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# 1

## **INTRODUCTION**



## ***INTRODUCTION***

The James River is an unparalleled natural and cultural resource, unique to Richmond and critically poised to catalyze both growth and conservation at the core of the City. The Richmond Riverfront Plan is a transformative and comprehensive vision for the future of the downtown Richmond Riverfront on both the north and south sides of the James River. The 2009 Downtown Plan recognized the James River as one of the Seven Foundations of the Plan that embody both the citizenry's vision for the future of their Downtown and the basics of planning for highly livable cities. The Downtown Plan promotes the James River as Richmond's "great, wet Central Park" and recommended the creation of a detailed design plan for both banks of the riverfront from the Lee Bridge downstream to the City line/Ancarrow's Landing. The intention of the proposed design plan was to allow residents and visitors to fully enjoy this unique natural feature by creating a series of clear connections to the riverfront, developing a comprehensive system of natural open space along the river and creating green connections between city parks and the riverfront, expanding existing recreational activity along the river, such as waterfront festivals, kayaking and rowing, and to preserve views to the river by limiting building heights and protecting important viewsheds.

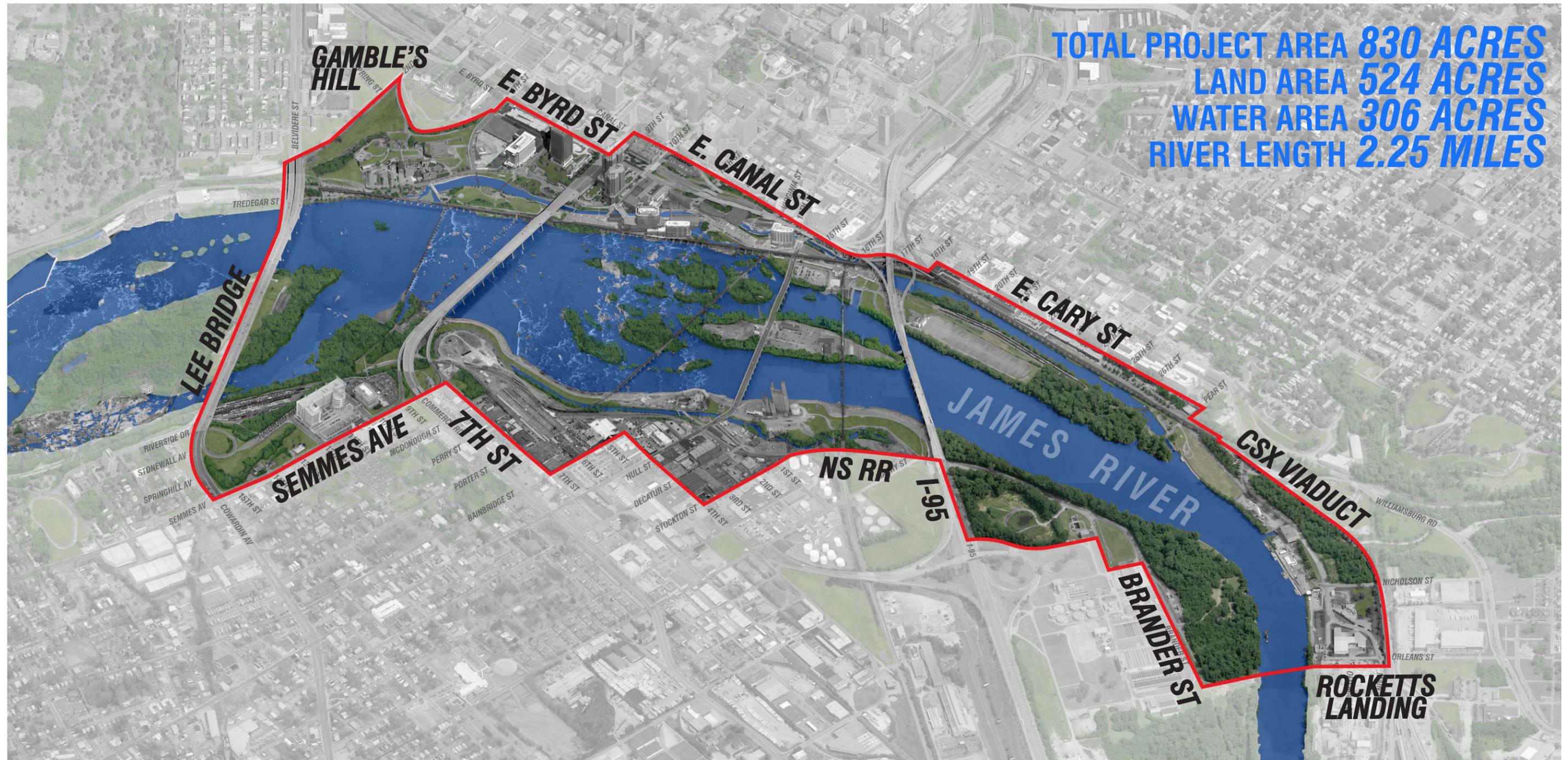
As a continuation of the 2009 Downtown Plan, the Riverfront Plan provides a bold strategy to revitalize this 2.25 mile long stretch of the James River, from the Lee Bridge to Rocketts Landing, extending at least 200' inland from both banks.

The river experience is foremost in importance. The James River is a singular resource that should be publicly accessible and protected for future generations. Expanded use and access should be accompanied by significant social, ecological, and economic improvements that are both quantitative and qualitative. The Plan recognizes and celebrates the wealth of Richmond's cultural history, industrial artifacts, and ecological diversity along the City's vibrant Riverfront. This melding of historic and contemporary cultural, industrial and natural forces has and continues to shape the distinctive sense of place that is Richmond.

The Plan identifies opportunities for new and expanded connections and open spaces, incorporating a broad range of landscape experiences and programmatic opportunities; it also highlights preferred private development sites that will both gain from and contribute to the long-term stewardship of the Riverfront. The Riverfront Plan establishes the James River as a shared amenity for Richmond's broader community, a dynamic year-round attraction for the surrounding counties and region, as well as an international destination. Strengthening and re-forging physical connections and continuities with the river will significantly enhance adjacent neighborhoods, reverberating benefits well beyond the project boundary.

The Riverfront Plan is the result of input from public and private study area stakeholders, community groups, and City organizations. In addition, three public presentations at the Virginia War Memorial, in September, October and December 2011, documented the evolution of the Riverfront Plan and generated substantial citizen input. The Riverfront Plan is the product of this critical dialogue, a document that represents Richmond's vision for the future of its Riverfront. The Riverfront Plan is a cohesive vision for incrementally achieving a transformed Riverfront, phased based on existing conditions, feasibility and anticipation for significant impact of both public and private redevelopment opportunities. Priorities reflect a balance of estimated capital costs, funding sources, and prospective short- or long-term impacts on access to and along the Riverfront. Strong leadership and a unified entity for long-term governance and stewardship will drive the Plan's implementation and the realization of a much-anticipated, renewed Richmond Riverfront.

***Above all else, the Plan redefines the City-River relationship, dramatically expanding both visual and direct physical access to the James River. The Plan maps out a transformation comprised of incremental interventions, some bold and sweeping, and some subtle and strategic; together they describe an enhanced urban landscape. The long-term vision for the Richmond Riverfront is a sustainable public landscape corridor seamlessly connected with the River's significant resources upriver and downriver, and a reaffirmed focus on the James River as the heart of the Richmond region.***



## PROJECT BOUNDARY



The project boundary focuses on the stretch of the James River between the Lee Bridge and Rocketts Landing, extending a minimum of 200-feet back from either bank to align with the street grid or rail tracks. The objective is to capture adequate acreage to be considered for either redevelopment or transformation into public open space, with direct adjacency to the river. These parcels will have direct influence on land use and access as the Riverfront evolves.

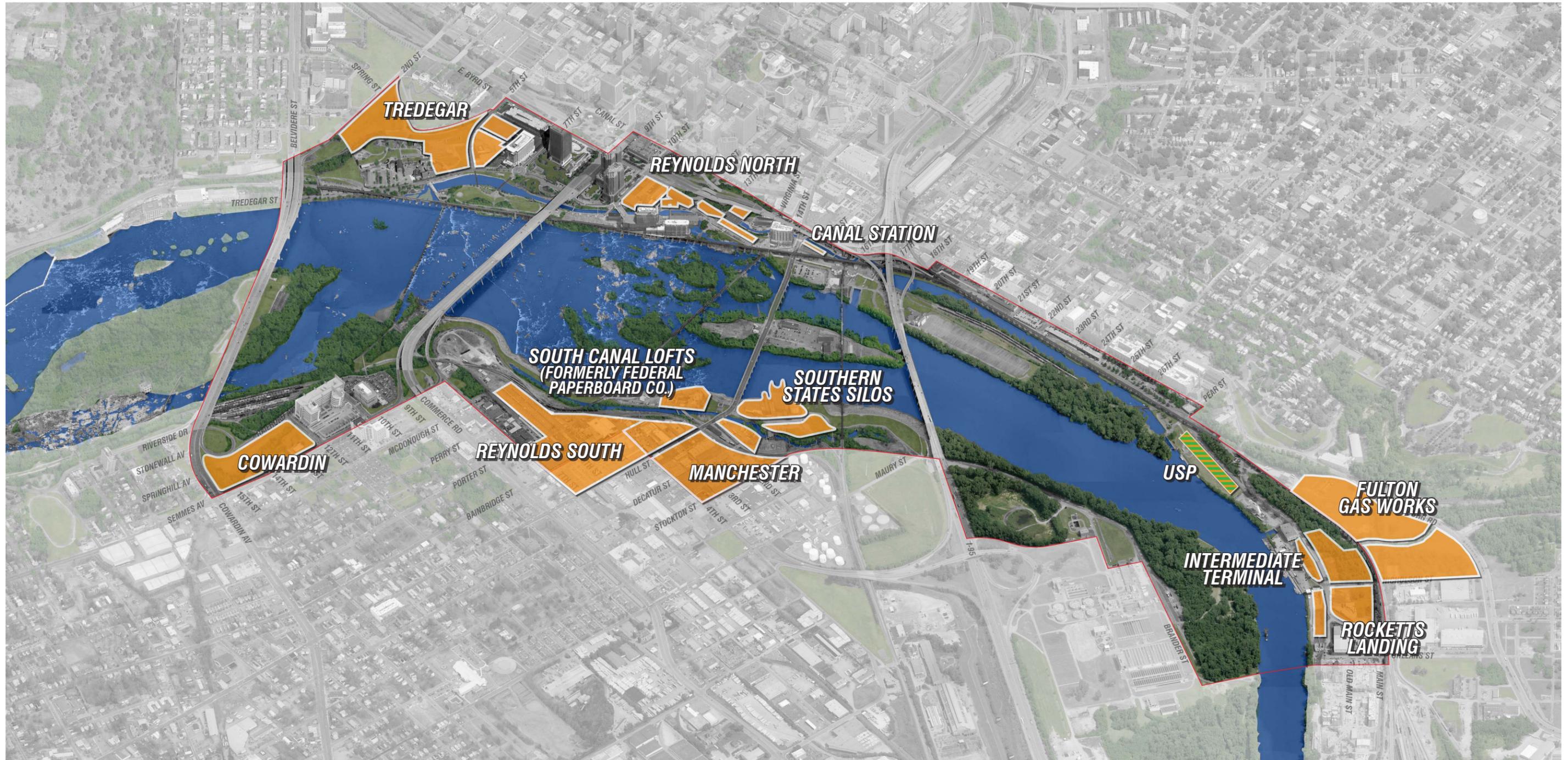
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# 2

## **RIVERFRONT PLAN**



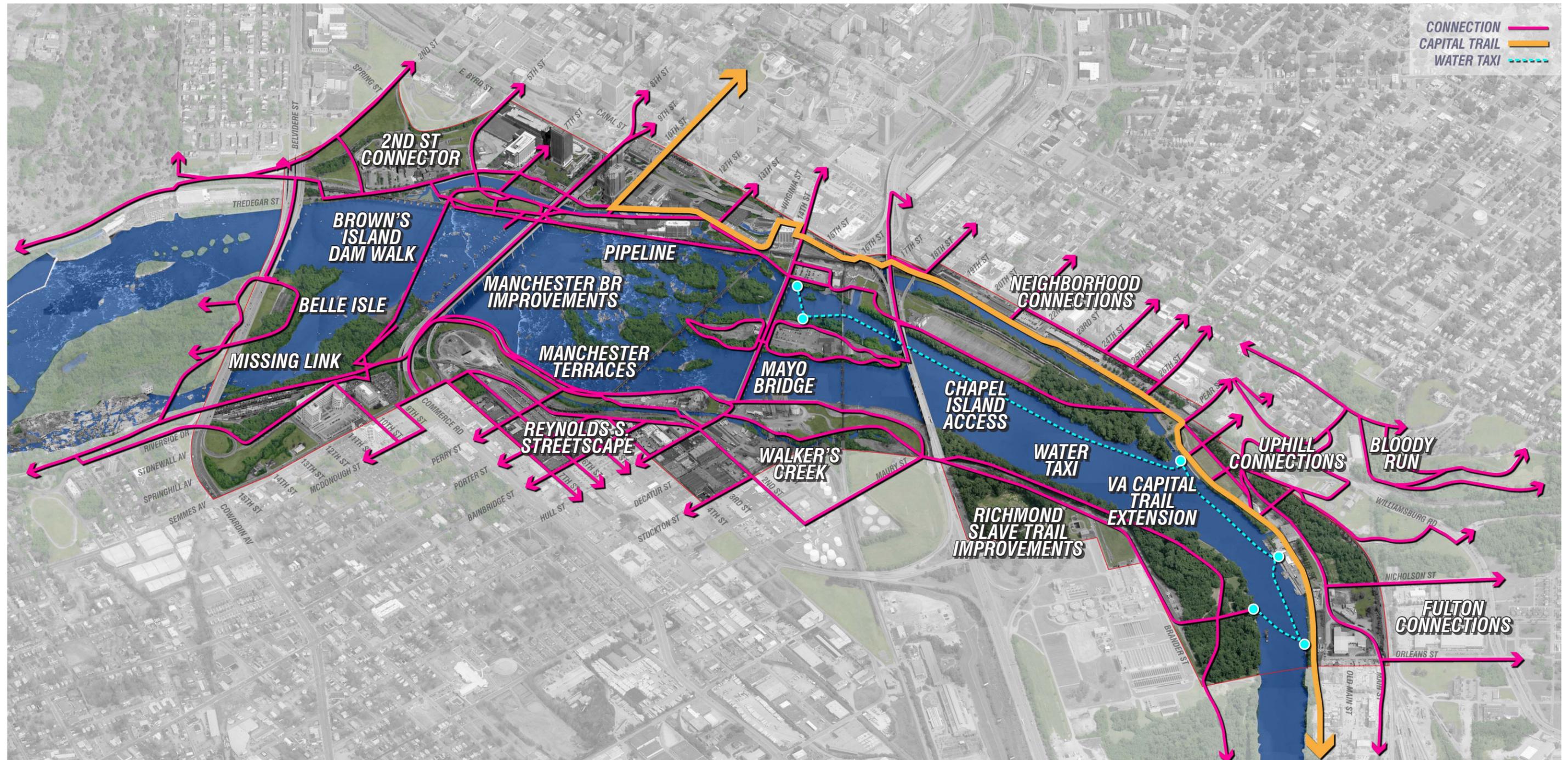


## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



The Plan anticipates incremental redevelopment of under-utilized parcels and languishing former industrial sites. Development strategies should favor mixed-use, with an emphasis on street level retail, where appropriate. The fundamental emphasis of redevelopment along the Riverfront is to intensify pedestrian activity at street level through infill development with sufficient density to be an attractor and destination of activity. Greater density reinforces urban character, provides for an increase in pedestrian activity, resulting in a safer and more vibrant city. Each redevelopment project will be subject to the existing public process and review to assess and enforce

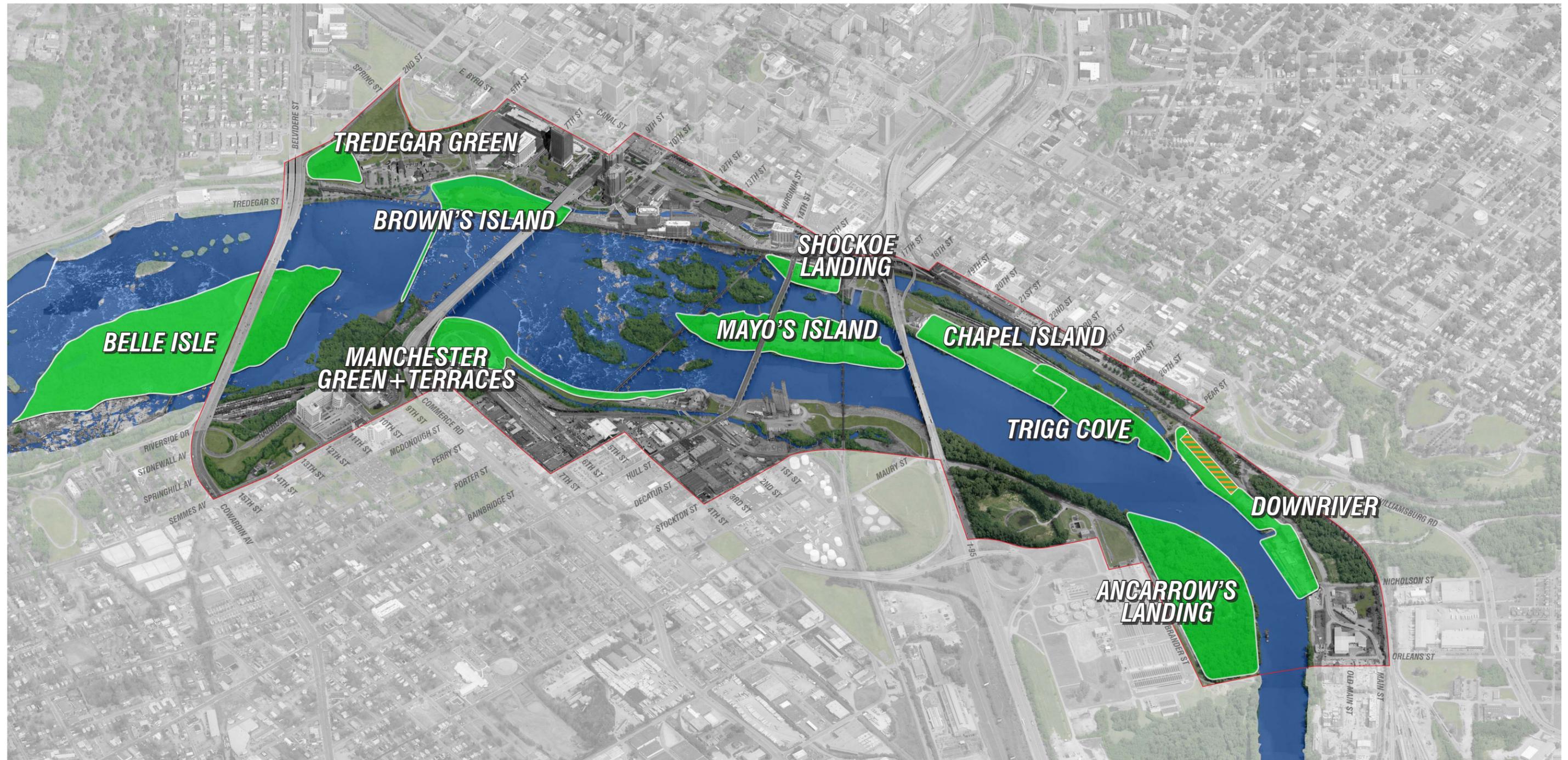
massing and detailing complementary to the Riverfront. The architectural expression of new infill development should reference the rich historic context of the Richmond Riverfront, speaking to the present without discarding the past, creating the next generation of landmark structures and neighborhood places.



## CONNECTIONS

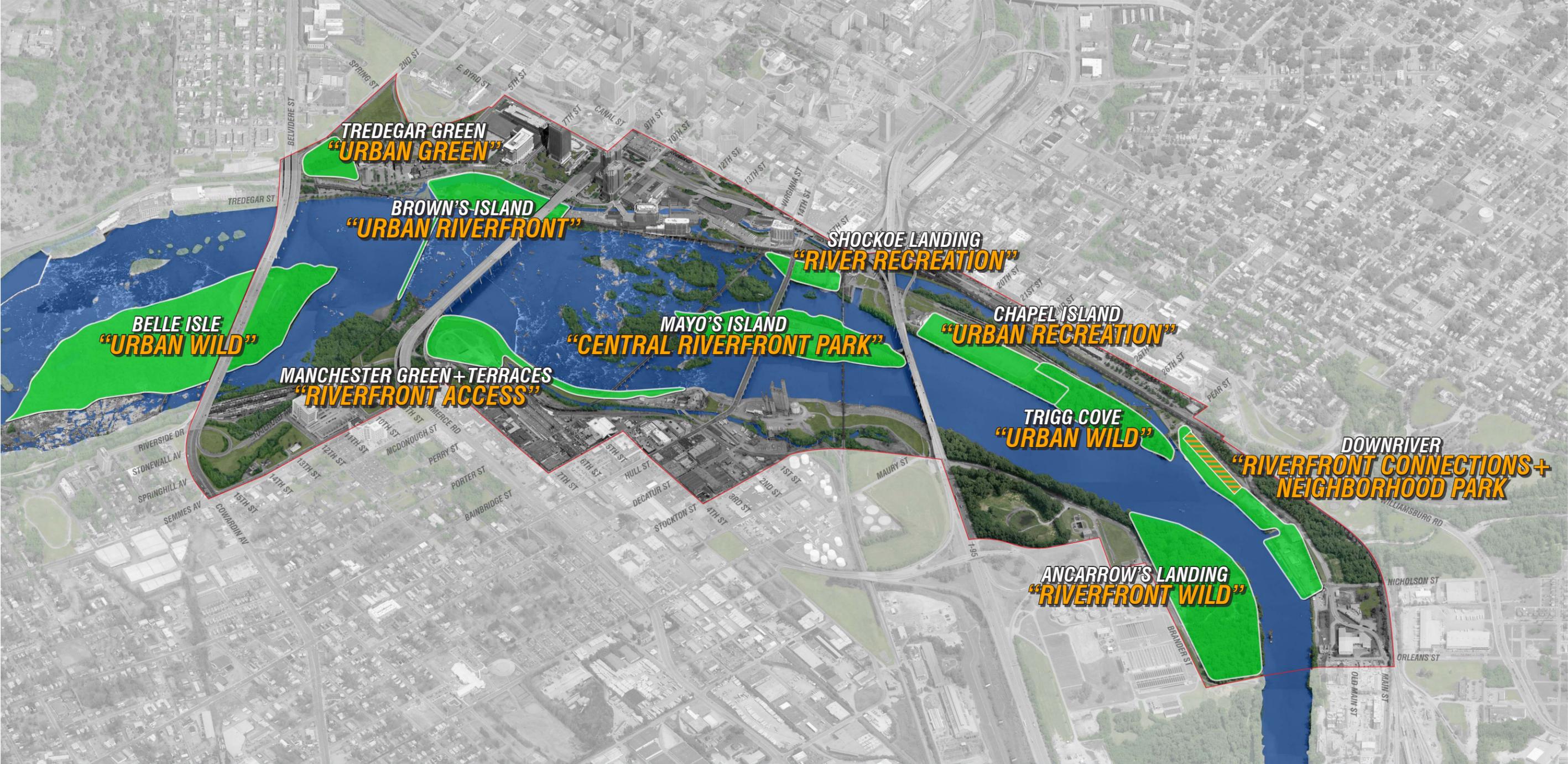
The Richmond Riverfront currently enjoys an abundance of pedestrian and bike routes of varying quality and difficulty, from broad, pedestrian-only sidewalks, to multi-use walks and single-track, off-road bike trails. In several prominent locations, however, there are notable omissions and opportunities to dramatically improve this circulation network. At a basic level, the Plan is focused on improving access to the James River, encouraging greater ease of access to, along, across and around the river via a diversity of routes, some linear and some loops. Improving these connections hinges on expanded access along active rail tracks, across existing infrastructure structures, through both public and private

property, as well as public streetscape improvements. The Plan anticipates connections to broader regional networks, including the East Coast Greenway and the Virginia Capital Trail. Completing the Virginia Capital Trail from Great Shiplock Park downriver expediently is necessary to achieve completion of the trail to coincide with the sesquicentennial of the end of the Civil War and the World Road Cycling Championships in 2015.



## PIVOTAL PLACES

There are ten underutilized sections of the Riverfront that can be reconfigured as pivotal destinations along the Riverfront. Each parcel has unique characteristics, constraints and adjacencies that define a singular potential for contributing to the larger Richmond Riverfront. These properties, highlighted in green, include: existing publicly-accessible spaces, existing public property, and property proposed for easements or outright acquisition.



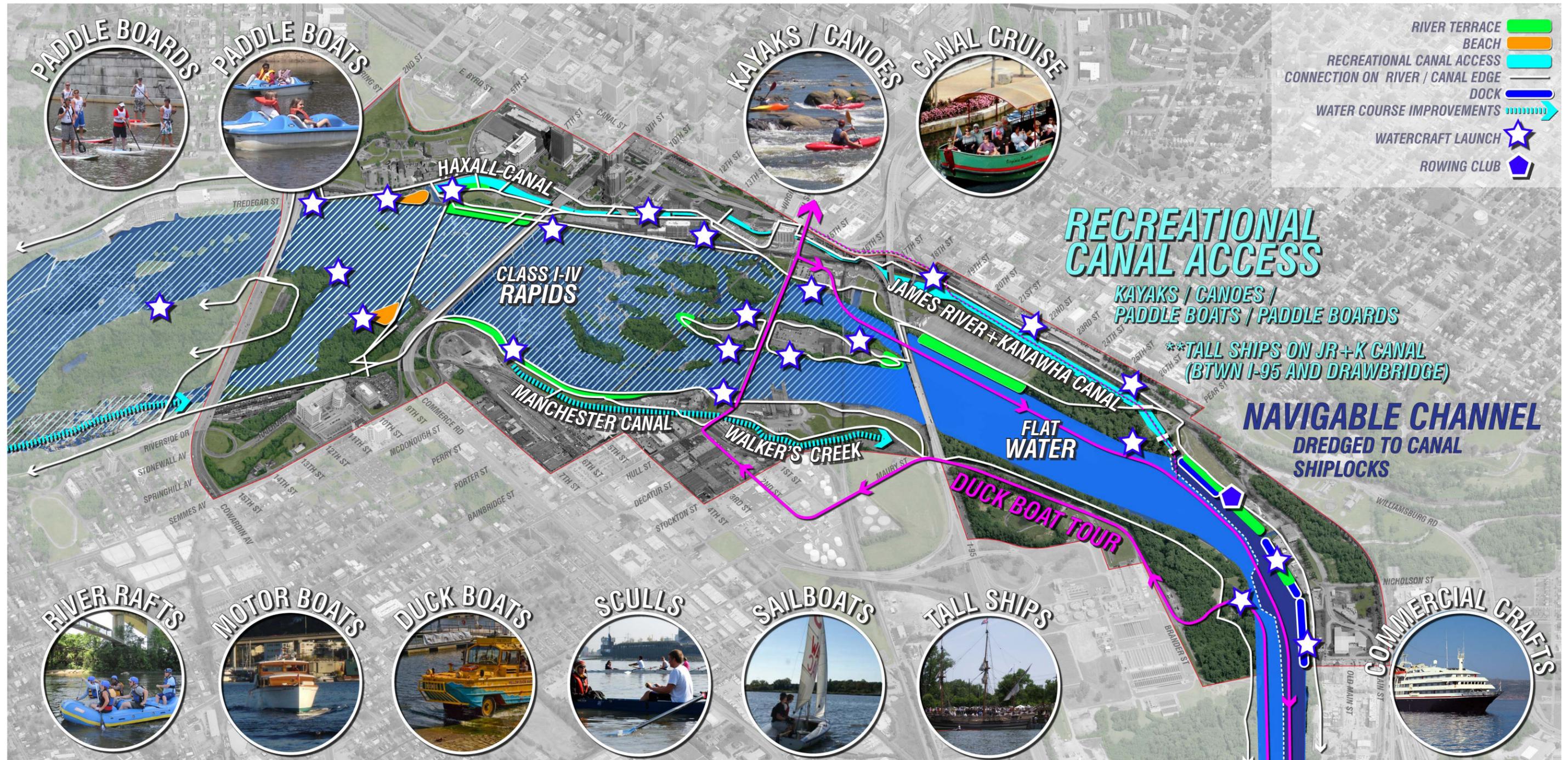
# RIVERFRONT CHARACTER



The James River is the dominant landscape feature of Richmond, and the geographic determinant for the founding of the City. Richmond was historically sited at the Falls of the James, the geologic boundary separating the coastal plain from the Piedmont, and the farthest inland reach of tidal fluctuation, and therefore coastal commerce. This fall line or zone is most visibly associated with the rapids upstream of Mayo Bridge, and the steep descent to the tidal portion of the river. While the James River is a singular geographic feature, the riparian landscape it has sculpted at the micro scale is varied. Human occupation and successive waves of industrial development have dramatically transformed the Richmond

Riverfront through dam, bridge, rail and viaduct infrastructure, as well as significant filling operations. This has produced a diversity of landscape characters, from relatively 'wild,' to fully 'urban,' with variations between these extremes. The Plan embraces the rich and varied character of the Riverfront: while the James River cannot uniformly be all things to all users, there can and should be a great diversity of character and function. The James River is integral to the brand and image of Richmond, with untapped potential to influence the creation of future iconic spaces along the Richmond Riverfront.





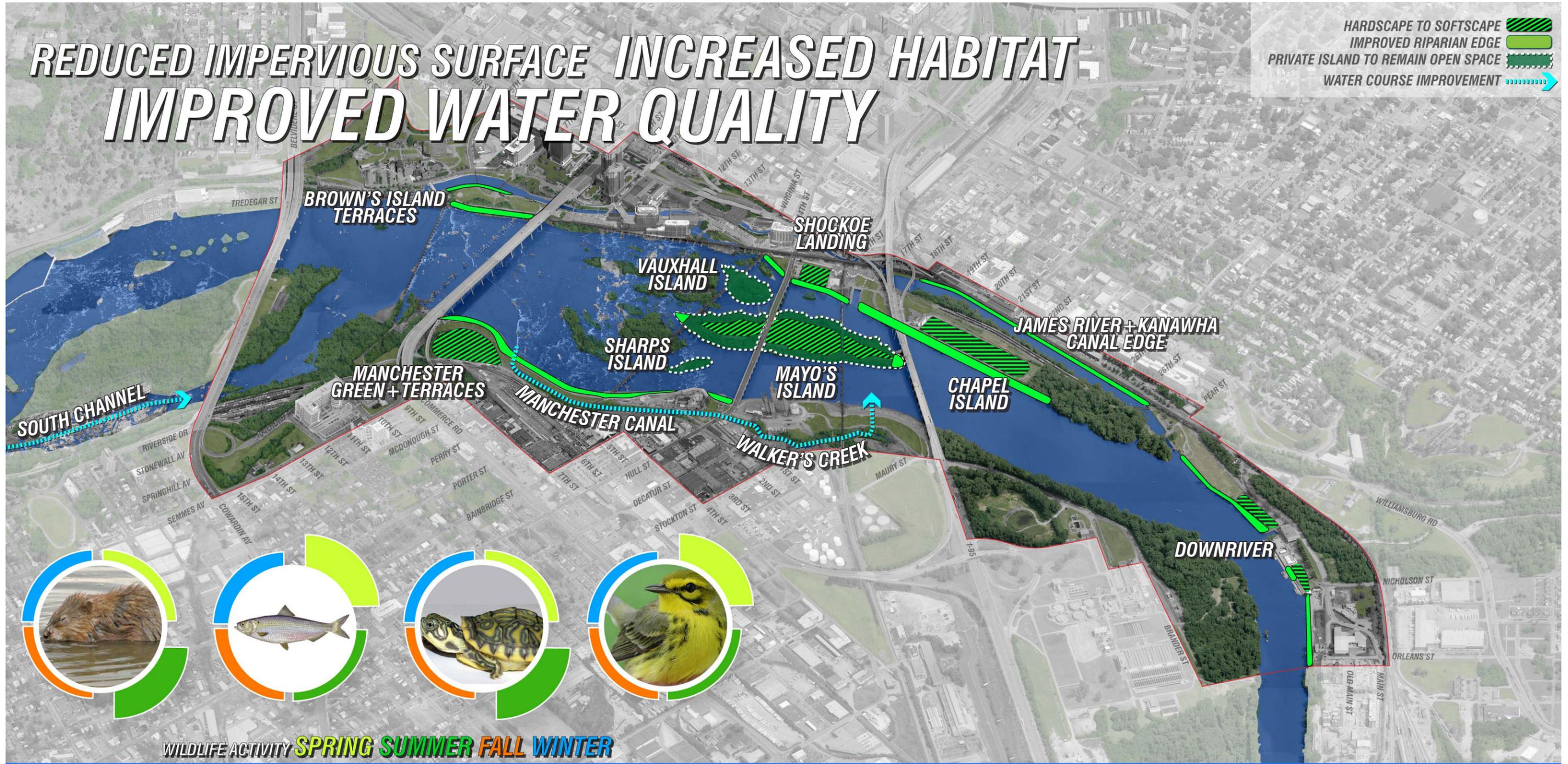
## WATER ACCESS

Connection to the James River can be both visual and physical, including sweeping views to and across the Riverfront, as well as new opportunities for engaging the water sheet. Interaction with the James ranges from sunbathing on the rocks; recreational watercraft passage through the rapids; flat water craft plying the tidal zone below 14th Street; fishing from various structures; or simply walking within the rocky, sandy and vegetated riparian zone. River terraces provide expanded access for both viewing and touching the water. More direct physical access to the river includes expanded locations for personal watercraft launch and takeout. A new, multi-tenant boathouse for sculling shells, as well as expanded marina

docks for commercial and recreational boats of all dimensions are concentrated downriver below Great Shiplock Park. Both the Haxall and James River & Kanawha Canals hold unrealized potential for personal watercraft recreation, providing activity within steps of the Canal Walk and Virginia Capital Trail. Reconfiguration of the Haxall Canal and Walker's Creek outfalls offer opportunities for celebrating the literal return of water to the James River.

**REDUCED IMPERVIOUS SURFACE IMPROVED WATER QUALITY**  
**INCREASED HABITAT**

HARDSCAPE TO SOFTSCAPE   
IMPROVED RIPARIAN EDGE   
PRIVATE ISLAND TO REMAIN OPEN SPACE   
WATER COURSE IMPROVEMENT 



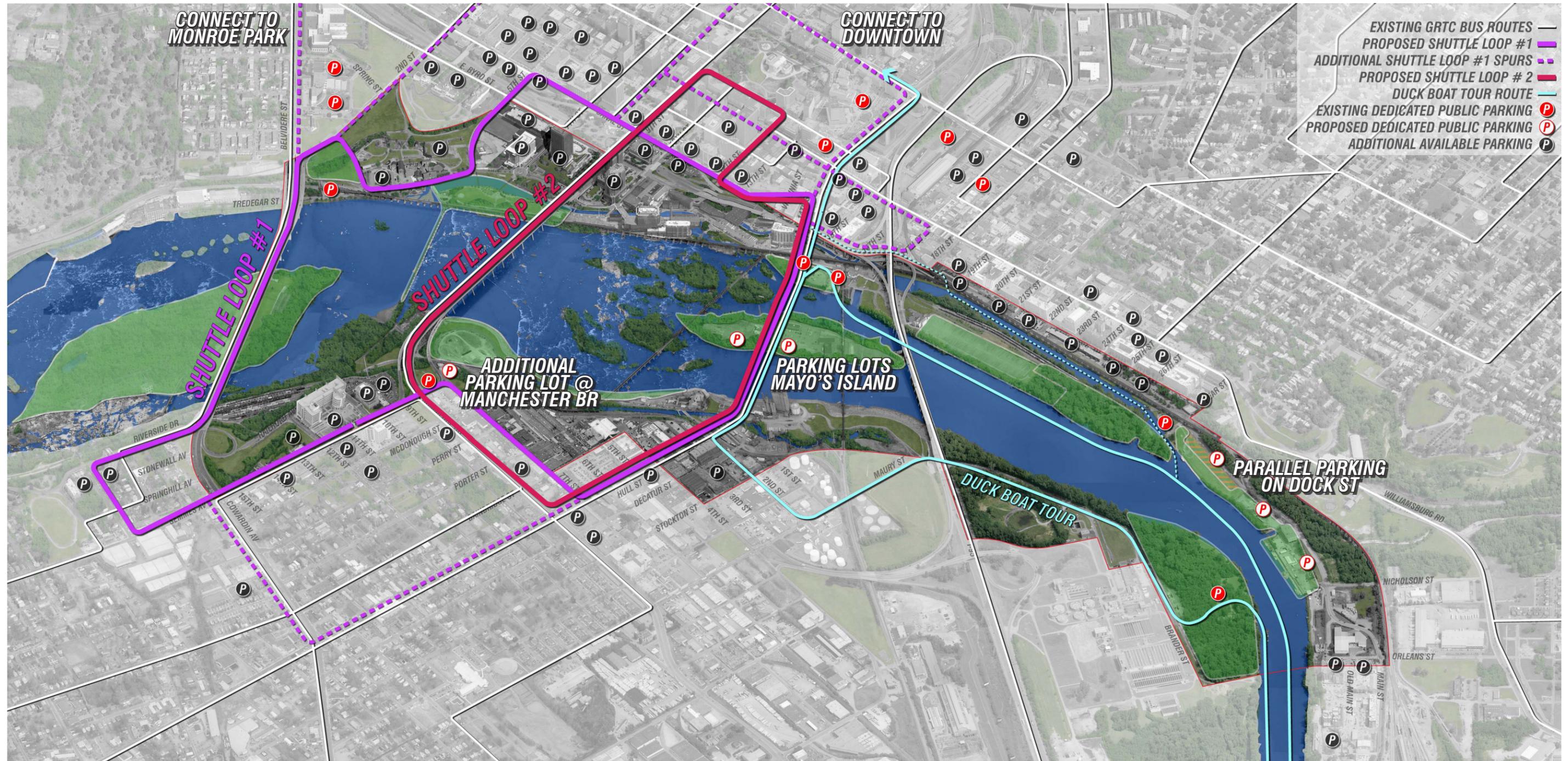
WILDLIFE ACTIVITY **SPRING** **SUMMER** **FALL** **WINTER**

# ECOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS



The water quality of the James River has long suffered unrestricted industrial pollution, which has dramatically reduced flora and fauna within the Riverfront corridor. The latter half of the 20th century saw both a significant reduction in river edge industrial activity and a renewed regulatory effort to enforce water quality standards. Together these two trends have incrementally catalyzed regrowth of vegetation, spurred a return of wildlife, and an improvement in water quality. The Plan aims to transform impervious hardscape or compacted industrial soils to landscaped softscape capable of infiltrating storm water on site. The Plan identifies areas where riparian, or river-dependent, species of vegetation can be

installed or restored with the objective of accelerating the return of diverse fauna species, expanding the natural web of habitats along the Riverfront. The Plan identifies several privately-owned islands in the James River, and advocates that their owners commit to long-term restrictive covenants to protect their current undeveloped status, or sell them to the City or Commonwealth for inclusion in a conservation easement.

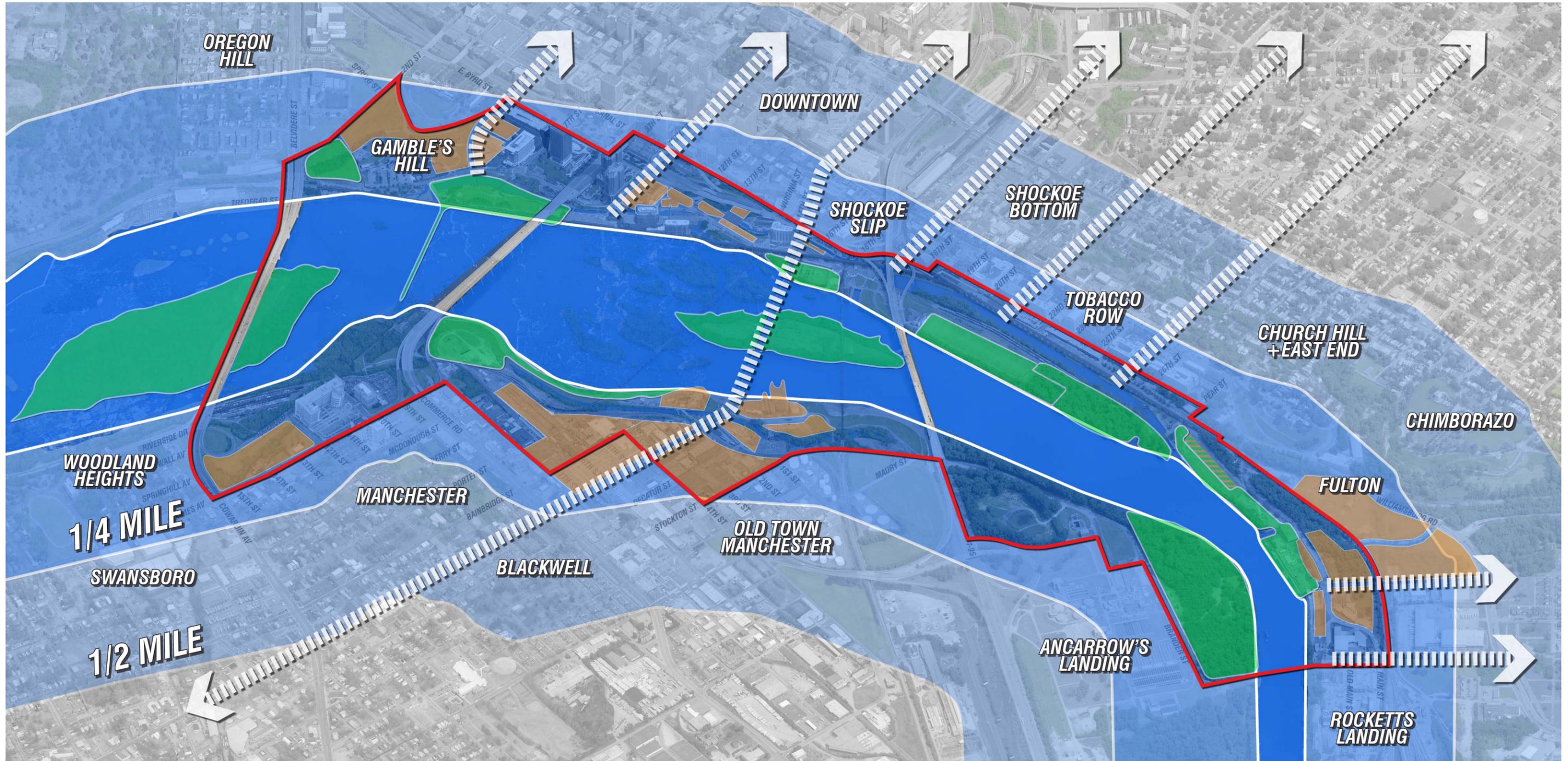


## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION + PARKING



Prevailing perception is that there is ample bus service across the River, but it does not adequately serve the recreational users of the Riverfront. There is no such consensus with regard to parking availability, with more than half the comments indicating that there is a surplus of available parking, while the balance indicate that there is insufficient parking close to the James River. The combination of one-way streets and peak hour parking restrictions work against the efforts of many downtown workers and visitors to access the Riverfront precisely when they have the chance at the end of the day. The Plan takes the long view that Richmond has an abundance of surface and garage parking, though the absence of

a coordinated parking authority and plan is sorely missing and needed to support the Riverfront Plan with adjustments to two-way streets where feasible, and strategic peak hour street parking. Each destination within the Riverfront should have a minimum amount of dedicated off-street parking with appropriate metering restrictions to deter daily office worker parking, yet allow for recreational use. Seasonal use of a shuttle operated by a third party vendor could help handle peak demand, connecting distant parking with the Riverfront, with the flexibility to refine routes based on desire and demand.



## REVERBERATIVE IMPACT



The Plan identifies redevelopment sites within the project study area, with the understanding that investment in the public Riverfront will catalyze a reverberative impact well beyond the project area. Investing in public realm improvements attracts significant private investment, triggering further on-site and local investment and associated increased revenues. The accessibility of the Riverfront to adjacent neighborhoods through the Plan's comprehensive network of connections maximizes opportunities for the reverberative impact of Riverfront improvements beyond the site boundary. Beyond pure economics, an improved Riverfront has the potential to dramatically impact the lives, health, fitness and well-being of Richmond residents through broadened opportunities to engage the natural environment and each other outdoors.