

Reconciliation Plaza Restore

Richmond VA 23219

Sept 18, 2025

Project Purpose:

The City of Richmond is renovating The Reconciliation Plaza at the corner of 15th and Main Street, originally constructed in 2007 as one of three locations across the globe (Richmond, VA - Liverpool, England – Cotonou, Benin) that recognized their respective roles in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The site has always been envisioned as a gateway into Shockoe Bottom and as an emotional anchor point along the Richmond Slave Trail. The site contains an approx. 12 ft sculpture by Richard Broadbent, a water feature with interpretive content, bench seating, plantings and a paving surface bounded by a concrete walk. The objective of the project is to renovate and update the plaza.

Underlying Principles:

Plaza and Paving

The underlying design principles for this project are to ensure cohesion with the existing Reconciliation statue, repair the existing plaza, and minimize distractions from surrounding streets and the parking garage. The existing paver surface will be repaired using the same type of brick on the site, which will then be paved with concrete. The existing wooden bench seating, which was completely rotted, has already been removed, and the anchor locations have been filled with concrete. The new brick paving will cover these anchor locations. Where necessary, the existing paver surface will be reset. Any damaged areas on the existing walls will also be patched.

Lighting

The lighting scheme is designed to focus on the sculpture, with uplighting being the most prominent feature, while the downlighting on the surrounding bench seating and walkway will be more muted. This corner also benefits from abundant existing street lighting. Existing lighting in the existing concrete walls which will be removed and replaced. LED fixtures will replace the older halogen ones in their current locations, utilizing existing wiring. Bollard lighting will add additional lighting to the walkway adjacent to the garage. The three large oak trees will be up lit providing more visibility at night and frame the statue. The trees behind the fountain will also be up lit. The fountain will be lit from the sides and spot lighting within the back of the lean rail. The water rill will be lit by led lighting in the kick rail and in the stone.

Fountain, Bridge & Railing

The fountain will be removed and replaced at a new location. Both the fountain and the water rill will be constructed from Virginia Mist Granite. The triangular shape of the fountain is a direct reference to the triangular path of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Water will flow from the top of the sculpture, cascading across the top face of the fountain into the pool below instead of down the sides. Bronze maps and narrative elements will be raised above the water's surface to enhance visibility and legibility. These bronze maps will likely be attached with a locking mechanism to ensure durability and prevent theft. The

new bridge will be made from Locust Timber Plank. A new water rill and shallow pond will be constructed along the wall toward the existing stairs. The bridge, slightly wider than the existing path, will offer a place for people to stop and view the fountain. A lean rail and kick rail will prevent guests from accessing the water.

Landscape:

Demolition (see also Civil Narrative)

1. Demolish existing water feature vault and all equipment therein.
2. Remove and salvage existing granite water feature component. Protect on site or remove/protect off site until time for re-installation.
3. Demolish existing wood bench. Cut anchors/attachments 6" below grade to receive new paving.
4. Demolish wood decking. Retain and salvage bronze handrail for re-use.
5. Remove one (1) existing Maple tree which will be in conflict with new work. Remove all existing grasses south and west of plaza. Remove all evergreen trees along length of garage. Remove all existing street trees adjacent to parcel.
6. Retain and salvage water meter, backflow preventor and irrigation controller.
7. Demolish all existing lighting

Existing Conditions Protections

1. All existing trees to remain are to be fenced for protection during construction. No construction materials or equipment are permitted within the driplines of existing trees.

Earthwork and Drainage (see also Civil Narrative)

1. The entire site is to be fine graded to ensure adequate flow away from gathering spaces.
2. All low points on site are to have storm drains. See civil drawings for locations.

Pedestrian Walks

1. Pedestrian paving varies based on location. See plan for designated areas.
2. 4" concrete paving: Concrete finish to include light broom finish. Color to match existing.
3. Brick paving: Match existing.
4. Wood boardwalk: Black Locust decking on metal framing.

Site Handrails

1. Existing handrail is to be salvaged and re-used. Handrail may need to be modified to fit new location/attachment requirements.

Planting

1. Proposed trees: Trees to be native medium to large canopy trees, ranging in sizes from 2-1/2" caliper and supplied in balled & burlapped stock. Tree locations and species are chosen so that their mature size does not impact site flood models.
 2. Proposed planting beds: These areas consist of evergreen and deciduous drought tolerant native shrubs, grasses, groundcovers, and perennials with 2" of shredded hardwood mulch placed atop the planting soil. Shrub plantings will be supplied in balled and burlapped stock. Grasses will be supplied in 3-quart containers. Perennials will be supplied in 1-gallon containers.
1. All lawn areas are to be sodded.

Irrigation and Service Water:

1. All lawn areas are to be irrigated with pop-up sprinkler heads. All planting beds are to have spray head irrigation.

2. Irrigation controls are to be linked to existing water meter, backflow preventor and controller, if still operable.
3. Provide one (1) quick coupler for cleaning/maintenance.

Site Furnishings:

1. Bench: See plan for products.
2. Trash and recycling receptacles: See plan for products.

Construction Program:

Programmatically, the plaza is a place to reflect and remember the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade. An additional path near the parking garage provides a shortcut for commuters. Seating is located on the walls of the triangle plaza and under the trees on the site. The signage and railing are combined into a single element, allowing enhanced legibility. This design also conceals fountain lighting within the railing. The combined approach minimizes visual obstruction, preserving clear views of the fountain. During construction the Reconciliation Statue will be covered and protected.

Construction Timeline:

Construction is planned to be completed by Emancipation Day (April 3rd) 2026.

Funding:

The project is supported by allocated funding from the City of Richmond and Commonwealth of Virginia.

Budget: The amount budgeted for design is \$109,000 and \$2,000,000 for construction.