

Legislative Packet

for the

2026 General Assembly Session

LEGISLATIVE and BUDGETARY REQUESTS

Legislative

Anti-Rent Gouging

Richmond requests anti-rent gouging legislation that gives localities the authority to establish, by city ordinance, a program to limit abusive rent increases.

Long-term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP)

Richmond advocates for the completion of the study outlined in the 2025 Appropriations Act to ensure recommendations for a Long-term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP) are delivered in 2026 including feasibility, eligibility criteria, strategies for implementation, and best practices from other states.

Inclusionary Zoning

In accordance with *Richmond 300: A Guide for Growth*, Richmond requested authority to adopt mandatory inclusionary zoning programs to ensure low to moderate income housing in future housing development projects.

Budgetary

Water Treatment Plant

Since the water crisis in January 2025, the city has worked diligently on a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Richmond Waterworks to upgrade aging infrastructure to improve resiliency and reliability of drinking water for Central Virginia. The full cost of the CIP is estimated at \$1.3B over the decade. **The City requests \$40M in state assistance for both FY27 and FY28 to jumpstart these critical drinking water infrastructure improvements.**

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)

The cost of the CSO Final Plan as approved by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on August 8, 2024 was \$565 million, which the City believes can be reduced to a \$533.5million total. Rate payers in Richmond are already paying some of the highest rates in Virginia. The city will need \$400 million in state funds set-aside for the project by FY29 in order to initiate contracts to meet the 2035 deadline mandated by the General Assembly. To date, the General Assembly has appropriated \$250 million in State grant funds and ARPA funding in total, of which \$119.5 has been dedicated to the CSO Final Plan. **Richmond requests \$100 million in FY27 and \$100 million in FY28 to support the implementation of the city's Final Plan.**

POLICY POSITIONS

Thriving Neighborhoods

Richmond strives to meet the housing needs of a growing city, so that Richmonders across different income levels can access affordable housing in safe neighborhoods with strong public amenities.

Affordable Housing

- Richmond supports additional tools from the General Assembly to help increase the number of quality affordable housing units, encourage first-time home buyers, incentivize housing density and a variety of quality housing.
- Richmond still faces some of the highest eviction rates in the Commonwealth. The City requests the state invest in additional resources to continue the Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot (VERP) and additional resources to ensure access to legal counsel to support residents facing eviction.
- Richmond requests a revision in the State's Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program to match the updated federal LIHTC program regulations to more effectively support Richmond's lower income households.
- In addressing the issues of blighted and vacant properties, Richmond supports more tools to gain the compliance of absentee or uninvolved real estate owners who fail to maintain their property, with the goal of restoring these properties for future purchase or rent.
- Richmond supports the *Yes In God's Backyard* legislation that would authorize local governments to streamline the permitting process for religious organizations to build multi-family affordable housing on their land.
- The city supports tools that keep authority for housing development as the responsibility of localities and does not have the state override local ordinances.
- Richmond opposes actions that would preempt local control of land use policies, including recently enacted City legislation that (1) allows accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right and (2) maintains the primary residency requirement for short-term rentals in residential areas.

Public Safety

- Richmond joins its local government partners, Virginia First Cities and the Virginia Municipal League, to request an increase in HB 599 funding, Aid to Local Police. The state created a program of financial assistance to local police departments (HB 599) when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities more than 30 years ago. For a city that is not able to grow in geographic footprint, state support for local police departments is crucial to improving public safety.
- Richmond supports holistic, community-based strategies that address the root causes and conditions of community violence including continued funding for the Safer Communities Program to support.

- Richmond supports state funding to increase the salaries and benefits of the city's public defenders to ensure equitable judicial outcomes for all residents, regardless of income or ability to pay. Increasing salaries and benefits of public defenders also helps ensure the city can retain quality public defenders.
- Richmond supports additional authority to regulate and impose penalties on unpermitted vape shops as well as tools to help address issues of blight, dilapidated and/or vacant buildings that can attract criminal activity and reduce the quality of life for residents.
- Richmond supports resources to reduce the opioid crisis without further criminalization of addiction
- Richmond supports strengthening evidence-based laws that can reduce gun violence and requests additional tools to reduce gun violence and encourage safe gun ownership.

Thriving Families

Richmond supports the education, health, and development of children and families — in and out of the classroom — so that students graduate from Richmond Public Schools well-prepared for success and connected to opportunities for further learning and career development.

High Quality Education for All

- Richmond supports modernizing the state funding formula for public education. The 2023 JLARC report on Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula, found that Virginia underfunds K-12 education by over \$3 billion annually and recommended transitioning to a student-based funding model. The current funding formula does not adequately address the needs of Richmond Public Schools as the current Local Composite Index (LCI) formula does not account for fiscal stress that Richmond faces. Richmond supports the JLARC recommendation to modify the formula to use a multi-year average of income, property, and sales data to smooth volatility and better reflect fiscal reality, or replace it with another formula like the Local Fiscal Stress Index.
- Richmond joins Virginia First Cities (VFC) and the Virginia Municipal League (VML) to request authority to raise the sales tax by up to 1% through a local voter-approved referendum for the sole purpose of funding public school construction and modernization, giving communities a local tool to fund urgently needed school improvements while maintaining voter oversight and accountability.
- Richmond supports continued reform and greater investment in the state's funding stream that supports economically disadvantaged students, the At-Risk Add-On Program.
- Richmond supports consistent, annual funding for school construction, modernization, and other needs through per-pupil infrastructure allocations or other competitive grant programs.
- Richmond requests the state maintain the practice of allocating hold harmless funding if the city is at risk of receiving less state funding for Basic Aid than in the previous biennium.

- Richmond supports funding for out-of-school and after school programs, including ones run by the city, by city partners, and by non-governmental organizations.
- Richmond supports funding and resources to provide affordable, high-quality full-day, full-year early childhood childcare and education options in all areas of the city, including:
 - Fully restoring the Virginia Pre-school Initiative; and
 - Fully funding the Child Care Subsidy Program, including maintaining current co-payment rates, to ensure affordability for working families.

Health and Human Services

- Given the cuts in funding federal programs, Richmond requests that the state prioritize resources for vital services that protect children and the most vulnerable in our community, such as SNAP, Medicaid, and Virginia Food Access Grants. Richmond requests the Commonwealth invest in technology upgrades while holding localities harmless.
- Richmond supports additional state funding for our local CSBs and other crisis community supports, like Marcus Alert.
- Richmond supports additional state programs and resources that continue to support high-value, evidence-based practices that aim to improve maternal health outcomes.
- Richmond supports holistic state-wide programs that help adults access health providers, pharmacies, addiction treatment programs, and mental health resources without criminalizing health and mental health struggles.
- Richmond supports efforts to create a commercial marketplace for adult-use cannabis, to discourage illegal sales, protect consumers, prevent children from accessing the drug, and capture tax revenue for needed public services. Richmond urges legislators to dedicate tax revenue from cannabis sales to increased funding for early childhood care and education, social equity initiatives, public health programs, and directly to the local governments that allow sales in their jurisdictions.
- The city requests that localities have discretion in placement and permitting of cannabis stores and vape stores in proximity to schools, preschools, day care centers, addiction treatment centers, and other similar locations.
- Richmond supports continued resources for the critical Lead Service Line Replacement program, as well as efforts toward the reduction of greenhouse gasses to improve air quality.

Thriving Economy

Support small and minority-owned businesses and employers providing quality, living-wage job opportunities. Create pathways for disadvantaged residents to move from poverty to stability to wealth building, and direct investments to historically neglected neighborhoods.

Economic Development

- Richmond supports expanded authority and tools to upzone and increase zoning density, particularly around transportation, housing, and critical care services.
- Richmond requests that affordable housing be included as a commercial activity for which Economic Development Authorities can issue bonds and offer low-interest rate loans to affordable housing developers.
- Richmond supports the expansion of historic rehabilitation tax credits to allow for investment in the quality and character of Richmond's neighborhoods.
- Richmond opposes any legislation that weakens local authority to regulate land use, which is a key local responsibility.
- Richmond supports programs and tools that support Richmond's vibrant and growing tourism industry, including the Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund and the Governor's Motion Picture Tax Credit Fund, which drives resources, jobs, and unique creative opportunities to Richmond, while promoting Virginia's history, culture and architecture.
- Richmond supports efforts to allow a deeper partnership between the city and the Commonwealth as it relates to off-hours use of state-owned parking decks, particularly for weekends and large events.

Transportation

- Richmond supports expanded authority to use speed cameras near designated children's day care programs and expanded hours speed cameras may be used in school zones.
- Richmond supports funding for installation and maintenance of public electric vehicle charging stations.
- Richmond requests a focus of additional resources on multimodal transportation options to prevent regional traffic congestion and improve accessibility for all Richmonders, such as dedicated bike lanes and sidewalk infrastructure that are currently excluded from state maintenance payment formulas.
- Richmond supports fully funding findings from JLARC's 2021 *Transportation Infrastructure and Funding* study and increasing the availability of street maintenance funding because Richmond serves as the seat of government for the Commonwealth and the regional hub of jobs, entertainment, and cultural institutions in Central Virginia, including eliminating the 17.5% State of Good Repair funding cap and revising the maintenance payment formula to account for traffic signals, street lights, and other critical infrastructure currently excluded from the lane-mile calculation.

Administration of Government

- Richmond supports the fair market evaluation and continuation of Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to offset losses in property taxes due to the existence of a high number of nontaxable state controlled properties within City limits.
- Richmond supports legislation to provide additional financing and bonding authority for the maintenance and construction of public facilities and entertainment related venues, as authorized by [§58.1-608.3](#). Beginning in 1991, Richmond had the authority to retain sales and use tax revenue generated at public facilities, including convention centers and hotels, to repay bonds issued for those projects. Despite renewing this authority eight times since 1991, the General Assembly allowed it to sunset on July 1, 2024. Richmond supports the re-establishment of this program for specified localities.
- Richmond requests greater authority in permitting and placement of cannabis stores, vape stores, and skill games to limit proximity to schools, preschools, day care centers, addiction treatment centers, and other similar locations.
- Richmond supports the preservation of our local authority and autonomy in matters of local concern.
- Richmond opposes unfunded mandates that further tie the hands of city government from addressing concerns locally and supports sufficient time and tools for localities to budget to meet their obligations.

Regional Partners

- Richmond supports the legislative agendas of our community partners, including:
 - Richmond Public Schools
 - PlanRVA
 - Virginia Municipal League (VML)
 - Virginia First Cities (VFC)
 - Greater Richmond Safety Net Collaborative

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PROPOSED Legislative and Budget Priorities

City Requests for Legislation

- 1. Affordable Housing- Long-term Owner Occupancy Program:**
 - a. Richmond requests that the General Assembly pass legislation that would amend the Constitution of Virginia to grant local governments authority over property tax exemptions to combat gentrification, by creating the authority to establish a Long-term Owner Occupancy (LOOP) Program.**
 - b. Recognizing that time may be required to gain support for a relatively new proposal,¹ Richmond proposes, as an intermediary step, a General Assembly study of LOOP Programs and their potential to protect long-term residents from displacement.**
- 2. Richmond requests legislation to expand the authority to use speed cameras to the campuses of higher education institutions.**
- 3. Richmond requests legislation to renew specified localities' ability to collect all sales tax revenue from public facilities, including convention centers and hotels integral to them. That local power, authorized by § 58.1-608.3, sunset on July 1, 2024. The Commonwealth has restored it eight times since first granting the power in 1991.**

¹ This legislation was first introduced to the General Assembly in 2023 (SJR 247 (Hashmi) and HJ498 (Carr)).

City Budget Request

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)- The cost of the CSO Final Plan as approved by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on August 8, 2024, is \$565 million. The city will need \$500 million in state funds set-aside for the project by FY29 in order to initiate contracts to meet the requirements mandated by the General Assembly.

Richmond requests additional state funding of \$100 million in FY25 and \$150 million in FY26 to support the implementation of the city's Final Plan.



The City of Richmond's 2025 Legislative Program: Supporting Virginia's Historic, Capital City

The City of Richmond is a proud, historic city with a rich cultural heritage. As the Capital of the Commonwealth, Richmond leads the region in high-quality business and residential growth. Richmond's unique neighborhoods and districts, both historical and new, support a diversity of uses, the equitable accommodation of all phases of life, and the efficient use of land to promote sustainable and healthy lifestyles. Richmond proudly hosts legislators from all corners of Virginia during the General Assembly session. Downtown Richmond is the core of local, state, and federal government in the Commonwealth.

One-third of Richmond's real estate is located within a historic district. Approximately 25,000 properties in the city are located in either a City Old & Historic District or a National Register Historic District, representing one-third of all City real estate. Richmond is proud to be a leader in historic preservation while still supporting development of new residential neighborhoods and business centers.

The city is growing rapidly as it attracts new residents. Residents of Richmond have a strong sense of community and civic engagement. Each of Richmond's unique neighborhoods contributes to the rich tapestry that make up the city and make it a place people can call home. However, many of Richmond's most vibrant neighborhoods were decimated by residential segregation ordinances, discriminatory housing practices, and highway construction. Thoughtful redevelopment in Richmond is an opportunity to redesign the city around the needs, assets, and aspirations of valuable yet historically overlooked communities.

A strong entrepreneurial spirit and a diverse economy exist in Richmond. Richmond was one of the most industrialized cities in the south in the late-1700s and early 1800s. In the 19th century, Richmond's largest business, by value, was the sale of enslaved people and we must recognize the economic impact that fact continues to have on our city. Today, technology firms, financial institutions, design and creative firms, researchers, restaurants, a variety of public-private partnerships, non-profits, life sciences organizations, artists, and small businesses all choose to locate in Richmond. Richmond strives to increase the number and support the growth of small businesses, start-ups, and women-owned and minority-owned businesses.

The fall line of the James River established Richmond's prominence as a center of trade, industry, transportation, and economic prosperity. The James River and its park system now provide top-notch outdoor activities and recreation from paddling, hiking, cycling, to just enjoying time at the waterfront. Richmond values protecting the natural splendor of the James River, improving water quality and managing growth to protect natural assets in the city so they are accessible to everyone.

Walking, biking, and transit options are becoming more convenient and more-widely used, thereby improving the natural environment and our health. Richmond's multi-modal transportation system is growing in quality and ease of use for all people regardless of income and physical abilities, connecting Richmond neighborhoods and attractions to each other, the region, and the nation.

Richmond is approaching its 300th anniversary. We are a proud, diverse city whose role in history and as the Capital of the Commonwealth continues to determine many of its limitations and successes. As we build on our success, we know that the city's growth has not benefited everyone equally.

- Roughly 17% of residents live in poverty.
- Housing costs in Richmond have outpaced income growth for low- and very low-income households.
- Racial inequities persist in the local and regional labor market.
- Disparities in education exist in the city, particularly in parts of Southside.

As Richmond grows, it seeks to do so equitably, sustainably, and beautifully. As the historic, vibrant, capital of the Commonwealth, Richmond can be a model for what it means to be a welcoming, inclusive, diverse, innovative, and equitable city of thriving neighborhoods, ensuring a high quality of life for all. Richmond believes in courageously acknowledging the continuing impact that racism plays in many of our state policies and state funding decisions.

Richmond's legislative program reflects the needs and tools that we seek from the General Assembly in order to continue to move our good work forward for all.

Come Here, Stay Here: Housing

Richmond envisions being a city that provides inclusive housing with access to quality housing choices for all of the city's residents. Richmond is growing at a rate not seen since the late 1800s. Richmond's main sources of population growth is from people leaving more expensive metropolitan areas in search of less expensive housing and the high-quality of life Richmond provides. Richmond seeks tools that will allow it to adapt to the changing needs of a fast-growing community. Richmond is still grappling with the legacy of discriminatory housing policies and past growth designed to cut through communities of Black and poor residents. Tools that support more housing, inclusionary zoning, and progressive planning practices can co-locate residents to the things they need most, such as transit and transportation, groceries and pharmacies, health care, educational services, recreational options, green space, and jobs.

Richmond seeks to support existing and new residents, regardless of income. More than 50.22% of Richmond households who rent and 39.62% of Richmond households who own their homes are cost burdened. Richmond needs an additional 16,680 affordable units to ensure every household that makes under 80% of the AMI is not cost-burdened. In 2021, the American Community Survey found that the median rent in Richmond was \$1,132. For the average Richmond household, that rent represents an untenable 31.2 % of their income. But that price is simply prohibitive for the 35% of Richmond households who make less than \$25,000. Additionally, while the housing crisis cuts across all demographics, it is hitting our senior citizens extremely hard.

The Mayor and the City Council unanimously declared that a housing crisis exists in the city of Richmond (Resolution 2023-R019) and will support a broad approach to addressing this crisis in the city and in the Commonwealth. Richmond continues to utilize every tool granted to them by the General Assembly to address the city's housing crisis. The city's most recent effort is the effective roll-out of the Affordable Housing Performance Grant Program. That program is attracting considerable attention from both for-profit and nonprofit developers and has put over 2,000 units of affordable housing into the construction pipeline in the last

two years. The city continues to seek the authority from the General Assembly to utilize more strategies and programs to address the housing crisis.

The following proactive steps have been identified as supporting the city as we continue to address the housing crisis in Richmond:

Affordable Housing- Long-term Owner Occupancy Program:

- a. Richmond requests that the General Assembly pass legislation that would amend the Constitution of Virginia to grant local governments authority over property tax exemptions to combat gentrification, by creating the authority to establish a Long-term Owner Occupancy (LOOP) Program.**
- b. Recognizing that time may be required to gain support for a relatively new proposal,² Richmond proposes, as an intermediary step, a General Assembly study of LOOP Programs and their potential to protect long-term residents from displacement.**

Additionally, the city supports:

- Legislative and budgetary tools to increase the availability and funds for Low Income Housing Tax Credits and the Communities of Opportunity Program (intended to decentralize poverty by enhancing low-income Virginians access to affordable housing units in higher-income area). While the real estate market in the Richmond area is robust, the city believes there are reasons for concern and policy areas that need reinforcement.
- Efforts to improve the ability of non-profit entities to support the development of affordable housing options.
- Addressing the issue of blight and out-of-state landlord's failure to properly maintain their investment is a growing concern in the city. The city supports the General Assembly making more tools available to gain the compliance of absentee or uninvolved real estate owners for cleanup and getting blighted investment property back on the tax rolls and available for purchase or rent.
- Policies that reduce discriminatory housing practices and close the gap in racial disparities in the home buying process.
- Efforts to revise the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program to consider proximity to jobs, transit options, and other critical services for residents. Additionally, the city supports revising the area medium income (AMI) requirements to more adequately align to the city's cost of living.
- Legislation that adds housing protections to residents of the city's public housing programs.
- Additional tools from the General Assembly to help increase the number of quality affordable housing units, encourage first-time home buyers, incentivize housing density and a variety of quality housing. The city supports tools that keep authority for housing development as the responsibility of localities and does not have the state override local ordinances.
- Additional local authority and expanded state efforts to decrease the impact of evictions on the city's residents.

In order to continue the work of addressing the city's housing crisis while protecting the progress the city has made, Richmond opposes:

- Any state legislative action that would have the effect of preempting recently enacted City legislation that allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right and maintain the primary residency requirement for short-term rentals in residential areas. These City Council actions were specific recommendations to

² This legislation was first introduced to the General Assembly in 2023 (SJR 247 (Hashmi) and HJ498 (Carr)).

lessen the effects of the current housing crisis that the city is experiencing, specifically, the lack of housing access and affordability.

- Any state legislative action that would limit the city's ability to regulate short-term rentals (STRs)

Supporting Our Neighborhoods and Our Public Schools

The City of Richmond is home to 47 public schools, including 27 elementary schools, seven middle schools, eight high schools, and several specialty schools. It believes that schools are best supported when the neighborhoods they are in are thriving and healthy, and that students thrive when they go to school in high-quality schools. Neighborhoods that are well-designed and interconnected with public facilities, open spaces for residents, services and businesses providing jobs, recreational facilities, libraries and equitable accommodations, cultivate sustainable and healthy lifestyles for everyone. The flexibility to co-locate and coordinate city services within communities is a vital strategy as the city looks to provide full access, support, and critical care to our families and communities with the most need and to our historically vulnerable populations. For this reason, the City is excited to have three new community centers—two in Southside and one in the East End—under construction.

It is critical that students can get to school safely whether it be on foot, on a bicycle, on a school bus, or in a car. Richmond's schools are also the third-largest employer in the city and teachers, staff, and school division employees are valued members of our community. Richmond students graduating from K-12 public schools should have a variety of opportunities available to them including higher education, skill training, mentorship and apprentice program, or gainful employment.

Early Childhood and K-12 Education & Funding Support

The city supports full state funding for public education as recommended by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). Many of the recommendations in the two most recent JLARC reports, K-12 Funding Formula and Virginia's Teacher Pipeline, are particularly important to the city. We know that the current funding formulas do not adequately address the diverse needs of Richmond's school division, which include several, concentrated, high-poverty neighborhoods and many families in need of holistic support. Additionally, Richmond's school buildings and infrastructure, in many instances, mirror the historic nature of the city, which can often reinforce the inequities between the city and the surrounding counties. The city needs additional state support to provide the types of modern learning environments our students, school staff, and communities deserve. Richmond believes that all of our students should be "at promise" and are only at-risk if they are not provided opportunities to succeed and be supported.

For these reasons, the City of Richmond supports the following near-term goals that will be most impactful to Richmond Public Schools, including:

- Codifying Consolidating the At-Risk Add-On program and the Prevention, Intervention, Remediation program to create a new At-Risk Program under the Standards of Quality;
- Implementing an LCI calculation using a three-year average. Specifically, the JLARC option to weigh population equally with ADM would better reflect overall local budget expenditures, not just school expenditures. For the city of Richmond, it is estimated that this alone would shift approximately \$4.3 million from the city to the state.
- Consistent, annual funding for the school construction grant program from the state's general fund until such time as the Virginia Gaming Proceeds Fund, or a like-dedicated school construction fund, is up, running, and sufficiently funded.
- Adding Richmond to the list of localities that can hold a referendum to ask voters to increase the sales tax by 1% to raise money for school construction and modernization.

- Maintaining the practice of allocating hold harmless funding if the city is at risk of receiving less state funding for Basic Aid than in the previous biennium.
- Funding and support for out-of-school and after school programs, including ones run by the city, by city partners, and by non-governmental organizations.
- Funding and resources to provide affordable, high-quality full-day, full-year early childhood childcare and education options in all areas of the city.
- Fully restoring the Virginia Pre-school Initiative.
- Fully funding the Child Care Subsidy Program, including maintaining current co-payment rates, to ensure affordability for working families.

Protecting and Promoting Our Residents' Well Being

The city of Richmond prioritizes positive and equitable health outcomes for all residents. In order to meet this goal, the city needs additional support, resources, and tools to achieve positive health outcomes for residents at all stages of life. The City of Richmond recognizes that public health is determined by a wide variety of life circumstances and accessibility of services. Areas that require particular attention this Session and additional support include mental health funding, decriminalizing mental health crises, stemming the opioid crisis, ensuring quality housing options, support for children in foster care systems, and more.

In order to more effectively protect and promote the well-being of our citizens, the city supports:

- Additional state funding our local CSBs and other critical community supports, like the Marcus Alert. The city seeks to continue its resilient comeback from the effects of COVID 19 in students and children, disruptions in routines and relationships, and increased reports of social isolation, anxiety, and learning loss. When our students have supportive communities that prioritize and support health, they can thrive in school.
- Additional state funding to expand programs like the Virginia Food Access Grants that support local food systems by investing in projects that improve retail access to fresh foods in low-income areas with poor access to these foods.
- Additional state programs and resources that continue to support to high-value, evidence-based practices that aim to improve maternal health outcomes.
- Additional state support for holistic state-wide programs that help adults access health providers, pharmacies, addiction treatment programs, and mental health resources without criminalizing health and mental health struggles.
- Additional state funding to address the opioid crisis, especially the disparate impact on communities of color. The city opposes efforts to further criminalize people suffering from addiction.
- Efforts to create a commercial marketplace for adult-use cannabis, to discourage black market sales, protect consumers, prevent children from accessing the drug, and capture tax revenue for needed public services. Richmond urges legislators to dedicate tax revenue from cannabis sales to early childhood care and education, social equity initiatives, public health programs, and directly to the local governments that allow sales in their jurisdictions. The city also supports legislation that allows localities discretion in placement and licensing of cannabis stores and vape stores in proximity to schools, preschools, day care centers, addiction treatment centers, and other similar locations.
- Efforts to ensure that tenants have a right to an attorney if they are facing eviction. The city supports efforts to reduce evictions and tools and programs that help residents overcome financial challenges and keep them in their homes.
- In order to continue to place Richmond's children in need into high-quality foster care settings, Richmond supports maintenance payments to assist in meeting the basic needs of a child in the system. Enhanced maintenance payments are available when a child has a clearly defined need that requires the

parent to provide increased support and supervision due to the child's behavioral, emotional, or physical/personal care requirements. Under the current system, as soon as a child in foster care reaches the age of thirteen, the stipend disappears.

The city opposes:

- Any action that further criminalizes people suffering from addiction.

Keeping All Citizens Safe: Supporting Public Safety

Richmond has led the way in identifying places where social justice approaches can be applied to reform and reimagine what safe communities look like. Residents need equitable access to public safety services such as EMS and emergency response and peace of mind that emergency responses will help them. Public safety is about protecting citizens and also reconciling the inherent racial biases that can be present in traditional policing. The city believes that the judicial system also must work to eliminate legacy racial biases that can result in inequitable outcomes.

Instances of violent crime in Richmond have been falling and this reduction is thanks to efforts made by the city. Gun violence continues to be a concern, and Richmond seeks additional tools to reduce gun violence. Through the implementation of its "Gun Violence Prevention and Intervention Framework" (GVPI), the City has made strides in implementing a public-health approach to reducing gun violence. The GVPI Framework brings together partners from government, nonprofits, religious institutions, public health organizations, and other community members to enforce existing laws; address the root causes of gun violence; provide wrap around support to victims of violence and their families; deploy credible messengers to communities most affected; and develop best practices to ensure quality services. Through programs ranging from the Police Department's "Operation Safe Summer," which uses data to prioritize how to deploy resources, to the Human Services' Department's "Positive Youth Development Fund," which provides out-of-school time opportunities from youth ages 12 to 19, the City is committed to ensuring the public safety of all of its residents.

- The city joins its local government partners, Virginia First Cities and the Virginia Municipal League, in supporting increased HB 599 funding, Aid to Local Police. The state created a program of financial assistance to local police departments (HB 599) when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities more than 30 years ago. The state must be held to a standard of upholding this contract and funding aid to our city police, especially for our city that is not able to grow in geographic footprint.

Additionally, the city supports:

- Continued funding for the Safer Communities Program to support holistic, community-based strategies that address the root causes and conditions of community violence.
- State funding to increase the salaries and benefits of the city's public defenders to ensure equitable judicial outcomes for all residents, regardless of income or ability to pay. Increasing salaries and benefits of public defenders also helps ensure the city can retain quality public defenders.
- The granting of authority and tools to help address issues of blight, eradicating dilapidated buildings, and vacant buildings. Blighted buildings can be locations for criminal activities and reduce the quality of life for residents.
- Additional tools and resources to reduce crime around and related to placement of ABC stores.
- Additional resources to reduce the opioid crisis but protections so that we stop criminalizing addiction.
- Funding for out-of-school time programming, that ensures young people have safe and positive opportunities.

Finally, the city **strongly urges** the General Assembly to adopt additional tools to reduce gun violence and encourage safe gun ownership. Richmond has made great strides in reducing instances of gun violence in the city. However, Richmond seeks additional support in the form of legislation that reduces gun violence and funding and incentives to encourage safe gun ownership practices.

Connecting Our City: Transportation

Richmond has been working to ensure that all citizens have access to high-quality jobs, schools, doctors' offices, grocery stores, entertainment options, outdoor recreation, quality childcare, family, and friends regardless of where they live or whether they own a car. The city wishes to build a stronger system of multimodal transportation options for residents. The city has been working to bridge gaps in our transportation systems and ensure safe and reliable transportation and transit options for all residents. The city is committed that as it grows and faces greater transportation challenges, it still works to address and reconcile gaps that currently exist due to systemic inequality in order to ensure safe and reliable transportation options for all.

Richmond requests legislation to expand the authority to use speed cameras to the campuses of higher education institutions. Richmond is the home to three college campuses, as well as to a community college. Virginia Commonwealth University and Virginia Union University, especially, are woven into the urban fabric of Richmond. VCU is among the largest colleges in Virginia and its unique campus results in a large number of pedestrians navigating busy city streets. The city supports expanding authority for tools that will help it achieve its Vision Zero goals to eliminate fatal crashes. Tools such as automatic speed enforcement cameras are already having a positive impact in reducing speeding around the K-12 schools where they have been placed. The city supports expanding authority to place speed cameras in places where vulnerable pedestrian populations can be protected, where speed studies indicate speed cameras would be helpful, and with consideration toward equity and community safety.

The city joins its local government partners, Virginia First Cities and the Virginia Municipal League in additional efforts to fund improvements to local transportation systems, roadway maintenance, safe street improvements, bus and transit support, and evaluate formulas that disadvantage municipalities.

Additionally, the city supports:

- Legislation that expands the authority to use speed cameras in designated children's day care programs and to expand the hours speed cameras may be used in school zones.
- Legislation and budget amendments that allocate additional resource to multimodal transportation options. With Richmond's growth, there must be an increase in pedestrians, bikes, public transit riders, and other alternative forms of transportation in order to keep the city growing sustainably and to prevent regional traffic congestion. Richmond supports efforts to make all alternative forms of transportation more accessible, user-friendly, adaptive, energy-conscious, and reliable. Support for multimodal transportation will help all Richmonders be more connected to the services they rely on.
- Fully funding the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's findings in the 2021 Transportation Infrastructure and Funding study and increasing the availability of street maintenance funding.
- Additional street maintenance funds to support the increased use of the city's road and infrastructure because it serves as the seat of government for the Commonwealth of Virginia and the regional hub of jobs, entertainment, and cultural institutions.

Economic Development and Community Wealth Building

Richmond is home to a variety of businesses and industries that offer opportunities for quality employment and capital investment. Richmond is a first-choice location for businesses and investment because the city's

transportation, housing, cultural, outdoor, commercial, and institutional amenities create a vibrant city. Richmonders of all income levels should have opportunities for life-long learning and skill-building. Richmond seeks to foster an environment that supports the growth of existing and new small, medium, and large businesses. Richmond also seeks to mitigate the racial disparities that exist in the current job market, where white workers in the Richmond region are about three times as likely as Black workers to be employed in management occupations and Black workers are predominately in low-wage jobs. Poor job access leads to modern-day segregation. While the legacy of unequal job access is not unique to Richmond, the city seeks to cultivate a diverse and thriving economy with opportunities to help all residents.

To support Richmond’s economic and commercial growth the city will request legislation to renew specified localities’ ability to collect all sales tax revenue from public facilities, including convention centers and hotels integral to them. That local power, authorized by § 58.1-608.3, sunset on July 1, 2024. The Commonwealth has restored it eight times since first granting the power in 1991.

Additionally, the city supports:

- Authority and tools to upzone and increase zoning density, particularly around transportation, housing, and critical care services.
- Maintaining and expanding local authority to plan and regulate land use and opposes any legislation that weakens these key local responsibilities.
- Support for start-ups, small businesses, and women- and minority-owned businesses.
- Programs and tools that support Richmond’s vibrant and growing tourism industry.
- Increased state funding to further support the work of the city’s Office of Community Wealth Building.
- Efforts that expand access to and reduce the cost of quality childcare. Childcare is critical to maintaining a vibrant and diverse workforce.
- Efforts to sufficiently fund the Governor’s Motion Picture Opportunity Fund and the Governor’s Motion Picture Tax Credit Fund. The City of Richmond has benefited significantly from the location shooting of many different projects. Richmond has become a backdrop for Hollywood and continues to drive resources, jobs, and unique creative opportunities to Richmond. It also highlights Richmond’s historic place as the capital of the Commonwealth, its unique culture and architecture, and beautiful James River system.
- Efforts to allow a deeper partnership between the city and the Commonwealth as it relates to off-hours use of state-owned parking decks, particularly for weekends and large events.

Building a Cleaner Future

The City of Richmond values having clean water, clean air, and a flourishing ecosystem. Richmond is positively adapting to a changing climate where all residents have equitable access to nature and a healthy community. Richmond has a wide system of parks, including the excellent James River Park System. Clean water not only improves the natural environment that supports plant and animal life, but also improves human health, as the James River is the source of drinking water for residents in the region.

Richmond’s Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Project

In the late 1800s, Richmond was one of the first cities in Virginia to create a system to carry sewage away from the urban center. While the first, Richmond is not alone as many cities in the United States have a combined sewer system. Roughly one-third of Richmond is in the combined sewer system area. In these areas, wastewater from homes and businesses, and stormwater from streets, are combined into a single pipe and flow to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. During dry weather, all of this water is treated. But if stormwater overwhelms the system’s capacity, as it can after heavy rainfall, stormwater and wastewater create an overflow that directly

feeds into the James River and Gillies Creek. The release of stormwater combined with untreated wastewater can contribute to poor water quality and impairs recreational use of the river. While Richmond has made significant progress in reducing the frequency of combined sewer overflow events and amount of pollution entering the James River, these overflows still persist and need to be addressed for the health of the river and the community. Richmond has made large investments since the 1970s to reduce overflow events, investing over \$780 million (in 2023 dollars). The City is currently beginning a new \$575-\$625 million effort to address overflow events. The General Assembly mandated that the city complete this work by 2035. In order to meet this requirement without placing the full burden of the cost on Richmond's ratepayers, the city seeks state grant funding to support the CSO project. Without state support, the city has limited options to fund the overall cost of the project. Rate payers in Richmond are already paying the some of the highest rates in Virginia. The city cannot burden them with the costs. The city's other options would require abandoning some of the important work the city is undertaking on other key public services including other water-quality mandates, schools, roads, affordable housing, tax incentives to support low-income homeowners, and public safety programs.

The cost of the CSO Final Plan as approved by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) on August 8, 2024, is \$565 million. The city will need \$500 million in state funds set-aside for the project by FY29 in order to initiate contracts to meet the requirements mandated by the General Assembly. Richmond requests additional state funding of \$100 million in FY25 and \$150 million in FY26 to support the implementation of the city's Final Plan.

Richmond also supports:

- Development of patterns and policies which encourage density and discourage a dependency on single-occupancy vehicles.
- Policies which reduce the level of greenhouse gasses and increase healthy air quality
- Funding support for the parks and trails system, including the Fall Line Trail, in the city which improve the quality of life for our citizens and those who visit our capital city.
- Infrastructure investments in parks and public spaces such as accessibility to public transportation, installation of bathrooms, and access to drinkable water.
- Additional tools and resources to support the Richmond Soil and Water Conservation District efforts to provide financial and educational resources and administer programs designed to encourage individual responsibility to conserve, improve and sustain our soil and water resources for future generations.
- Additional resources to support the city's Office of Sustainability.
- Additional efforts to allow the city to tap into federal dollars for the critical Lead Service Line Replacement program.
- Funding for installation and maintenance of public electric vehicle charging stations.
- Recognition that Richmond is an urbanized heat island that experiences higher temperatures than outlying areas. The city supports efforts to reduce urban heat vulnerability. These efforts include helping increase tree canopy coverage in the city, shade from which helps reduce urban temperatures and encourages a more walkable environment. Trees also help reduce air pollution.

Courageously Opposing Discriminatory Policies and Practices

As a city we know that we must acknowledge the continuing impact racism plays in many of our state policies and state funding decisions. The city supports all efforts to amend the Code of Virginia and any state regulation that is inherently racist or biased.

Additionally, the city supports all efforts to amend any state funding formula used to allocate funds to local governments that create and sustain inequities between communities.

The City of Richmond will continue to oppose any state policies or regulations that attempt to roll back civil rights or to discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, or race. Likewise, any state attempts to regulate the placement or banning of books or otherwise whitewash the nation and Commonwealth's history will be opposed.

Local Authority of Our City

Local authority is a key component to ensure Richmond can continue to meet the strategic initiatives it has adopted. In order to further the strategies and programs outlined in the Richmond 300 plan, Richmond seeks to preserve local authority and autonomy in matters including land use, revenue measures, procurement, and other issues of local concern. Richmond also has a unique relationship with the Commonwealth of Virginia as it serves as the seat of state Government.

The City Charter:

The city believes that authorities established in their City Charter should allow Richmond government to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible and the city should be supported when they propose updates to the Charter.

Richmond supports:

- Fair market evaluation and continuation of payments in lieu of taxes to offset losses in property taxes due to the existence of a high number of nontaxable properties within its boundaries.
- Authority to determine placement and licensing of cannabis stores, vape stores, and skill games in proximity to schools, preschools, day care centers, addiction treatment centers, and other similar locations.
- Preservation of our local authority and autonomy in matters of local concern.

Richmond opposes any unfunded mandate from the Commonwealth of Virginia. When funding for a mandated program is altered, the mandate should be suspended until full funding is restored.

Legislative Packet

for the

2024 General Assembly Session



City of Richmond

FINAL Draft Legislative Program for the 2024 General Assembly

Budget Requests:

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) - \$300,000,000

The City requests \$100 million appropriation in FY 2024 (caboose budget); \$100 million in FY 2025; \$100 million FY 2026. These amounts would constitute 60% of the approximately \$650 million estimated as needed to begin construction on the Final Plan for CSO remediation. The entire amount must be on hand by FY 28 for construction to begin in FY 29 as required to meet the statutory mandate for completing construction by 2035.

Early Childhood Education- \$275 million in FY25/\$325 million in FY26

The city requests state funding to maintain pandemic era expansions of the Mixed Delivery and Child Care Subsidy Programs. One-time federal investments of more than \$24 billion expired September 30, 2023. Without additional state funding, Virginia faces a steep cliff at the end of Fiscal Year 2024: statewide, nearly 36,000 children are projected to lose care and over 37,000 working parents are expected to face job disruptions in Fiscal Year 2025 unless the Commonwealth acts. Research has shown that these investments lift children out of poverty, reduce child maltreatment, and prepare children for success in school and in life. Expanded access to publicly funded early childhood care and education has been a game changer for the City of Richmond. From May of 2021 to September 2023, there has been a 147% increase in the number of children accessing care with subsidy. And, importantly, the Richmond Department of Social Services has not had a waitlist for the CCSP since October 2020. These results must continue, which is why Richmond joins the Virginia Promise Partnership, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, and the Virginia Business Roundtable for Early Education to request an additional \$275 million in FY25 and \$325 million in FY26 to maintain and support parent demand for childcare.

K-12 Teacher Residency Programs- \$590,000

The city requests additional state funding to support twenty five (25) Richmond Teacher Residency (RTR) stipends. The RTR is a proven pipeline for RPS to employ qualified, highly trained, and effective teachers that work and stay in the RPS system. We have a significant teacher shortage in Richmond. Having enough, high quality teachers is among the most important factors necessary for a quality education system. Teachers who use direct pathways to become a fully licensed teacher are better prepared for the classroom and tend to stay in the school system.

Requests for Legislation:

1. Make the Possession and Use of Semi-Automatic Switches Illegal Under Virginia Law

Switches are illegal under federal law, but not illegal under Virginia law, meaning that if Virginia local law enforcement officers come upon a suspect with a switch, they do not have the authority to arrest the person. Switches are small, cheap devices that can be added to a semi-automatic weapon to make it automatic. Local law enforcement can refer the case to federal authorities, but this is cumbersome and has the potential to lead to the person who has the switch getting away without consequence and the switch still being “on the street.” (Administration/Chief Edwards)

2. Pedestrian/Public Safety Urban Institutions of Higher Education

Amend § 46.2-873, Maximum speed limits at school crossings, to include “students” in the definition of “school crossing zone” so that institutions of higher education (VCU/VUU) may be included in the areas where photo speed monitoring devices may be used.

3. Charter Changes

Items of mutual agreement (City Council and Administration) would be included.

4. Long Term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP)

Amend the Constitution of Virginia to give local governments control over property tax exemptions and tools to combat gentrification – Create a Long- Term Owner Occupancy Program.

5. Include the city in §15.2-2304 Affordable Dwelling Unit Ordinances in Certain Localities.

As a high growth locality facing inordinate pressures on housing access and affordability, the City requests to be included with the other seven Virginia localities able to use mandatory inclusionary zoning tools.

6. Give City Ability to Assess a Civil Penalty for Unauthorized, Non-Permitted Demolition. Consistent with *Richmond 300*, Richmond’s award-winning Comprehensive Plan, the City needs state legislation to develop stronger code enforcement tools for violations in City-designated, state-designated Old & Historic Districts non-permitted demolition of buildings and structures. The City requests that §15.2-819 be amended to include Richmond.

POLICY STATEMENTS

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)

The city opposes any attempt to accelerate the current statutory Richmond CSO project completion timeline ahead of 2035.

K-12 Education & Funding Support

The city supports full state funding for public education as recommended by the Board of Education and, most recently, by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). Many of the recommendations in the two most recent JLARC in depth studies (K-12 Funding and Virginia's Teacher Pipeline) are particularly germane to the city. Virginia K-12 funding formulas have exacerbated the problems in our inner-city, high poverty school division. For these reasons, the City of Richmond supports the following near term goals that will be most impactful to Richmond Public Schools, including:

- Consolidating the At-Risk Add-On program and the Prevention, Intervention, Remediation program to create a new At-Risk Program under the Standards of Quality;
- Implementing an LCI calculation using a three-year average. Specifically, the JLARC option to weigh population equally with ADM would better reflect overall local budget expenditures, not just school expenditures. For the city of Richmond, it is estimated that this alone would shift approximately \$4.3 million from the city to the state.

The city supports the state providing consistent annual funding for the school construction grant program from the state's general fund until such time as the Virginia Gaming Proceeds Fund, or a like-dedicated school construction fund, is up, running, and sufficiently funded.

The city supports adding Richmond (and any Virginia local government) to the list of localities that can hold a referendum to ask voters to increase the sales tax by 1% to raise money for school construction and modernization.

The city supports a full and fair K-12 rebenchmarking of updated cost estimates for the 2024-2026 Biennial Budget. Further the city supports hold harmless funding if the city is at risk of receiving less state funding for Basic Aid than in the previous biennium.

Housing

Citizens in metro-Richmond are paying more than 30% of their income toward housing costs. Additionally, the metro-Richmond area has a 23,320 housing unit shortage. The housing crisis cuts across all demographics but is hitting our senior citizens extremely hard. The Mayor and the City Council unanimously declared that a housing crisis exists in the city of Richmond (Resolution 2023-R019) and will support a broad approach to addressing this crisis in the City and in the Commonwealth. The following proactive steps have been identified to help with the housing crisis in Richmond:

- The city supports legislative and budgetary tools to increase the availability and funds for Low Income Housing Tax Credits and the Communities of Opportunity Program (intended to decentralize poverty by enhancing low-income Virginians access to affordable housing units in higher-income area). While the real estate market in the Richmond area is robust, the city believes there are reasons for concern and policy areas that need reinforcement.

- The city supports efforts to improve the ability of non-profit entities to support the development of affordable housing options.
- The issue of blight and out-of-state landlord's failure to properly maintain their investment is a growing concern in the city. The city supports more legislation to make more tools available to gain the compliance of absentee or uninvolved real estate owners for cleanup and getting blighted investment property back on the tax rolls and available for purchase or rent. For example, the General Assembly is requested to remove the cap on additional taxes qualifying localities (fiscal stress of 100+) may levy on blighted and derelict properties. § 58.1-3221.6. This additional taxation authority would be an extremely valuable tool to encourage proper maintenance of properties and compliance with state and local building regulations.
- The city supports legislation that would grant them authority to require the registration of any building that had been vacant for a period of 12 months or more. Vacant, unmonitored houses are inherently a public safety problem – not structurally (i.e. derelict) but due to potential criminal activity.
- The city opposes any state legislative action that would have the effect of preempting recently enacted City legislation that allow accessory dwelling units (ADUs) by-right and maintain the primary residency requirement for short-term rentals in residential areas. These City Council actions were specific recommendations to lessen the effects of the current housing crisis that the city is experiencing, specifically, the lack of housing access and affordability.

Human Services

Mental Health Funding and Efforts to Decriminalize the Mental Health Crisis in Richmond

- The city supports additional state funding our local CSBs and other critical community supports, like the Marcus Alert. The Commonwealth of Virginia faces an unprecedented mental health crisis among people of all ages. Two out of five adults report symptoms of anxiety or depression. Our youth have been particularly impacted as losses from COVID and disruptions in routines and relationships have led to increased social isolation, anxiety, and learning loss. The FY 2024 state budget made great strides in funding for mental health and pandemic-related learning loss, but we urge the Commonwealth to do more to support our citizens struggling with addiction and mental health issues and to treat the actual crisis without criminalizing the crisis.

Opioid Crisis

- The city supports additional state funding to address the opioid crisis especially the disparate impact on communities of color.

The Virginia Cannabis Control Authority

- The city supports efforts to create a commercial marketplace for adult-use cannabis, to discourage black market sales, protect consumers, prevent children from accessing the drug, and capture tax revenue for needed public services. Richmond urges legislators to dedicate tax revenue from cannabis sales to early childhood care and education, social equity initiatives, public health programs, and directly to the local governments that allow sales in their jurisdictions.

Tenant's Right to an Attorney

- The city supports efforts to ensure that tenants have a right to an attorney if they are facing eviction.

Equitable Support Services for Children in Foster Care Through the Age of Maturity

- The city supports a budget amendment to recognize foster care enhanced payment beyond the child's age of 13. Additionally, the city supports cost of living increases to these enhanced payments. Virginia's foster care system provides maintenance payments to assist in meeting the basic needs of a child in the system. Enhanced maintenance payments are available when a child has a clearly defined need that requires the parent to provide increased support and supervision due to the child's behavioral, emotional, or physical/personal care requirements. Under the current system, as soon as a child in foster care reaches the age of thirteen, the stipend disappears. The trauma and emotional needs of the thirteen year old + does not disappear.

Public Safety

HB 599 Aid to Local Police Funding

- The city joins its local government partners, Virginia First Cities and the Virginia Municipal League, in supporting increased funding for HB 599, Aid to Local Police. The state created a program of financial assistance to local police departments (HB 599) when it imposed an annexation moratorium on cities more than 30 years ago. The state must be held to a standard of upholding this contract and funding aid to our city police, especially for our city that is not able to grow.

Public Defenders

- The city supports additional state funding to increase the salaries and benefits of the city's public defenders.

First Responders

- The city supports additional state funding to increase the salaries and benefits of the city's public defenders. Additionally, the city supports state efforts to improve incentives for the retention of first responders.

Lead Service Line Replacement Program

- The city supports efforts to allow Richmond to tap into federal dollars for the critical program.

Tax Policy

Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity and Tax Credit Fund

The city supports efforts to sufficiently fund the Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund and the Governor's Motion Picture Tax Credit Fund. The film, television, and streaming industry has experienced exponential growth and innovation over the past decade, with demand for content seeing a monumental upward trend despite the economic uncertainty that has shaken other industries. It is now recognized as an industry that continues to grow and adapt at breakneck speed, one that uniquely touches technology, tourism, and traditional economic development, while simultaneously providing high-wage career pathways that are of great interest to our existing and emerging workforce. The City of Richmond has benefited significantly from the location shooting of many different projects. This industry benefits businesses large & small during filming, and for years after in the emerging sector of film tourism and has proven to be very resilient, providing crucial support to sectors impacted the most by the economic shutdown, such as hospitality and brick-and-mortar retail.

Transportation

The city supports increasing the availability of funds to for street maintenance. The 2022 General Assembly tasked the Virginia Department of Transportation to study the formula and methodology for city street maintenance funding. The report found that an additional \$51 million in state funding is needed to meet the needs in Virginia.

Economic Development

The city supports increased state funding to further support the work of the city's Office of Community Wealth Building.

Social Policy

The City of Richmond will continue to oppose any state policies or regulations that attempt to roll back or reverse discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, or race. Likewise, any state attempts to regulate the placement or banning of books or otherwise whitewash the nation and Commonwealth's history is to be opposed.

Legislative Packet

for the

2023 General Assembly Session



**City of Richmond Legislative Proposals
for the
Virginia General Assembly 2023 Regular Session**

Legislative Priorities

- **Preserve and defend Richmond's authority to hold a casino referendum in 2023**

The City opposes any efforts to remove the ability for the City to hold a referendum for the One Casino and Resort in November 2023. The casino will bring a much needed economic development project to the city's southside and will be a workforce driver. The October 2022 JLARC report noted that a Richmond casino will bring in more state tax revenue, as well as much needed local revenue. The JLARC report demonstrates that a casino in both Richmond and Petersburg is a very positive development. Not only for state revenues, but for critical addition to local revenues in both cities. There is a path forward leading to a win-win for both Richmond and Petersburg - - larger state gaming revenues and increased consumer choice. Richmond has a robust casino ready to move forward and would like nothing more than to hold another referendum in November of 2023.

- **Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)**

The City opposes any attempt to accelerate the current statutory Richmond CSO project completion timeline ahead of 2035. The General Assembly has mandated, and the City of Richmond is resolute, that the City will substantially eliminate combined sewer overflows into the James River by 2035, a goal currently estimated to cost upward of \$1.3 billion. With the \$50 million ARPA funds allotted to the City of Richmond during the 2021 General Assembly Special Session II, along with the \$50 million in local match, and \$100 million appropriated, yet unobligated by the 2022 General Assembly, the City's DPU is working diligently toward meeting this goal. The City DPU is leaving no stone unturned to identify additional federal, state and local financial resources that can be accessed to complete the job of protecting the James River and Chesapeake Bay. The City's ratepayers cannot do this alone and consistent funding in successive state budgets will be required for the city to complete this project by 2035 as mandated.

HOUSING – The City is asking for more **tools** to be responsive to the rapidly rising Richmond **housing market**, especially tools to abate real estate taxes in a more strategic manner.

- **Constitutional Amendment to Give Local Governments Control Over Property Tax Exemptions and Tools to Combat Gentrification** - Local real estate tax relief programs are currently limited to the elderly, disabled and certain veterans, and thus do not include lower middle-income homeowners. An amendment to the state constitution is required to expand the applicability of such programs and enable—not require—local governments to use a wide range of alternative real estate tax tools for properties used for affordable housing and homelessness services. The City is requesting that the General Assembly *amend the state constitution to allow localities, at their option, to set up abatement/exemption options like the long-term owner occupancy program (LOOP) or a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) program for affordable housing.* While common in other states, including Maryland, current Virginia law does not give localities authority to establish these types of programs for affordable housing. The draft language for the amendment to the Constitution of Virginia should

explicitly permit localities in Virginia to adopt ordinances that allow alternative real estate property taxation methods for properties used as affordable housing; should be written broadly to permit means tested tax abatements, exemptions, PILOT and other similar solutions that allow localities flexibility and options; set a minimum floor of 15 years for any period of tax reduction by local programs; considers pro-rata tax relief to provide greater relief as deeper affordability is offered (covering mixed-income housing; and properties with units under inclusionary zoning programs, which may have some units rented above 80 percent AMI.). Allowing local governments to develop and implement means tested, long term owner-occupied real estate tax relief programs will help prevent the displacement of long-term owner occupants due to dramatically rising property tax assessments, thereby leading to neighborhood gentrification

- **Strengthen Va. Code Ann. § 58.1-3295 to Include Additional Affordable Housing Types and Directives** - The current section of state code that directs local assessors to use a specific income-based approach for rent-restricted affordable housing needs revision. *The City is requesting that the code be amended to cover all types of rental housing that use subsidies to serve households below 80 percent AMI.* Both developers and operators of affordable housing properties have highlighted significant challenges with the assessment process for rent-restricted communities. This stems from language interpretations in the current state code. § 58.1-3295 directs localities to assess below-market rate (affordable) rental housing after considering: restrictions on rent values, restrictions on title transfers and “other restraints” on future sale, and “actual operating expenses” and other relevant expenditures. These considerations ensure that the real estate taxes levied on owners of affordable rental housing are commensurate with the actual rent amounts collected rather than fair market values, thereby reducing the tax burden on these properties. The problem has become increasingly acute with the rapid increase in market valuations. New statutory language should be enacted that would replace § 58.1-3295 with a broader definition of affordable housing to include all of the following solutions: All existing types of publicly-assisted multifamily rental housing, including LIHTC, USDA-RD Section 515, HUD Section 202, HUD Section 822, Rental Assistance Demonstration, and others. Eligible uses would include affordable homeownership programs, homelessness services, and community land trusts and other shared-equity ownership models. They should not be restricted to new construction only and they should defer most specific definitions/criteria to localities since they will be creating ordinances under this new authority.
- **Redemption Period on Delinquent Homes** - With the extreme financial pressures on the city’s lower middle-income residents, the City wants to offer assistance by extending the number of years property owners can negotiate payment arrangements on tax delinquent properties, as well as extend the redemption period for fiscally stressed property owners. This will help keep residents in their homes (by lowering their monthly installment payments,) and slow further gentrification to City neighborhoods. Current Virginia law, § 58.1-3965, allows payment arrangements up to sixty months for delinquent property taxes. However, when the tax debt is higher, the payment translates to high monthly payments. When a resident defaults on the installment agreement, the agreement can be voided upon 15 days written notice and, once the payment plan ceases, the resident is not eligible for 3 years. It is within 3 years period that the property becomes eligible to be sold. *The City is requesting that § 58.1-3965 be changed to 1) extend the installment period for a longer period than 60 months so that more reasonable installments payments of the tax debt be accommodated.* This change will serve to help residents whose financial situation may change later or who would have difficulty making significantly higher stay in their homes; and 2) *extend the redemption period to up to one year after the property is sold in order to give the property owner a chance to redeem their property.*

- **Inclusionary Zoning/Affordable Housing**

The City supports expanding local authority to establish and implement tools that will assist with increasing the supply of affordable housing units. *The City requests that Richmond be added to the list of cities (Alexandria & Charlottesville) that can avail themselves of the tools found in § 15.2-2304. Affordable dwelling unit ordinances in certain localities.* The share of low and middle-income renters with cost burdens is increasing in the city, as the median rent has reached a record high. Minimum and average-wage workers cannot afford most available market-rate rental units. Although the rental stock is increasing, most new additions are not considered affordable to Richmond residents. At the same time, there are a plethora of blighted, derelict homes and buildings that sit vacant. The City needs as many tools as possible to help bring balance to the housing needs of Richmonders.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- **HB 599 Funding for Local Police** – Our cities are still experiencing human resource and workforce development issues concerning our local and valued policemen and women. Our cities cannot compete with state agencies, universities, and other local governments that offer increased pay and consistently poach trained and newly trained police persons. Local police department funding and workforce development issues are even more acute at this point in time. We ask the General Assembly to please *fund the Aid to Localities with Police Departments according to the Code of Virginia statute.* This was an obligation delineated in the annexation moratorium of the 1980s. The City values our highly trained and very competent local police force, but we need sustained funding to improve police salaries, reduce police vacancies, and enable us to recruit, train and retain our valued police persons.
- **Use of Radar Enabled Cameras** – *The City requests that the authority to use radar-enabled speeding and red-light cameras be expanded to include business and residential districts, parks, and bridges.* Legislation was enacted in the 2020 General Assembly session permitting their use in posted school crossing zones and work zones. This authority should be expanded to include residential, parks, bridges, and selected business districts.

PARKS & GREEN SPACE

- **EcoTourism/James River Park System** – The James River Park System is the finest urban wilderness in the United States and has transformed the City of Richmond. With more than 600 acres extending from Ancarrow’s Landing to the Huguenot Flatwater, it is Richmond’s largest public park and a true gem for the state and the city. The primary attraction of the park are the more than 22 miles of interconnected trails, open to bikes and foot traffic. The trail network (which includes the Richmond Slave Trail) navigates along both banks of the James River, affording views and access to the river with ample non-motorized watercraft activity. The Park was recently named one of the top six river parks in the United States by outdoor retailer REI. *\$15 million in state assistance during each year of the current biennium is requested* for four eco-labs and two immersive historical sites located at Ancarrow’s Landing and along the Richmond Slave Trail. The funding will seed these projects and contribute toward the ongoing maintenance providing a significant return on investment for the Richmond community and the Commonwealth.

Policy Statements

The Machinery and Tools (M&T) and Business and Professional Occupational License (BPOL) taxes comprise a major part of the city's revenues. Along with our municipal brethren, we will *oppose any attempt to eliminate or reduce the M&T and BPOL taxes unless it includes a reliable, consistent, and adequate replacement funding mechanism*. This also applies to further state tax reductions that impact our local government budgets, including further tax cuts to the Grocery Tax or the tax on Personal Hygiene Products.

Climate Action - The City *opposes any state-led attempts to roll back or insert state policy in local, non-jurisdictional utility matters related to local climate action plans*. The city, through proactive City Council resolutions like Resolution No. 2021-R049 and major committed programs like RVAgreen 2050, is centering equity-based climate action and resilience planning initiatives in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 45% by 2030, achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and help the community adapt to Richmond's climate impacts of extreme heat, precipitation, and flooding. Richmond has a community-wide initiative to develop and implement a roadmap of actions uses an innovative planning approach that centers frontline community members and works at the intersection of equity, mitigation, and climate resilience. The city recommits to RVAgreen 2050 as an equitable climate action that is going to lead to a healthy and resilient Richmond in the future.

Pay parity for public defenders – The City *supports state funding to establish pay parity between public defender staff and the actual salaries of Commonwealth's Attorneys staff*. In City of Richmond courtrooms, assistant commonwealth's attorneys charged with prosecuting crimes continue to earn significantly more than the government employees responsible for defending the accused, an imbalance that leads to inequity in the criminal justice system. Both prosecutors and public defender offices are funded by the state, with positions in each earning comparable base salaries. The salary gap stems from a common practice in which local governments allocate money from their budgets for prosecutors but not for public defenders. The legal system works best when both prosecutors and defenders are equally resourced. The City of Richmond provides pay supplements to the commonwealth's attorney office because its staff is classified as city employees. Public defenders' offices are overseen by the state and function as state employees. The Commonwealth and the General Assembly are requested to take full responsibility for giving public defenders the increases they deserve and on parity with commonwealth attorneys.

Lead Service Line Replacement - The City has been working with the Virginia Department of Health Office of Drinking Water for the past three years to develop and institute a lead service line rebate program for homeowners. This program has awarded the City of Richmond a \$500,000 grant annually towards the replacement of lead service lines on homeowners' property under the VDH-ODW Financial and Construction Assistance Programs. With a large number of lead service lines that need to be replaced, the City *supports ongoing state funding for the lead service line replacement program*. State assistance will enable the City to address this critical water quality and environmental justice issue.

Early Childhood Care and Education – Because there is a direct correlation between early childhood care and education and the overall health of the City, Richmond is very supportive of allowing community childcare providers greater flexibility in their utilization of Virginia Preschool Initiative funding and encourages a statute change to enable this action. Likewise, the City supports increased funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative Mixed Delivery Program and the Virginia Child Care Subsidy.

STEP-VA New and Sustained Funding – The City *supports increased sustainable state funding to implement STEP-VA requirements as well as to support the planning and implementation of the Marcus Alert protocols*. Virginia has made significant improvements in the quality and accountability of community services through legislative and administrative efforts. However, Virginia's overall behavioral

health system remains underfunded and patched together in well-meaning responses to crises with services that are not always sustainable or consistently funded.

Equitable Support Services for Children in Foster Care Through the Age of Maturity

Virginia's foster care system provides maintenance payments to assist in meeting the basic needs of a child in the system. Enhanced maintenance payments are available when a child has a clearly-defined need that requires the parent to provide increased support and supervision due to the child's behavioral, emotional, or physical/personal care requirements. Under the current system, as soon as a child in foster care reaches the age of thirteen, the stipend disappears. The trauma and emotional needs of the thirteen year old + does not disappear. *The City is supportive of a budget amendment to recognize the enhanced payment, as well as to provide a cost of living increase.*

Automatic Restoration of Voting Rights Post Incarceration – *The City supports amending the state constitution to provide for the automatic restoration of voting rights for convicted felons who have completed their sentence.* Virginia is one of three states whose constitution otherwise permanently disenfranchises all citizens with past felony convictions, but grants the state's governor the authority to restore voting rights.

Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity and Tax Credit Fund - The film, television, and streaming industry has experienced exponential growth and innovation over the past decade, with demand for content seeing a monumental upward trend despite the economic uncertainty that has shaken other industries. It is now recognized as an industry that continues to grow and adapt at breakneck speed, one that uniquely touches technology, tourism, and traditional economic development, while simultaneously providing high-wage career pathways that are of great interest to our existing and emerging workforce. The City of Richmond has benefited significantly from the location shooting of many different projects. This industry benefits businesses large & small during filming, and for years after in the emerging sector of film tourism. Because it has proven to be a very resilient industry, providing crucial support to sectors impacted the most by the economic shutdown, such as hospitality and brick-and-mortar retail, the City of Richmond *urges the General Assembly to please sufficiently fund the Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund and the Governor's Motion Picture Tax Credit Fund.*