



Staff Report  
City of Richmond, Virginia  
**Planning Commission**



<b>UDC 2025-11</b>	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 5/20/2025
<b>Applicant/Petitioner</b>	Guinevere Richardson / Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities	
<b>Project Description</b>	UDC 2025-11 CONCEPT Location, Character, and Extent review of the Mayo Island Park project located at 501 S 14 <sup>th</sup> St.	
<b>Project Location</b>		
<b>Address:</b> 501 South 14 <sup>th</sup> Street, Richmond, VA		
<b>Property Owner:</b> City Of Richmond Recreation And Parks		
<b>High-Level Details:</b> The project proposes phased demolition, ecological restoration, and development of Mayo Island as a 16-acre flood-resilient public park, including trails, picnic areas, native plantings, and interpretive signage.		
<b>UDC Recommendation</b>	Approval, with Conditions	
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Kevin Costanzo - Kevin.Costanzo@rva.gov	
<b>Public Outreach/ Previous Reviews</b>	Please see Applicant Documents / Narrative. - October 2024: Community Open House at Studio Two Three (Manchester) - March 2025: Community Open House at Marvel's Office (Downtown Richmond) - Ongoing online survey (320 responses as of April 2025)	
<b>Conditions for Approval</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff recommends submission of a planting and maintenance plan at Final Review to ensure ecological goals are met.</li> <li>2. Staff recommends specifications for any built structures, site features, and / or furnishings be included in for Final Review.</li> <li>3. Staff recommends that final outdoor lighting details minimize light pollution and follow dark-sky compliance.</li> <li>4. Staff recommends the Applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.</li> </ol>	

## Findings of Fact

Site Description	Mayo Island is a 16-acre site in the middle of the James River, historically used for industrial and parking purposes. It has limited utility infrastructure, no connection to the municipal sewer, and lies below the 100-year flood elevation.
Scope of Review	The project is subject to Location, Character, and Extent review under Section 17.07 and design recommendations under Section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter.
Prior Approvals	N/A
Project Description	<p><b><u>The Applicant States:</u></b></p> <p>The project proposes phased demolition, ecological restoration, and repurposing of Mayo Island as a 16-acre flood-resilient public park, including trails, picnic areas, native plantings, and interpretive signage.</p> <p><b>Project Phases:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demolition: Removal of buildings, asphalt, and electrical infrastructure.</li> <li>- Site Grading &amp; Conservation Planting: Grading of the island, removal of artificial fill, and seeding of native meadows and phytoremediating plant species.</li> <li>- Public Park Development: Construction of nature trails, gathering spaces, signage, and access points.</li> </ul> <p><b>Conservation Easement:</b> 14.5 acres will be protected in perpetuity under easement held by Capital Region Land Conservancy and DCR, including caps on impervious surface and restrictions on new development.</p> <p><b><u>Staff Review:</u></b></p> <p>The Mayo Island Park project will transform an underutilized and largely inaccessible 16-acre site into a regional public park destination, significantly expanding access to green space in the heart of Richmond. With proximity to Downtown, Manchester, and key regional trail systems such as the Virginia Capital Trail and Richmond Slave Trail, the island is positioned as both a physical and symbolic connector between historically divided neighborhoods. The redevelopment of this city-owned property as a public green space aligns with Richmond's broader goals for climate resilience, equitable access, and community-centered investment.</p> <p>The proposed park design emphasizes walking, biking, and paddler access, with trails constructed from permeable and natural materials to support stormwater management and environmental performance. The site's transformation includes the removal of impervious surfaces, introduction of layered meadow systems for habitat restoration, and the integration of stormwater gardens and no-rise grading techniques. The park will feature universally accessible pathways, interpretive signage, paddler launch points, and portable restrooms. Planned site furnishings and structures are intended to match the standards of the James River Park System in both appearance and performance.</p> <p>The Richmond Riverfront Plan states the following:  <i>"The island could provide a distinct open space that provides walking and biking trails, multiple watercraft launches, an exploratory green landscape, play areas, an event lawn, and restored riparian overlooks upriver and downriver. Existing parking lots could be reused adjacent to the road, and a plaza with concessions and recreational equipment rentals could offer support for a variety of programs. The rehabilitation of Mayo Bridge should integrate with this anticipated revitalization of Mayo's Island, in support of this anticipated active,</i> </p>

*pedestrian landscape. The Plan recommends that 14th Street as it crosses the island be reconfigured to calm traffic speed and accommodate the anticipated foot and bike traffic crossing the street from one side of the island to the other. The acquisition and transformation of Mayo's Island into public open space is a priority for protecting the integrity of the James River as an accessible landscape, reflective of Richmond's rich natural and cultural legacy: Mayo's Island becomes the 'green jewel' of the Richmond Riverfront."*

Staff supports the proposed scope of work for Mayo Island Park project as it aligns with the vision of the Richmond Riverfront plan to create an "exploratory green landscape" on the island.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. Staff recommends submission of a planting and maintenance plan at Final Review to ensure ecological goals are met.
2. Staff recommends specifications for any built structures, site features, and / or furnishings be included in for Final Review.
3. Staff recommends that final outdoor lighting details minimize light pollution and follow dark-sky compliance.
4. Staff recommends the Applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.

**UDC Review**

The UDC discussed material used on paths, parking, potable water access, Mayo Bridge interface, and kayak access.

The UDC recommends approval of this application with amended conditions below.

1. Staff recommends submission of a planting and maintenance plan at Final Review to ensure ecological goals are met.
2. Staff recommends specifications for any built structures, site features, and / or furnishings be included in for Final Review.
3. Staff recommends that final outdoor lighting details minimize light pollution and follow dark-sky compliance.
4. Staff recommends the Applicant incorporate public art, where feasible.

## Urban Design Guidelines and Master Plan

	Text	Staff Analysis
<b>Master Plan</b>		
<b>Big Moves:</b> <i>iv. Provide Greenways &amp; Parks for All (R300, p.197)</i> <i>v. Reconnect the City (R300, p.199)</i>	<p><b>Provide Greenways &amp; Parks for All:</b> <i>Develop parks and greenways so that by 2037 100% of Richmonders live within a 10-minute walk of a park.</i></p> <p><b>Reconnect the City:</b> <i>Cap highways to reknit neighborhoods destroyed by interstates, build/</i></p>	<p>The project will transform an underutilized and inaccessible site into a regional park destination, significantly expanding access to public green space.</p> <p>With proximity to Downtown, Manchester, and major trail systems, Mayo Island serves as a physical and symbolic connector between historically divided neighborhoods.</p>

vi. <i>Realign City Facilities (R300, p.201)</i>	<p><i>improve bridges, introduce street grids, and make the city easier to access by foot, bike, and transit.</i></p> <p><b>Realign City Facilities:</b> <i>Improve City buildings (schools, libraries, fire stations, police stations, etc.) to provide better services in efficient, shared-use, accessible facilities to better match and serve the growing city.</i></p>	The use of city-owned land as public green space supports the City's goals for climate resilience, equity, and community-centered investment.
<b>Urban Design Guidelines</b>		
<b>Transportation – Paving Surface Materials (pg. 4):</b>	<i>The selection of appropriate paving materials should be based upon visual compatibility, sustainability, performance, and maintenance.</i>	The proposed trail system will primarily use permeable and natural materials. Final plans prioritize durability, maintenance, and stormwater performance in material selection.
<b>Transportation – Multimodal Transportation (pg. 6):</b>	<i>The UDC prioritizes transportation design for pedestrians and vulnerable users</i>	<p>The proposed design prioritizes walking, biking, and paddler access, integrating with the Capital Trail and Richmond Slave Trail.</p> <p>Final plans detail trail connections, inclusive access for multi-modal park users, and traffic calming at bridge approaches.</p>
<b>Environment – Public Parks / Universal Design (pg. 9):</b>	Public park design should ensure equal access to all users.	Maintaining universal access should remain a central design element throughout the proposed project's future phases.
<b>Environment – Landscaping (pg. 10):</b>	<i>Plantings should be compatible with and relate to surrounding landscapes. Designs that include conservation landscaping, strategically minimize the urban heat island effect, or decrease stormwater runoff are strongly encouraged.</i>	<p>The plan includes a layered meadow system with seasonal diversity and long-term restoration benefits.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends submission of a planting and maintenance plan at Final Review to ensure ecological goals are met.</u></p>
<b>Environment – Stormwater / LID (pg. 11):</b>	<i>Developments should promote impact minimization techniques through alternative stormwater management practices.</i>	The design removes impervious surface, reduces runoff, and integrates stormwater gardens and no-rise grading. Staff supports continued FEMA coordination and integration of green infrastructure.
<b>Public Facilities – General Site Design (pg. 13):</b>	<i>The site should respond to its users through its design and by providing an appropriate array of amenities to serve those users. Circulation within the site should be geared toward pedestrian movements, not vehicular. Connectivity from the site to adjacent areas should be considered during the design phase and include accommodations for non-motorized means of transit and other micro-modal transportation, such as bicycle parking, bike racks, showers,</i>	<p>The project envisions interpretive signage, gathering spaces, paddler launch points, and portable restrooms.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends final specifications for any built structures, site features, and or furnishings be included in for Final Review.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that final outdoor lighting details minimize light pollution and follow dark-sky compliance guidelines.</u></p> <p><u>The Applicant incorporate public art, where</u></p>

	<p><i>restrooms, and air pumps.</i></p> <p><i>Adequate seating, lighting and trash receptacles should also be provided in the design of plazas. The incorporation of Low Impact Design (LID) or sustainable design is highly encouraged.</i></p>	<p><u>feasible.</u></p>
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