

## **Vision Statement in Support of The James River and Richmond's Riverfront, The Unique African-American History in Shockoe Bottom, and The View That Named Our City**

We, the undersigned, urge the elected officials and leaders in the City of Richmond, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and at the federal level to work with us on the following:

- 1) Develop a **riverfront park** along the James River that will preserve public access to the river and provide a lively, multi-use destination for citizens and tourists;
- 2) Take all steps necessary to ensure that the valuable and unique **African-American history** along the James River and in Shockoe Bottom is preserved honorably, and with all due respect; and
- 3) Preserve the **historic panoramic viewshed** of the James River from Libby Hill that is the basis for the naming of Richmond.

The City of Richmond possesses extraordinary historic, scenic, architectural, cultural and recreational resources that position us to be the U.S.'s premier capital city. Among our most valuable assets are the Riverfront along the James River that gave rise to the founding of Richmond, the unique African-American history that occurred in and around Shockoe Bottom, and the panoramic view of the James River from Libby Hill that is the basis for the naming of Virginia's capital city.



We believe that these unique resources could and should be connected in a way to promote tourism and enhance the quality of life for our residents. The City of Richmond's Downtown Master Plan proclaims the value of these particular resources, and -- recognizing the James River as the River Where America Was Born -- encourages that public access to Richmond's stretch of this living, breathing piece of history be preserved for all generations.

Of the hundreds who participated in the City's most recent Downtown Master Plan process, the majority supports a riverfront park along the James. Accordingly, the City's Downtown Master Plan encourages the development of a riverfront park as the primary use for the former Tarmac parcel, as a means for creating a lively, multi-use destination for citizens and visitors that preserves public access for all.

Mayor Dwight Jones and the Richmond City Council have allocated funding in the amount of \$500,000 for a riverfront study. Accordingly, lest we risk wasting that funding and doing permanent damage to the riverfront, no land use decisions concerning the riverfront should be made until the study is completed. If the riverfront study recommends the acquisition of riverfront land, the City should be prepared to act. Mayor Jones has proposed land acquisition funding of \$2.5 million for FY 11 and \$2 million for FY 12. City Council should be prepared to keep this funding in its entirety in the budget.

It's extremely important that our elected officials be mindful that for those families living in Richmond's East End, the riverfront represents a singular opportunity for access to natural resources, wildlife habitat, and recreation along the James. For that reason, we hope that the conservation easement recently placed on James River Park will be extended to areas of the riverfront in the East End not included in the easement.



The James River and the City of Richmond forever will be tied to the abominable practice of slavery in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Slave traders used the James to transport slaves into Richmond, where they were sold at auction as chattel.

City Council has allocated \$125,000 for a Shockoe study. Several historically significant sites in Richmond associated with slavery still exist along the James River and in Shockoe Bottom. These include Ancarrow's Landing; the Slave Trail; Lumpkin's Jail, where slaves were held prior to auction; the slave auction sites; and a slave burial ground. This part of Richmond's history – albeit shameful -- still remains largely untold and deserves to be shared with the world through a respectful retelling that acknowledges the wrongs inflicted upon a people.

It is our belief that acknowledging this painful history will provide much needed closure to the darkest chapter in Richmond's history. The resultant healing will include opportunity for new job creation through enhanced tourism, one of the most sustainable of industries. We urge our elected officials and leaders to demonstrate the courage and forthrightness required to tell the truth about our past, and voice plainly and for the world to hear, "May it never happen again."



The City's Downtown Master Plan recognizes the value of the historic viewshed from Libby Hill in historic Church Hill that historians believe is the basis for William Byrd II's naming of Richmond in 1733. This scenic panorama along the James River mirrors the view in Richmond-upon-Thames, England.

The value of this view cannot be overstated. On March 18, 2006, the mayors of Richmond, Virginia and Richmond-upon-Thames, England designated the panoramic vista from Libby Hill as "The View That Named the City." Likewise, in 2007 the Virginia General Assembly acknowledged with a Resolution the historic panorama of the James for its critical historic association with the early development of the City of Richmond and our Commonwealth, and its connection to Richmond-upon-Thames. Further, Virginia's legislators encouraged "the unencumbered and unobstructed preservation of the view in Virginia's capital city" for future generations to enjoy.

The panoramic view of the James River from Libby Hill Park in Richmond possesses scenic, historic, and cultural significance that extends far beyond the capital city, attracting visitors from around the world. Hundreds of citizens from around the Commonwealth and beyond have urged leaders in the City of Richmond to undertake efforts to preserve the historic view of the James River from Libby Hill Park.

We believe that being of such vital importance to the history of Virginia and its capital city, the panoramic view of the James River from Libby Hill Park belongs to all of the citizens.



We conclude by noting that our shared goals of a riverfront park, a respectful retelling of the African-American history in Richmond, and the preservation of the view that named Richmond do not preclude development. We understand, in fact, that development must occur for Richmond to continue moving forward. But, we are at a most critical juncture regarding our future prosperity. The City will succeed if we work together to identify areas appropriate for development that save access to the river, our unique history, and the view that is the basis for the naming of Richmond. These assets are our last great chance for being a world-class city. If we lose them, on our watch, we lose ourselves, and the promise we once held.

