d                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City and PRCF Policies for Temporary and Internal Staff Promotion and Training       |            | ●        |         | 10.1.k, 10.1.l        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRCF Succession Planning                                                             |            | ●        |         | 10.1.c                |
| Facilities and Planning                                                                                       |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pilot Innovative Park Development Strategies in Equity Investment Zones              | ●          |          |         | 1.1.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Create an Internal System to Pilot Design Solutions                                  | ●          |          |         | 1.2.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Update Memorandum of Agreement between PRCF and RPS                                  | ●          |          |         | 1.3.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City of Richmond Equity Scorecard                                                    |            | ●        |         | 6.1.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five-Year Updates to PRCF Project Prioritization Methodology                         |            |          | ●       | 5.1.c                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Goals and Metrics for New Design and Planning Projects                               |            |          | ●       | 6.2.a                 |
| Operations and Maintenance                                                                                    |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Total Asset Management System Integration                                            | ●          |          |         | 11.1.a                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Routine Equity-focused Maintenance Service Audits                                    | ●          |          |         | 5.3.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park and Facility Design Intent Plans                                                |            |          | ●       | 5.2.b                 |
| Recreation and Programming                                                                                    |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved Program Proposal, Implementation, and Evaluation Systems                    |            | ●        |         | 12.1.d                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved Program Registration and Payment Systems                                    |            | ●        |         | 12.1.a                |
| Marketing and Communications                                                                                  |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Five-Year Citywide Park and Recreation Survey                                        |            |          | ●       | 12.1.b                |
| Arts and Culture                                                                                              |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Improved Processes for Access to PRCF Sites for Art, Entertainment, and Performances | ●          |          |         | 4.3.b                 |
| Resilience and Sustainability                                                                                 |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in City Climate Vulnerability and Risk Assessment                      |            | ●        |         | 7.2.f                 |



**Table 12: Richmond INSPIRE New Projects and Programs**

| OUTCOME                                                                                             | TIMING     |          |         | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                                     | Short Term | Mid Term | Ongoing |                       |
| Administration                                                                                      |            |          |         |                       |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Junior Park Rangers Program                                     | ●          |          |         | 3.1.g                 |
| Facilities and Planning                                                                             |            |          |         |                       |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Pilot Program for Temporary Park Activation                     | ●          |          |         | 3.1.b                 |
| Recreation and Programming                                                                          |            |          |         |                       |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> PRCF Community Center Open Houses                               | ●          |          |         | 5.2.d                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> New James River Park System Programming                         | ●          |          |         | 3.3.c                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Introductory Programming for PRCF Facilities and Healthy Habits | ●          |          |         | 3.2.f                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Urban Wood Programming                                          |            | ●        |         | 7.1.i                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Ridesharing Program to Parks and Programs                       |            | ●        |         | 2.1.d                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Fruit Tree Steward Program                                      |            | ●        |         | 13.1.f                |
| Arts and Culture                                                                                    |            |          |         |                       |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Public Art, Maker Spaces and Rotating Galleries                 | ●          |          |         | 4.3.c                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Artist and Cultural Organization Residency Program              | ●          |          |         | 4.3.a                 |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Oral History Project                                            |            | ●        |         | 4.2.d                 |
| Resilience and Sustainability                                                                       |            |          |         |                       |
| <div><input type="checkbox"/></div> Community Resilience Hub Programming                            | ●          |          |         | 14.1.c                |

## New Equipment and Technology

Richmond INSPIRE recommends seven new investments in software programs and technology and equipment upgrades, listed in Table 13, to improve PRCF's operational efficiency and customer service.

New software, to be vetted and purchased in consultation with other City departments, includes a central asset management program that will allow PRCF

to track work orders and maintenance schedules alongside data about the age, condition, and lifecycle of all PRCF assets and equipment. This type of program will make PRCF's operations and maintenance teams more efficient and more responsive to community requests, and it will allow the department to make a stronger case for future staffing and capital investments.

Similarly, new software to integrate PRCF recreation facility

**Table 13: Richmond INSPIRE New Equipment and Technology**

| OUTCOME                                                                                      | TIMING     |          |         | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                              | Short Term | Mid Term | Ongoing |                       |
| Facilities and Planning                                                                      |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Systemwide Public Internet Access</u>                            |            |          | ●       | 14.1.e                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Staff Technology Upgrades</u>                                    |            | ●        |         | 10.2.a                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Aggregate Visitor Data Program</u>                               |            |          | ●       | 10.2.g                |
| Operations and Maintenance                                                                   |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Total Asset Management and Work Order Software</u>               | ●          |          |         | 11.1.d                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Maintenance Equipment Upgrades</u>                               |            | ●        |         | 10.2.a                |
| Recreation and Programming                                                                   |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Recreation Scheduling, Registration and Maintenance Software</u> |            | ●        |         | 11.1.c, 10.2.c        |
| Marketing and Communications                                                                 |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>PRCF Website Update</u>                                          | ●          |          |         | 3.2.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Unified Portal and Calendar</u>                                  |            |          |         | 3.2.e                 |

scheduling, program registration, and maintenance tasks will improve internal and partner coordination and efficiency. Additionally, the application of new softwares will also make it much easier for Richmond residents to learn about and make use of PRCF's recreation facilities and programs.

Other specific technology and necessary equipment upgrades will be identified following PRCF's assessment of staff facilities and equipment.

## New Staff Training Series

Richmond INSPIRE recommends 13 new PRCF staff training series. This is in recognition

of the diversity of PRCF's operational and maintenance portfolio and in keeping with the department's focus on cultivating PRCF staff as the stewards, experts, and future leaders of the system.

Some of these training series, listed in Table 14, should be developed and offered with other City departments and external partners. Staff training series should be continuously evaluated to ensure they are meeting system needs, improving the quality of department operations and customer service, and helping staff grow within their roles and the department.

## DEEPER DIVE



Appendix B: The State of Richmond's Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

**Table 14: Richmond INSPIRE New Staff Training Series**

| OUTCOME                                                                             | TIMING     |          |         | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------|---------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                     | Short Term | Mid Term | Ongoing |                       |
| Administration                                                                      |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>PRCF Internal Job Shadow Program</u>                    |            | ●        |         | 10.1.e                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Professional Growth and Advancement Pathways</u>        | ●          |          |         | 10.1.b                |
| Operations and Maintenance                                                          |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Green Stormwater Infrastructure</u>                     | ●          |          |         | 8.2.c                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Urban Forestry</u>                                      | ●          |          |         | 8.2.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Sustainable Lawns and Gardens</u>                       | ●          |          |         | 8.2.g                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Natural Resource Management</u>                         | ●          |          |         | 10.1.f                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Irrigation</u>                                          |            | ●        |         | 10.1.f                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Historical Resource Stewardship</u>                     |            | ●        |         | 10.1.f                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>New Department Technologies—Total Asset Management</u>  |            | ●        |         | 11.1.b                |
| Recreation and Programming                                                          |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>New Department Technologies—Recreation and Programs</u> |            | ●        |         | 11.1.c                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Community Engagement</u>                                |            | ●        |         | 14.1.d                |
| Resilience and Sustainability                                                       |            |          |         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Emergency Preparedness</u>                              |            | ●        |         | 10.1.m                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Urban Agriculture and Food Forests</u>                  |            | ●        |         | 13.1.f                |

## New External Coordination

Implementation of Richmond INSPIRE will require a new level of coordination between PRCF and other City departments. Table 15 lists the specific external plans, working groups, and staff liaison roles in need of a PRCF staff point person for smooth operations.

Strengthening coordination with departments responsible for infrastructure, operations, maintenance, and emergency response will help integrate parks and recreation into broader citywide planning and reinforce PRCF's role as an essential public service.

**Table 15: Richmond INSPIRE New External Coordination**

| OUTCOME                                                                                             | ACTION ITEM REFERENCE |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>External Plans and Studies</b>                                                                   |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Parklet Guidelines and Standards</u>                   | 1.3.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Historic Resource Inventory and Best Use Study</u>     | 4.2.c                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Update to Richmond Riverfront Plan and James River Park Master Plan</u> | 7.4.g                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Historic Canal Maintenance and Activation Plan</u>     | 7.4.d                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Cemetery Preservation Study and Action Plan</u>        | 9.1.f                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Stream Daylighting and Feasibility Study</u>           | 7.4.c                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Parkland Real Estate Strategy</u>                      | 1.1.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City of Richmond Vacant Property Temporary Activation Toolkit</u>       | 1.3.c                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Monument Avenue Collective Vision and Long-term Plan</u>                | 1.3.g                 |
| <b>Collaborative Working Groups</b>                                                                 |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Total Asset Management</u>                                              | 11.1.a                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Park Safety Strategies</u>                                              | 3.1.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Review of City-Owned Land</u>                                           | 1.3.b                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Regional Open Space Coordination</u>                                    | 8.2.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>City Capital Improvement Project Coordination</u>                       | 1.3.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Anti-Displacement Strategies</u>                                        | 6.1.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Rail-to-Trail and Rail-with-Trail Strategies</u>                        | 2.2.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Community Engagement Strategies</u>                                     | 5.2.a                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Marketing and Communications Strategies</u>                             | 12.1.c                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Bike Safety and Ridership Strategies</u>                                | 2.1.e                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Emergency Preparedness</u>                                              | 10.1.m                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Natural Springs Restoration</u>                                         | 7.4.f                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Urban Agriculture Strategies</u>                                        | 13.1.d                |
| <b>Departmental Liaison</b>                                                                         |                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning and Development Review                                            | --                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office of Sustainability                                                   | --                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office of Strategic Communications and Civic Engagement                    | --                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Richmond Economic Development                                              | --                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority                               | --                    |



# Budget and Staffing

## Keeping Pace with Growth

PRCF’s budgets and staffing will need to grow and evolve during the next 10 years to keep pace with the growth recommended by *Richmond INSPIRE* and ensure the city’s parks, community centers, open spaces, and greenways are well-maintained over time.

## PRCF Staffing and Operating Budgets

Based on the City’s adopted FY25 budget, PRCF’s current staffing level and operating budget are in

line with or even higher than peer-city and national median figures.

However, support for PRCF will need to grow steadily during the next 10 years to accommodate a growing parks system and the need to serve Richmond’s rapidly growing population.

Table 16 uses population-based metrics to calculate the target operating budget and staffing figures for PRCF in 10 years based on national median statistics. This is an order-of-magnitude target recommendation; staffing and budget figures will be annually reviewed and updated to reflect

observed needs, the evolving organization of PRCF, the actual growth of the system, and data captured through PRCF’s new asset management and recreation programming systems.

## PRCF Capital Budgets

Every year the City of Richmond approves an annual capital budget and five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for significant physical improvements—such as community centers, greenways, swimming pools, and playgrounds—generally defined as having a useful life of 10 years or longer.

**Table 16:** Existing and Target PRCF Acreage, Staffing, and Operating Budget

|                                     | TOTAL                  | TARGET METRIC TO MATCH NATIONAL MEDIAN      |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Total System Acreage</b>         |                        |                                             |
| Existing                            | 2,769                  |                                             |
| 10-Year Target                      | 4,200                  | 14.0 acres per 1,000 residents <sup>1</sup> |
| Change                              | + 1,431 acres          |                                             |
| <b>Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)</b> |                        |                                             |
| Existing                            | 230                    |                                             |
| 10-Year Target                      | 300                    | 10.0 FTEs per 10,000 residents <sup>2</sup> |
| Change                              | + 70 FTEs              |                                             |
| <b>Annual Operating Budget</b>      |                        |                                             |
| Existing                            | \$34,519,697           |                                             |
| 10-Year Target                      | \$45,174,000           | \$150.58 per resident <sup>3</sup>          |
| Change                              | + \$1,065,430 per year |                                             |

1 TPL ParkScore National Median, 2025  
2 Metric to maintain current population-based staffing level for a projected 2037 population of 300,000 (Richmond 300)  
3 Metric to maintain current population-based spending level for a projected 2037 population of 300,000 (Richmond 300)

Table 17 shows the 10-year history of CIP support for parks and recreation. Historically annual capital support was relatively low compared to peer cities—Richmond’s five-year park and recreation capital spending was \$20.0 million from FY16 to FY20, compared to national median five-year capital budgets from the 2025 National Park and Recreation Association agency survey of \$25.6 million for agencies serving jurisdictions with 100,000 to 250,000 residents, and \$50.2 million in jurisdictions with 250,000 to 500,000 residents.

From FY21 to FY25 the City of Richmond’s capital spending on parks and recreation more than quadrupled to \$113.6 million, as

shown in Table 18. This was due in part to the City’s commitment of \$73.5 million of its post-pandemic federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to PRCF projects, particularly community centers. However, the City’s capital spending on parks and recreation in FY21-FY25 was \$38.6 million even without the ARPA funds, almost double the sum of the previous five fiscal years and solidly in line with national capital spending.

Park, recreation, greenway, and community facility capital projects proposed in the *Richmond INSPIRE 10-Year Project Map* (Table 19) have an order-of-magnitude anticipated cost of \$486 million—or capital costs in 2025 dollars of \$48.6 million per

year for the next 10 years. This represents a significant increase in park and recreation capital spending in Richmond, which is appropriate given the scope of the community’s vision for *Richmond INSPIRE*—including 10-minute park access for all residents, expansion of the citywide greenway and open space system, expanded programming, improvements for existing facilities, and catching up on more than \$75 million in needed deferred maintenance.

**Table 17:** City of Richmond Capital Budget Support for Parks and Recreation, FY16-25

| FISCAL YEAR | ADOPTED CAPITAL SPENDING FOR PARKS AND RECREATION |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 2016        | \$4,415,000.00                                    |
| 2017        | \$2,745,650.00                                    |
| 2018        | \$4,706,317.00                                    |
| 2019        | \$4,158,650.00                                    |
| 2020        | \$4,008,650.00                                    |
| 2021        | \$3,448,026.00                                    |
| 2022        | \$4,050,000.00                                    |
| 2023        | \$18,630,000.00                                   |
| 2024        | \$75,169,851.00                                   |
| 2025        | \$12,291,683.00                                   |

# Funding Strategies

The City and its partners must pursue a diverse toolkit of park, recreation, and open space funding strategies and sources in order to implement the full vision of *Richmond INSPIRE*.

Many of the below funding strategies require close collaboration with other departments and with elected

officials. Some also require future study—for example, to fine-tune a bond issuance strategy or to re-establish a park system foundation or conservancy.

All options should be seriously explored to build a strategy for robust and sustainable park and recreation support in Richmond.

**Table 18:** Five-Year Capital Budget Comparisons, National and Richmond

|                                                                     | FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL BUDGETS |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Upper Quartile, Jurisdictions with Population 250k-500k, NRPA, 2025 | \$140,469,346             |
| Lower Quartile, Jurisdictions with Population 250k-500k, NRPA, 2025 | \$20,209,476              |
| Median, Jurisdictions with Population 250k-500k, NRPA, 2025         | \$50,204,958              |
| Richmond Historical, FY16-20                                        | \$20,034,267              |
| Richmond Historical, FY21-25                                        | \$113,589,560             |
| Richmond Proposed, 2027-2032                                        | \$243,026,361             |

**Table 19:** Order-of-Magnitude 10-Year Project Map Costs, 2025 Dollars

| COUNCIL DISTRICT | NEW PARK, COMMUNITY CENTER, AND GREENWAY PROJECTS | EXISTING PARK AND COMMUNITY FACILITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS | 10-YEAR PLAN TOTALS |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1                | \$8,982,900                                       | \$6,766,600                                               | \$15,749,500        |
| 2                | \$37,792,000                                      | \$937,600                                                 | \$38,729,600        |
| 3                | \$28,641,400                                      | \$28,723,700                                              | \$57,365,100        |
| 4                | \$20,555,100                                      | --                                                        | \$20,555,100        |
| 5                | \$21,581,000                                      | \$53,612,500                                              | \$75,193,500        |
| 6                | \$5,529,600                                       | \$17,078,100                                              | \$22,607,700        |
| 7                | \$110,637,500                                     | \$5,634,300                                               | \$116,271,800       |
| 8                | \$86,720,900                                      | \$103,389,600                                             | \$95,055,250        |
| 9                | \$18,869,000                                      | \$36,799,100                                              | \$55,668,100        |

## General Fund Revenue

The City should continue its trend of increased General Fund support to PRCF, with a focus in the near term on addressing systemwide deferred maintenance and making targeted improvements to parks and facilities that are in poor condition and in Equity Investment Zones.

This funding, secured through the annual budgeting process, can provide a bridge toward implementation of the larger 10-year plan—the scope of which will require more significant capital investments, including through potential new bond issuances that will take time to thoroughly evaluate and organize.

## General Obligation Bonds

The City of Richmond can issue bonds to raise significant one-time funds for capital improvements such as those recommended in the *Richmond INSPIRE* 10-Year Project Map. These funds are available in the short term, with costs that are repaid over time and therefore shared by future beneficiaries of the public investments. A bond issuance can be made with a majority vote of the City Council.

This option should be studied to determine the City's bond capacity and to evaluate public and Council support for such a measure. The findings and

recommendations of *Richmond INSPIRE* can lay the groundwork for these discussions and help PRCF and the City advocate for a new parks, recreation, and community facilities bond.

## Earned Revenue

Park and recreation systems can generate earned revenue through concessions, parking fees, user fees, park rentals, and sponsorships or naming rights. According to the 2025 NRPA nationwide agency survey, 20 percent of agencies' annual operating budgets come from earned revenue.

PRCF has a history of providing free community programming. The department currently collects very little earned revenue—\$1.81 per year per resident compared to \$28.63 per year for agencies nationwide—and any fees that it does collect go straight into the City's General Fund.

*Richmond INSPIRE* recommends PRCF pursue the following, which could allow the department to recoup some of its costs while maintaining its commitment to free community programming:

- Revenue generated by PRCF should come back to the department rather than going to the General Fund.
- As part of its Program Plan, PRCF should evaluate its

opportunities for earned revenue and identify specific areas where new or increased fees could support the department's maintenance and capital needs without compromising its mission of providing free programming for the community.

- PRCF should pursue more detailed cost accounting for areas with revenue-generating opportunities, such as community centers, pools, and sports complexes. For those facilities that host programs, this will help PRCF understand its annual investment and earned revenue level.
- Establish a mechanism whereby for-profit groups that use PRCF spaces share a portion of their revenue with PRCF.
- Establish a standard revenue split agreement and process for contracted instructors who charge a fee for classes located at PRCF facilities.

## Economic Development

PRCF should work with Richmond Economic Development to ensure that parks and recreation facilities, greenways, and open space are built or improved as part of larger public-private economic development projects.

Richmond's Special Service and Assessment Districts can also support park and recreation



investments. Property and business owners in these districts pay a special assessment for enhanced services, including placemaking, special events, and the activation, maintenance, and beautification of public spaces, including parks and public plazas.

## Partnerships

PRCF already benefits from strong partnerships with dozens of recreation providers, Friends of Park groups, and other community-based organizations that help care for and activate their local parks and community centers. There are still more public and private entities that wish to host events or programming at Richmond's parks and community centers, which drives *Richmond INSPIRE's* recommendation of additional volunteer and program partnership coordinators to build the department's capacity.

As PRCF continues to grow its partner network, the department should develop a partnership framework that spells out clear roles and expectations for specific partner types. There are many models across the country—and already in Richmond—of park and recreation agencies entering into formal agreements with public and private partners that support systemwide park operations, programming, maintenance, fundraising, and advocacy, including:

- Other private and public park providers that share

operations and maintenance responsibilities.

- Private non-profits that provide programming at City-owned or other city parks.
- Public and private schools, churches, and other entities that can offer public access to park and recreation amenities through local ordinance or through shared-use agreements. There is a particular need in Richmond to reestablish the historically strong relationship between PRCF and Richmond Public Schools.
- Private Friends of Parks groups can raise funds and provide significant ongoing maintenance and support for City-owned parks.
- Non-profit park conservancies can raise funds, manage projects and maintenance, and advocate on behalf of large parks and park systems.
- Public and private utilities and railroads can support greenway development and public access within easement corridors.
- Private conservation non-profits can help negotiate land donations and easements for protected parkland and open space.
- Homeowners associations can allow for the construction and maintenance of public trail facilities on private HOA land, and they can donate such land to the City.

- Private arts organizations can provide grants and operational support for public art creation and conservation and funding for arts programming.
- Private corporations can provide event and facility sponsorship and receive recognition for their support for a defined period of time.
- Private advocacy groups and corporations can support ongoing operations and maintenance through organized volunteer efforts, including Adopt-a-Park or Adopt-a-Greenway programs.

## Zoning Ordinance

*Richmond INSPIRE* recommends that PRCF work with Planning and Development Review to revise the Zoning Ordinance to strengthen private support for new public parks, open space, green infrastructure, recreation, and greenways as part of new development projects. This support can take the form of impact fees, proffers, park dedication ordinances, and fees in lieu of park dedication.

## Federal and State Grant Programs

One-time state and federal grants for parks, open space, community facilities, and greenways can fund significant capital projects or programming initiatives. These grants can be difficult to navigate, requiring the special expertise of a trained grantwriter, which

drives the *Richmond INSPIRE* recommendation of a dedicated PRCF grantwriting position.

The PRCF grantwriter should coordinate closely with the City grants coordinator to review all relevant private and public grant opportunities and to ensure project proposals are submitted that are the best fit for each grant program. These reviews can also help to ensure that the City and PRCF are well-positioned for future grant opportunities; for example, for grant applications that require projects to be shovel- or permit-ready, this review process can identify where investments in a park engagement and design process this year could make a project a strong candidate for that grant application the next year.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Transportation, and Department of Energy Management are the state agencies that manage federal grant programs—such as Land and Water Conservation Fund, Recreational Trails, and Transportation Alternatives—that consistently have been the best fit for funding local park and recreation projects.

These programs do not include other types of public grants—such as for water quality, highway caps, brownfield remediation, green infrastructure, and hazard mitigation—that aren't specifically

for park or recreation projects but could fund significant *Richmond INSPIRE* projects when pursued in coordination with other City departments and partners.

# CAPRA Accreditation

## Example Checklist

As *Richmond INSPIRE* charts the course for the next decade, national best practices offer a benchmark for excellence. The Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) provides one such framework—setting standards

for effective, accountable, and high-performing park systems. The checklist on the following pages is an example outline on how Richmond can use the CAPRA accreditation process as a structured tool for strengthening PRCF’s internal systems,

aligning operations with industry standards, and supporting continuous improvement. While accreditation is not a requirement, pursuing it offers a clear roadmap for the department to for achieve organizational excellence.

Table 20: CAPRA Checklist Example (2025)

| STANDARD                                                                                                       | STANDARD STATUS |                          |                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                                | Meets Standard  | Partially Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard |
| Agency Mission and Purpose                                                                                     |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mission, Vision, and Values                                                           |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Plan                                                                        |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Involvement in Agency Strategic Planning                                    |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Involvement in Agency Strategic Planning                                    |                 |                          |                        |
| Administration and Organizational Resources                                                                    |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advisory Boards and Commissions                                                       |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Services Accessibility Compliance |                 |                          |                        |
| Community and Park Planning                                                                                    |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community and Park Planning Strategy                                                  |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parks and Recreation System Master Plan                                               |                 |                          |                        |
| Human Resources Planning, Workforce Development, and Culture                                                   |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Human Resource Planning, Workforce Development, and Culture                           |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual                                              |                 |                          |                        |
| Financial Management, Responsibility, and Accountability                                                       |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Management, Responsibility and Accountability                               |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal Authority and Fiscal Policy                                                     |                 |                          |                        |

| STANDARD                                                                                                     | STANDARD STATUS |                          |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
|                                                                                                              | Meets Standard  | Partially Meets Standard | Does Not Meet Standard |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehensive Revenue Policy                                                        |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Statements                                                                |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Purchasing Policy                                                                   |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Audit                                                                   |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annual or Biennial Budget                                                           |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Capital Asset Management                                                            |                 |                          |                        |
| <b>Programs and Services Management</b>                                                                      |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Program Responsibility and Accountability                                |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program and Service Determinants (Components)                                       |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Program Plan (RPP)                                                       |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Evaluation - Staff Training & Use in Informing Programmatic Decision Making |                 |                          |                        |
| <b>Facilities and Land Use Management</b>                                                                    |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facility and Land Use Responsibility and Accountability                             |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park and Recreation Land Acquisition and Disposal                                   |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park and Recreation Property Development                                            |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance and Operations Management                                               |                 |                          |                        |
| <b>Law, Risk Management, Safety, and Security</b>                                                            |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management Responsibility and Strategy                                         |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection of the Public's Health, Safety, and Welfare                              |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Security Plan                                                               |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel Safety Training                                                           |                 |                          |                        |
| <b>Marketing, Communications, and Community Engagement</b>                                                   |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing and Communications – external                                             |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Engagement                                                                |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis Communications                                                               |                 |                          |                        |
| <b>Evaluation, Assessment, and Research</b>                                                                  |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Needs Assessment and Trends Analysis                                      |                 |                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Evaluation Program                                                       |                 |                          |                        |



# Site Design Standards

Richmond INSPIRE's

Classification System sets the foundation for how different types of parks and facilities should serve the community. Building on that framework, the Design Standards offer a flexible but focused set of best practices to guide the next generation of parks and recreation projects from improving existing neighborhood parks to designing new community centers.

This chapter outlines core principles that define high-quality, inclusive, and resilient park design in Richmond. PRCF can build on these principles to create comprehensive Design Guidelines as outlined in Strategy 9.1.

To help PRCF, its partners, and community members evaluate and shape park projects, the following pages include:

- **Site Design Standards:** A set of core design considerations—such as access, comfort, environmental resilience, and maintenance—that should inform every PRCF site
- **Neighborhood Park Checklists:** Easy-to-use tools that help staff, designers, and residents assess whether a proposed site meets essential criteria for location and design quality

- **Engagement and Design**

**Toolkit:** A recommended approach for translating community input into design decisions, with tools that can streamline outreach and encourage collaborative planning efforts.

Together, these tools create a starting point for more detailed park and facility guidelines. They are meant to evolve over time—through use, iteration, and ongoing feedback—to ensure Richmond's public spaces reflect the values and vision of its people.

## Core Design Principles

Every PRCF site, regardless of size or location, should reflect a consistent baseline of quality, access, and care. The Site Design Standards in this chapter outline core considerations that should guide the layout, materials, and experience of every park and facility in the system. These work hand-in-hand with The City of Richmond's Urban Design Standards, which prescribe various requirements.

### DEEPER DIVE



[Review Classification Standards in Chapter 3.](#)

The standards in Richmond INSPIRE are not prescriptive—but they set clear expectations for inclusive, welcoming, and durable design. Each park and facility should maintain a community-driven Design Intent Plan that establishes measurable goals, reinforces these core design principles, and documents the environmental, cultural, and recreational benefits the site is intended to provide over time.

Standards address five key areas:

#### 1. Access and Inclusion

- All parks should be welcoming to all users. Paths, entries, and amenities must meet ADA standards and reflect principles of Universal Design. Multilingual, intuitive signage should support wayfinding and comfort for community members of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

#### 2. Visibility and Safety

- Open sightlines and well-defined circulation routes improve comfort and reduce maintenance concerns. Entrances should be easy to locate and accessible from sidewalks, trails, and bike routes. Lighting should increase visibility without contributing to light pollution.

#### 3. Comfort and Environmental Resilience

- Design should account for sun, shade, slope, noise, and climate. Parks should include tree canopy, naturalized plantings, and green infrastructure like bioswales and permeable paving. All materials and vegetation should be durable, native when possible, and appropriate for PRCF maintenance capacity.

#### 4. Programming and Flexibility

- Parks must accommodate both planned and spontaneous activity. Include infrastructure such as electrical outlets, tool storage, and space for events. Designs should support a mix of uses—quiet and social, active and passive—for people of all ages and interests.

#### 5. Community Ownership and Long-Term Care

- Great parks reflect the communities they serve. Designs should incorporate opportunities for storytelling, public art, and historical interpretation. Layouts must also support efficient maintenance, including access for service vehicles and durable materials that reduce long-term wear.

These standards provide the foundation for future PRCF Design Guidelines and the Facility Maintenance and Natural Resource Management Manual. PRCF should work in partnership with the Urban Design Committee to develop Design Guidelines that build upon these standards and help ensure that every project advances Richmond's vision for quality, equity, and long-term stewardship

### REVIEW STRATEGY 9.1



Implement new written guidelines to ensure citywide standards for quality, amenities, and maintenance.

# Neighborhood Park Checklists

Neighborhood parks are often the most-used public spaces in the PRCF system—but not all sites are set up for long-term success. In the past, some sites were developed on leftover land that was too small, poorly located, or difficult to maintain. Even great design and strong programming cannot overcome fundamental site challenges.

To avoid repeating these issues, *Richmond INSPIRE* recommends a structured approach to evaluating both site suitability and design quality before moving forward with any new neighborhood park investment.

- The Site Selection Checklist helps PRCF and its partners evaluate whether a potential site has the right location, visibility, access, and context for a successful park. This does not consider priority or importance of the site.

- The Design Quality Checklist supports evaluation of proposed park layouts, ensuring they include the amenities, circulation, comfort features, and flexibility expected from a modern neighborhood park.

Together, these checklists create a simple, easy-to-use framework for staff, designers, and community members. They are adapted from national best practices—including guidance from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), AARP, and City Parks Alliance—and should become a regular part of all PRCF park planning, Design Intent Plan development, and capital improvement processes to accompany the Urban Design Standards.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | SITE SELECTION STANDARDS

Does the site meet these basic standards?

☐

Is there a sizeable residential population within a 10-minute walk of the site? Would a park here help to fill a park walkshed or service gap?

☐

Does the site have opportunities for safe walkable, bikeable and rollable access on multiple edges?

☐

Is the site big enough (ideally at least two acres) to function as a neighborhood park? Will the site soils, topography and drainage allow for a mix of spaces, from open and flexible to intimate and enclosed?

☐

Does the site have opportunities for active site edges such as restaurants and shops and strong connections to nearby schools, libraries and other community destinations?

☐

Is the site already owned by the City or a public or private partner?

☐

Are there opportunities to protect or restore natural resources? To protect or restore a cultural landscape?

☐

Is the site's context compatible with recreation? Would the site require environmental mitigation? (chemicals, pollution, extreme sound, etc.)

## NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | DESIGN QUALITY

### Does the park design create a welcoming entry experience?

- ☐ Are there multiple park entries to collect visitors from multiple directions?
- ☐ Are the park edges open, welcoming and beautiful, with clear views into the park and site entries?
- ☐ Do the park entrances have bike racks and good access by sidewalk and crosswalks?
- ☐ Is there an appropriate amount of parking for cars, if needed?

### Does the park design celebrate and protect nature?

- ☐ What percent of the park acreage has tree canopy? Gardens? Naturalized areas?
- ☐ Are there big trees (or trees that will grow to be big) where they're needed to provide shade?
- ☐ Is stormwater captured and cleaned on-site through green infrastructure?
- ☐ Is the park beautiful?

### Does the park design encourage people to use the space?

- ☐ Are there basic amenities—like playgrounds, flexible seating, shade, concessions, picnic tables and restrooms—that encourage people to linger, rest and socialize?
- ☐ Are there basic amenities—like walking paths, flexible fields and multi-generational fitness equipment—that encourage people to be active?

### Does the park design promote access and inclusion?

- ☐ Are entries, paths and equipment accessible to ADA standards?
- ☐ Are park features like signage and fitness equipment intuitive to understand and use?
- ☐ Is there adequate space or facilities for the specific activities the neighborhood wants?
- ☐ Are the park edges and access routes safe and attractive for multiple types of users?

### Does the park design promote safety?

- ☐ Is there adequate (and Dark Sky Friendly) lighting?
- ☐ Are there open sight lines within the park and beyond its edges?
- ☐ Are there facilities and programming to ensure that plenty of people are using the park at different times of the day, week and year?
- ☐ Are there active uses around the park edges?

### Does the park design provide for ongoing care and sustainability?

- ☐ Are there adequate receptacles and signage for trash and recycling?
- ☐ Is there a coordinated management plan for City staff and volunteers?
- ☐ Is there adequate programming, visibility and stewardship to ensure eyes on the park?
- ☐ Are the park materials and equipment durable, sustainable, and compatible to the environmental conditions?



## Engagement and Design Toolkit

Designing great neighborhood parks begins with meaningful community engagement. Strong design reflects not just technical excellence, but also the lived experiences, values, and priorities of the people who will use and care for each site.

To support a consistent and equitable approach across future neighborhood park projects, Richmond INSPIRE recommends that the City and its partners develop a shared engagement and design toolkit informed by current best practices. The toolkit would offer adaptable guidance that can be customized for individual sites and community contexts, support a range of engagement approaches, and evolve over time as trends, technologies, and lessons learned continue to shape effective practice.

The toolkit should include minimum standards by classification, flexible, ready-to-use templates that make it easier for staff to gather input and for community members to share ideas. These resources will allow PRCF to spend less time reinventing the process and more time focusing on what matters: building trust, reaching historically underrecognized communities, and co-creating spaces that reflect local identity.

The toolkit may include example activities such as:

- Reusable survey templates
- Visual preference boards
- Budget and chip games
- Guidance for outreach stipends and event support (e.g., food, translation, childcare)
- Limited text activities (i.e. youth, non-English speakers)

### RELATED STRATEGY



[Strategy 5.2 recommends authentic community engagement processes.](#)



The Budget Game (left) invites community members to distribute limited resources to the park features they value most. Visual preference boards (center) allow people to vote on park elements and aesthetics. The Chip Game (right) allows the community to place the park elements they want on the actual park site—when overlaid, the resulting heat map shows the kinds of features that residents want, and where they want them.

By developing shared tools, PRCF can lower the barrier to high-quality engagement—ensuring each park reflects a broad and inclusive vision, while maintaining a consistent standard for design outcomes across the system. This approach also supports transparency, equity, and long-term community stewardship.

**Figure 27:** Example Budget Game Design Kit for Reference

