General Assembly 2027 Legislative Agenda

Budget Requests

Richmond Regional Water Treatment Plant Security

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. Richmond supports the recommendations of the Regional Water Workgroup in building resiliency for drinking water infrastructure for Central Virginia.

Combined Sewer Outflow (CSO) Remediation

The City of Richmond is extremely grateful for the investment that the General Assembly continues to make to ensure the state's deadline for upgrading the CSO in Richmond is met. FY27's investment enables Richmond to begin the cutting edge Shockoe High Rate Disinfection Facility, with the design and accompanying detailed cost breakdown projected to be completed by Spring 2027. Rate payers in Richmond are already paying some of the highest wastewater rates in Virginia. The City estimates needing $350 million in state funds in coming years to meet the 2035 deadline mandated by the General Assembly. Richmond requests $100 million in FY28 to support the implementation of the city's Final Plan.

Legislative Requests

Anti-displacement Policies

Lower income, and often disproportionately minority and elderly residents, face unprecedented displacement pressure as real estate and housing costs rise. Richmond requests additional tools to protect long-time residents and prevent displacement of homeowners, including a constitutional amendment to permit localities to implement a Long-term Owner Occupancy Program (LOOP), creating opportunities for targeted property tax relief for homeowners under parameters determined by the locality. Local eligibility criteria should be based on: years of home ownership (for example, 10+ years); use as primary residence; income limits; significant assessment increases; or other anti-displacement factors. The program could freeze or cap taxable assessed value for qualifying homeowners, limit annual property tax increases, or provide targeted tax credits or abatements.

Tenant Protections & Housing Justice

Richmond supports measures to make housing more stable and affordable for renters and tenants and programs to protect residents. Richmond's priorities include: prohibiting algorithmic rent setting, capping pretenancy fees, protecting renters from predatory and abusive rent increases, funding and support for the enforcement of fair housing laws, instituting a good-cause eviction standard to protect the right to remain in the home if the tenant pays rent and follows the lease agreement, and enabling localities to recoup costs when they act on behalf of tenants whose housing has become unsafe. The Derelict Receivership Program should be improved by allowing captured rents to be used to fund repairs. The City strongly supports anti-rent gouging legislation, as well as the creation of a rental registry, creating the database needed to implement policies such as anti-rent gouging and more effective health and safety inspections.

Blighted and Vacant Property

Richmond requests more tools to address vacant and blighted properties and gain the compliance of absentee or uninvolved real estate owners who fail to maintain their property. The Commonwealth can enable localities to accelerate the transition of vacant and blighted properties for future purchase, rent, or commercial operation. Richmond supports economic development investment from the State to help spur redevelopment of vacant and blighted buildings, such as the Urban Public Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund and the Enterprise Zone Real Property Investment Grant.

Short-Term Rental Regulation

The City requests expanded tools to enforce zoning requirements for short-term rentals to ensure safe and compliant operation, such as enabling Departments of Finance or Commissioners of Revenue to share information with other city agencies to assist in validating the compliance of operators of STRs or authority to require an STR platform to remove nonconforming STRs from the platform and refund any cancelled bookings.

Policy Positions - Housing

The City of Richmond recognizes the urgency of the housing crisis and its impacts on our residents. We support additional tools, resources, and authorities from the General Assembly to help increase the number of quality affordable housing units, to incentivize an increase in financially accessible housing supply and housing density, support first-time home buyers, and provide short-term and transitional services to unhoused Richmonders.

Recognizing that the Commonwealth has diverse communities with uniquely different housing and land use needs, the City of Richmond supports maintaining locality discretion to implement housing and land use policies that reflect the needs of the specific jurisdictions.

Richmond supports...

- Expanded authority and tools to upzone and increase zoning density, where appropriate for each individual locality, particularly around transportation, housing, and critical care services.
- The transition to a statewide impact fees framework to encourage and support growth and enable localities to invest in essential infrastructure needed to grow communities and support new residents.
- Expanded home maintenance and renovation assistance for low-income homeowners.
- Targeted estate and title legal services assistance for qualifying residents to prevent displacement and facilitate intergenerational transfer of homeownership.
- Investment in the redevelopment of public housing, such as Gilpin Court in Jackson Ward, to create a vibrant, mixed-income community that delivers both better health and economic outcomes for residents, while also securing much needed affordable housing into the future.
- Additional state investment and ongoing funding for the Virginia Eviction Reduction Program and resources to ensure access to legal counsel to support residents facing eviction.
- Authorization to create a regional body, similar to the Central Virginia Transportation Authority or Richmond Metropolitan Transit Authority, tasked with collecting revenue and directing funding to localities related to affordable housing.

- Amending state code to specify that the ability to fine up to twice the assessed value of a property for unpermitted demolition also applies to design overlay districts. This currently only applies to “Old & Historic Districts” and locally designated historic areas.
- Preservation of existing tree canopy and old-growth trees. The City will closely monitor the findings of the comprehensive review of existing tree canopy laws as conducted by the Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience’s workgroup.

Transportation

In order to move towards Vision Zero, a future where Richmond streets are safe for all, Richmond supports policies that advance engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response to protect vulnerable road users. This is especially true in high-risk speed corridors and school zones: these tools can help us save lives.

In addition, Richmond supports....

- Expand the authority to utilize speed cameras, flashing signs, decreased speed limits, and other traffic calming measures beyond K-12 school zones, to be used specifically on higher education campuses and in high-risk commercial or residential areas to protect pedestrians and vulnerable road users. Currently the use in high-risk commercial or residential areas only applied to Planning District 8.
- Fully funding findings from JLARC’s 2021 Transportation Infrastructure and Funding study and increasing the availability of street maintenance funding, fulfilling the Commonwealth’s commitment to being a maintenance-first state.
- Tools and investment that support public transit, including ensuring Department of Rail and Public Transit TRIP grants can support ongoing operations for transit systems with fare free programs.

Public Safety

The City of Richmond is grateful for the State's commitment to strengthening evidence-based laws that can reduce gun violence, and requests additional tools to reduce violence in our communities, maintain a functional and equitable criminal justice system, and keep residents safe.

Richmond supports....

- Holistic, community-based strategies that address the root causes and conditions of community violence, including non-reverting funding for the Safer Communities Program.
- Augmenting state support for essential public safety services and the public safety workforce, including law enforcement, firefighting, and emergency response. In particular, we request an increase in revenue distributed via the 599 program, the Aid to Localities with fire programs, as well as funding for fire prevention.
- Authorizing localities to provide enhanced retirement benefits for full-time 911 dispatchers.
- Continued support for the Firefighters Cancer Screening Grant Program to help localities cover the costs of cancer screenings for firefighters.
- Allocate funding and resources to protect survivors of domestic and interpersonal violence in the Richmond region through the creation of a Family Justice Center, a public-private partnership to centralize resources and services for survivors.
- Refining the regulatory and judicial procedures for automated enforcement technologies to continue strengthening standards relating to data security and guardrails around vendor practices.
- 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.
- Additional authority to regulate retail businesses that sell recreational substances, both permitted and unpermitted.

Education

To set our children up for success, Richmond shares a vision with leaders across the Commonwealth to create a holistic family- forward education system that addresses children's needs.

Richmond supports....

- Comprehensive modernization of Virginia's public education funding formula to more accurately measure local fiscal capacity and fully account for student needs. The 2023 JLARC review found that Virginia underfunds K–12 education by more than $3 billion annually and recommended transitioning toward a student-based funding model, future components of which include:
  - Increasing the At-Risk Add-On and eliminating the required local match for at least the concentration-based portion of the program, with the goal of ensuring that divisions serving the greatest concentrations of economically disadvantaged students receive the full additional resources needed by those students.
  - Reform measures used to calculate the revenue available to each locality from its major tax bases, including tangible personal property, to more accurately reflect needs on the ground. This includes revising the Local Composite Index or replacing the LCI with JLARC's proposed Revenue Capacity Index.
  - Aligning methodologies with the implementation of student-based funding and providing appropriate transition assistance to prevent abrupt funding losses.
- Consistent, annual state support for school construction, modernization, and major capital needs through per-pupil infrastructure allocations, formula-based funding, competitive grant programs, or other sustainable funding mechanisms.
- Expanded funding for out-of-school and after school programs, including initiatives run by the localities, community-based service providers, and other youth-focused non governmental organizations.
- Richmond supports funding and resources to provide affordable, high-quality early childhood childcare and education options, including the Child Care Subsidy Program. State-supported programs should allow eligible public, private, nonprofit, and faith-based early childhood providers to participate on an equitable basis when they meet applicable health, safety, quality, and accountability requirements.

Health and Human Services

Richmond is ready to work with state and community partners to ensure our most vulnerable residents receive the care and support they need.

Richmond supports....

- Holistic state-wide programs that help adults access health providers, pharmacies, addiction treatment programs, crisis supports, and mental health resources without criminalizing health and mental health struggles.
- Programs that support affordable access to critical services like drinking water, electricity, food access, and more for residents with the greatest cost burdens.
- Increasing support to local Departments of Social Services to manage the increased workload resulting from additional eligibility verification requirements and more frequent redeterminations under new federal requirements.
- Modernizing state and local Departments of Social Services software systems and investing in e-referral so that we may work in tandem with credible and collaborative partners to deliver services to our residents in need.

Economic Development

Richmond requests state support in building an economy that works for all our residents by creating pathways for residents to move from poverty to stability to wealth building and by removing policy barriers that inhibit wealth building, supporting small and minority-owned businesses, and ensuring that people have access to living-wage careers.

Richmond supports....

- Richmond supports tools that enable local governments to finance and spur the development of public facilities and expansion of community-based commercial activity.
- Tools to assist with commercial redevelopment and vacancy reduction, including support for the Urban Public Private Partnership Redevelopment Fund, the Enterprise Zone Real Property Investment Grant, and Historic Rehabilitative Tax Credits.
- Continued resources for the critical Lead Service Line Replacement program.
- Expanding the list of eligible uses of VEDP's New Airline Service Incentive Fund (NASIF) to allow funding for local investments that support new or expanded commercial air service, including infrastructure improvements, ground transportation connections, marketing partnerships, workforce initiatives, and other related economic development activities.

Administration of Government

In order to provide high-quality and effective municipal services to residents and businesses, Richmond strives for sustainable funding, strong labor relations, and efficient City governance.

Richmond supports....

- Maintaining local authority and autonomy in matters of local concern.
- Ensuring fairness in changes to funding requirements and formulas to ensure that City government can continue to meet the needs of residents.
- Adjusting the Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to accurately reflect the fair market evaluation and offset losses in local revenue from continued acquisition of tax-exempt, state owned properties.
- Allocating funding to support renewal construction for John Marshall Courts Building. This building houses both state and local courts, but has substantial deferred maintenance and physical security issues.
- Continuing collective bargaining with the City workforce to help strengthen services for residents, recruit and retain talent, and steward a sustainable system for years to come.
- Increased authority to pursue energy independence, through simplifying the process of establishing Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) or Power Purchaser Agreements (PPA).
- The maintenance of sovereign immunity to protect operational reliability. The City supports accountability methods to ensure responsible public sector operations that do not erode sovereign immunity.

Regional Partners

Richmond supports the legislative agendas of our community partners.

Including:

- Richmond Public Schools
- PlanRVA
- Virginia Municipal League (VML)
- Virginia First Cities (VFC)
- 804 Health Net