

## **Dock Street Park**

### Project Narrative

#### Purpose

The purpose of the Dock Street Park design is to transform an underutilized and formerly industrial riverfront parcel into a resilient, accessible, and ecologically vibrant public park. The design prioritizes riverfront access, habitat restoration, and passive recreation and creates a destination that connects residents and visitors to the James River. Key elements include accessible pathways, a “river get-down,” interpretive and educational spaces, and flexible areas for gathering, relaxation, and outdoor learning. The park is designed to balance human use with environmental stewardship, characterized by native plantings, stormwater management, and long-term ecological health.

#### Background and Context

Dock Street Park is located along the James River just below the Fall Line, adjacent to Great Shiplock Park, the Virginia Capital Trail, and the Low Line corridor. The site sits at the confluence of river, rail, and trail systems, making it a critical connection point within Richmond’s riverfront network.

Historically, the area functioned as an active industrial riverfront and port environment, later transitioning to underutilized and fenced land impacted by prior industrial uses and flooding events. Today, the site is influenced by tidal river conditions, floodplain dynamics, and adjacent infrastructure constraints, including easements and utilities. The Capital Region Land Conservancy and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation jointly hold an easement on Dock Street Park, which ensures that it will serve Richmond as natural park space for perpetuity.

The project builds on the Richmond Riverfront Plan and ongoing investments in the Downriver area, supporting increased access, recreation, and environmental restoration. It also complements nearby assets such as the James A. Buzzard River Education Center, owned by the James River Association, and emerging mixed-use development close by. The site is accessible by the GTRC Pulse at the Intermediate Terminal Stop.

#### Community outreach

Community engagement has been a central component of the design process. Key outreach efforts include:

- **October 16, 2024: On-site Engagement Event**
  - 3-hour event with 5 interactive stations
  - 50+ participants
  - 90+ written comments
  - 150+ online survey responses
- **March 26, 2026: 7<sup>th</sup> District Community Meeting**
  - 2-hour session with 50+ participants

Community feedback emphasized a strong desire for ecological restoration and habitat creation, improved river access and water-based recreation, and a range of passive recreational opportunities such as lounging, picnicking, and walking. Participants highlighted the importance of incorporating educational and interpretive elements, as well as providing adequate shade, seating, and gathering spaces to support a comfortable and welcoming park experience. In parallel, the project has involved ongoing coordination with key stakeholders, including James River Park System staff, conservation easement holders, Capital Trees, Virginia Capital Trail, the James River Association, Friends of the James River Park, the Invasive Plant Task Force, James River Outdoor Coalition, and multiple City departments, to ensure alignment with environmental, operational, and regulatory considerations.

#### Project budget

The Dock Street Park project is being implemented in phases. The interim park improvements (completed in 2024–2026) have focused on site access, trail connections, initial planting, and basic infrastructure.

The full build-out budget is currently being refined as part of ongoing design development and coordination with easement constraints, infrastructure improvements, and future park expansion areas. Costs will include:

- Sitework and grading (including flood-resilient design)
- Trail and boardwalk construction

- ADA access improvements (including dock access)
- Landscaping and ecological restoration
- Site furnishings and interpretive elements

#### Project funding sources

##### **Project Funding Sources**

Funding for Dock Street Park is being assembled through a combination of:

- City of Richmond Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funding
- Department of Public Utilities (DPU) infrastructure investments (coordinated site work)
- Potential grants and partner contributions (current and future phases) including a Congressional Earmark (\$750,000) which the City of Richmond plans to apply for in 2026.

The phased approach allows for alignment between infrastructure upgrades and park development.

#### Construction program and estimated construction start date

The project is being delivered in phases:

- **Completed / Ongoing (2024–2026):**
  - Site survey and design development
  - Interim park construction and public access
  - Invasive species management and initial planting
  - DPU-led infrastructure construction
- **Next Phase (Anticipated):**
  - Final design approvals (including UDC and easement holders)
  - Construction documentation and procurement

**Estimated Construction Start (Full Build-Out):** Late 2026 / Early 2027 (pending approvals and funding alignment)