Master of Urban and Regional Planning Capstone Projects

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Parks & Equity: A Framework for Equitable Access in Richmond, VA Parks

Kendra Norrell

Parks & Equity

A Framework for Equitable Access in Richmond, VA Parks

Pocosham Park

Kendra Norrell
Master of Urban and Regional Planning
L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs
Virginia Commonwealth University
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Acknowledgements

Pocosham Park Nearby Homes
Norrell, 2020

Pocosham Park Creek Sandbank
Norrell, 2020

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Executive Summary

Increasingly, cities are investing in their green spaces, such as open spaces and parks, as a strategy to improve the livability of the city, but also to improve the health of its residents. Research finds that access and proximity to green spaces provides a host of benefits to humans, including mental and physical health improvements.[1] However, not all residents have equal access to these green public amenities. Cities throughout the United States are racially and economically segregated, and evidence shows that low income and communities of color are less likely to live near accessible and high-quality green spaces.[2]

Research focuses on best practices for identifying minimum basic standards for DPR parks and the importance and limitations of green spaces in urban design. Basic standards include: setting the minimum limit for amenities in parks, best policies, implementation practices, and funding. The plan will include an analysis of the study area, Richmond, Virginia, and park access based on age, income, and race. Following the description of the study area, the plan will look into best practices found in other cities (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and New York, New York), and how their equitable park plans have evolved over time. Followed by the implementation of best practices in Richmond, Virginia and which communities are best to start based on the demographic data pulled from the United States Census. The plan will also include visualization designs from SketchUp and Adobe Photoshop software to help show how visualizations can impact the use of certain parks.

Pocosham Park Creek Bank
Norrell, 2020

Pocosham Park Trail
Norrell, 2020

Increasingly, cities are investing in their green spaces, such as open spaces and parks, as a strategy to improve the livability of the city, but also to improve the health of its residents. Research finds that access and proximity to green spaces provides a host of benefits to humans, including mental and physical health improvements.[3] However, not all residents have equal access to these green public amenities. Cities throughout the United States are racially and economically segregated, and evidence shows that low income and communities of color are less likely to live near accessible and high-quality green spaces.[4]

In *Investing in Equitable Park Systems,* funded through the Urban Institute, shows the benefits parks bring to residents to broaden the definition of equitable access to *quality* parks.[5] Just City theory application emphasizes the redistribution of amenities to create a more equitable city; redistributing time and money will increase access, use, and programming for many of the City of Richmond's parks.[6] To establish the Just City theory in this plan, it is important to acknowledge the social inequities that exist and create space to address access and infrastructure inequities fairly. Equitable quality parks offer mental and physical health support, provide green infrastructure, create a place for cultural and social events, and provide economic development to neighborhoods and cities, as long as residents can access the parks.

Many cities are adopting the 10-Minute Walk Campaign, a program sponsored by The Trust for Public Land, The National Recreation and Park Association, and the Urban Land Institute, to provide everyone a park within a 10-minute walk from their house.[7] In Richmond, most residents live within walking distance of *a* park, but not a quality park. Quality parks are defined by proximity, size, and organized activities. *Access* is defined by the park's connectivity to the urban grid, bike lanes, sidewalks, and bus routes. *Amenities,* includes infrastructure such as benches, maintained trails, organized sports, trash cans, water fountains, lightening, and landscaping.

Client

The project client is the City of Richmond's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities, represented by Michael Burton, who serves as the Trails and Greenways Superintendent. The mission of the department is "to provide exceptional recreation and leisure programs to enhance the overall quality of life for the citizens and visitors to the City of Richmond and strive to preserve, protect, maintain and improve all of its natural resources, parkland, community facilities and recreation opportunities for current and future generations".[8]

The City of Richmond's (the City) Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities (DPR) seeks a plan that helps inform and complement their vision statement to provide:

> high quality and well-maintained parks, recreation, facilities and programs that are accessible, cost effective and support the citizens' vision and values for cultural unity, affordability, livability and healthy lifestyles that will create high economic value for living and working in Richmond.[9]

This plan helps guide equitable investment in objective identification and development of accessible connections to neighborhood parks throughout the City.

DPR is focused on updating many of the parks within the city to deal with deferred maintenance and unequitable improvements. DPR is not only concerned with access, but they are also focusing on increasing the number of residents that visit the city parks. Increasing the number of visitors to parks means updating the infrastructure of the neighborhood parks. Quality parks with appropriate infrastructure and culturally relevant planning are used at a higher rate.[10] While it is important to have community engagement in park planning based on designing a park for community needs, only relying on community engagement limits development only to parks that have active community groups. Just City Theory in planning focuses on the outcome of planning instead of the process. Emphasis on the outcome will allow DPR to address inequities in park infrastructure and design first, before working meeting consensus through community engagement. When planners focus on the process and reaching consensus, structural and social inequities within the community are ignored.[11] DPR is in the process of working on a variety of park master plans, the City of Richmond is working on the city-wide master plan, there is concern about pedestrian safety, and the GRTC (public transportation agency) recently finished the first year of route restructuring. This is a great time for DPR to visualize their interest in identifying different urban routes to the parks and starting to update the infrastructure in all parks.



Pocosham Park Creek
Norrell, 2020

In 2019, Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney announced the desire for more and improved park space within City limits. While the majority of residents live within a 10-minute radius of a park, there are approximately 51,000 city residents that do not.[12] Research finds that access and proximity to green spaces provides a host of benefits to humans, including mental and physical health improvements. However, not all residents have equal access to these green public amenities. The City also ranks on the low end, nationally, of dedicated park land. Richmond only uses 6% of land for park space, compared to the national average of 15%, and some of these parks are similar to Pocosham where they are undeveloped and not prepared for any form of neighborhood recreation. By the end of 2020 Mayor Stoney would like for DPR to transform "10 parcels of unoccupied city owned land into green space".[13]

Pocosham Park, in the 9th District, is the focus of this plan. As one of the districts with the lowest median income and the highest percentage of people of color, the parks within the 9th District meet the requirement set forth by this paper. The 9th District, and most of the southern neighborhoods in the City, has few parks and low access to those parks, as shown in Map 1. The planning layout of roads is less grid-like and more focused on creating cul-de-sacs. The lack of a street grid makes it difficult for residents to use sustainable transportation to access. Depending on where the GRTC stops are located, residents may not have a direct path from their home to the stop.

Pocosham Park was selected as a middle point in a 25-mile greenway between Pocahontas State Park (PSP) and the James River Park System (JRPS). This entry into the midpoint of the greenway would allow residents, that do not want to bike / walk the entire trail, an access point. While Pocosham has been closed for the 5-years, it has the infrastructure needed to create an access point to the greenway. There is already a parking lot within the park, space for trails to either be developed or improved to continue north to the James River.

Pocosham Park consists of 85 acres of the City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities owned land. The park is located on the border of the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County in the City's 9th District. It is in a great location to connect to a proposed greenway from PSP, located in Chesterfield County, to the JRPS. PSP is the largest state park in the Commonwealth of Virginia. PSP is known for its trails – mountain biking, hiking, trail running, etc. – and a greenway connection from the City to the park would increase the access possibilities to include cycling and pedestrian modes of access.

Legend
- 9th District
- Council Districts
- Streams
- Roads
- Waterways

Miles
0 0.45 0.9   1.8   2.7   3.6
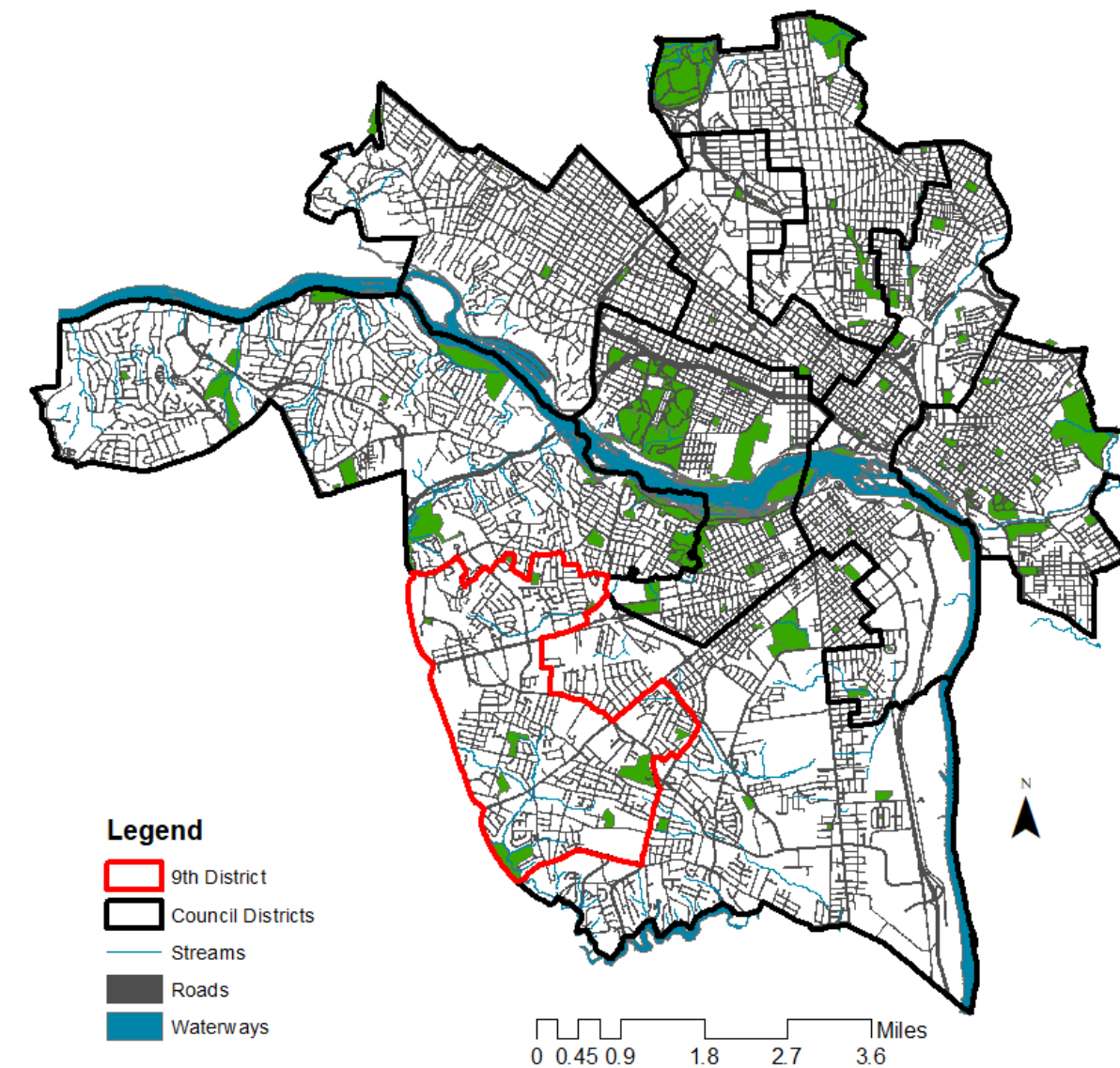
Map 1: City of Richmond District Map
City of Richmond Department of Planning and Review, 2019

Demographics

There are seven (7) potential entry points selected by City of Richmond and Chesterfield County DPRs to provide entry across municipal lines. This plan focuses on developing the entry point at Walmsley Boulevard which is circled in black on Map 4. This entry point already has an established roadway, entrance into the park, and neighborhood access. There is development needed to create equitable access (bike and pedestrian infrastructure) along this route, which if planned, can be part of the redevelopment process of Pocosham Park.

Looking at the entry points on Map 4, it is clear to see the importance of regional collaboration between the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County. The completion of the greenway between PSP and the JRPS relies on an agreed upon entry point that allows residents to connect easily and efficiently across municipality borders. At this point in the planning process the agreed upon connection point is Walmsley Boulevard.

Photo 1 shows the current state of Walmsley Boulevard near Pocosham Park. For equitable access a redesign of the street needs to be completed to create safe access in and out of the Park. The creation of a multi-purpose lane would improve access to the Park. Reconfiguring Walmsley Boulevard so that speeds, at best, match the speed limit which is 18 miles per hour to provide safer access.

The study area around Pocosham Park is limited to a 2-mile radius around the park. Within that radius, there are ten public schools: six City of Richmond Public Schools and four Chesterfield County Public Schools. The demographics of this area which houses roughly 30,000 people.[14] The breakdown of the 30,000 people in the Pocosham Park study area is a follows: 30-40% are below the poverty line, 30-50% do not have a high school diploma, 50-80% of the units are occupied by renters, and 60-70% of residents are under 30 years of age.[15] The racial breakdown of the population is shown in Figure 1.

Pocosham Study Area Racial Demographics

Other/Multiple 1.9%
Latino 9.0%
White 30.5%
Black 58.6%
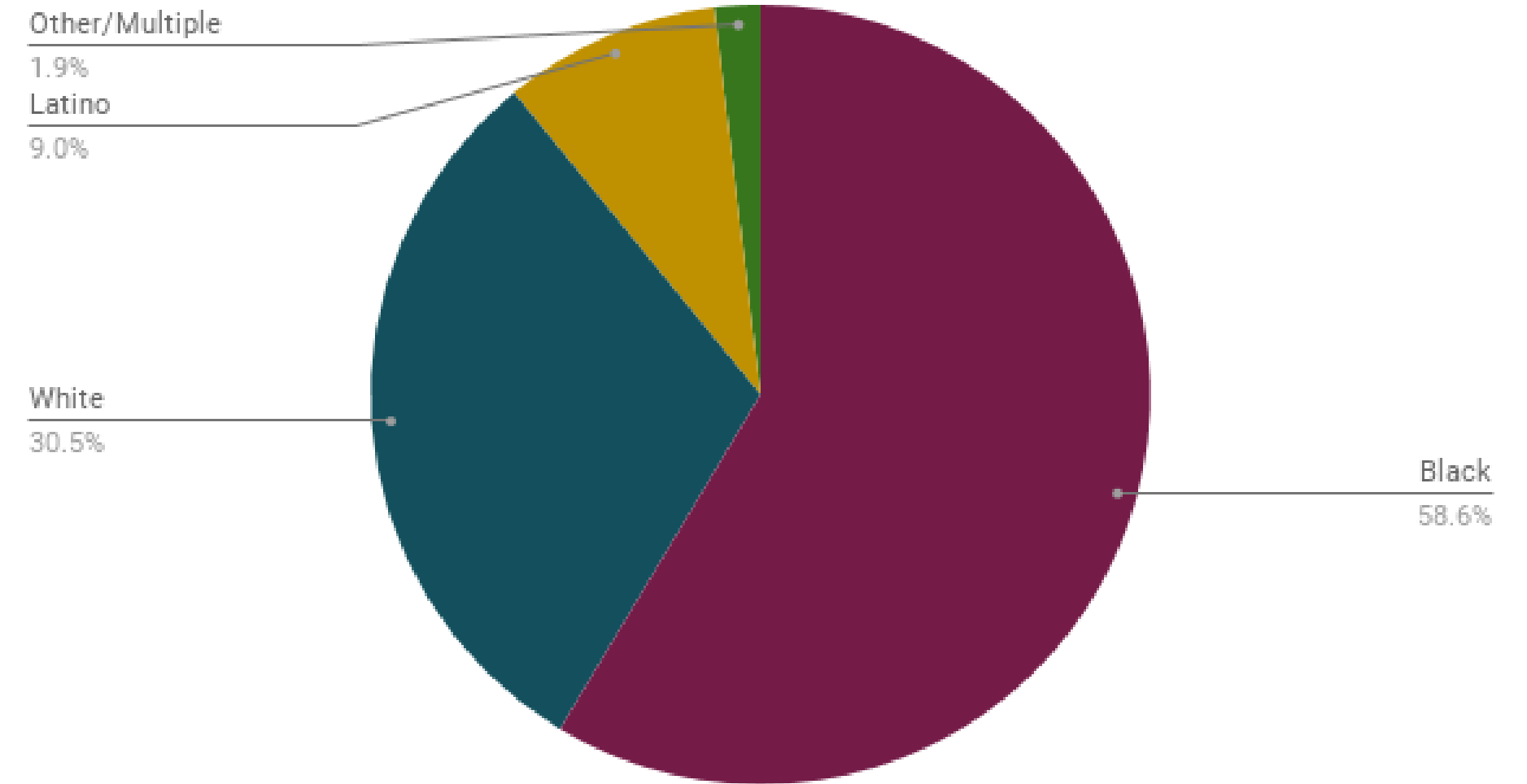
Figure 1: Racial Demographics
City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities, 2020
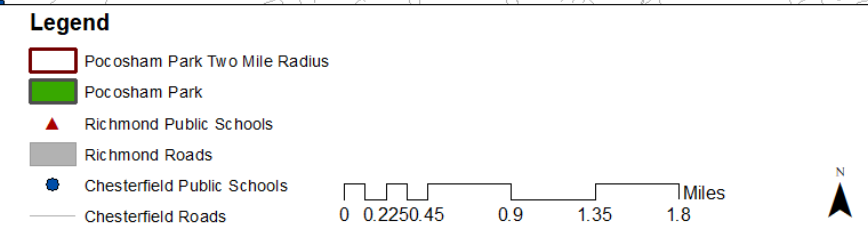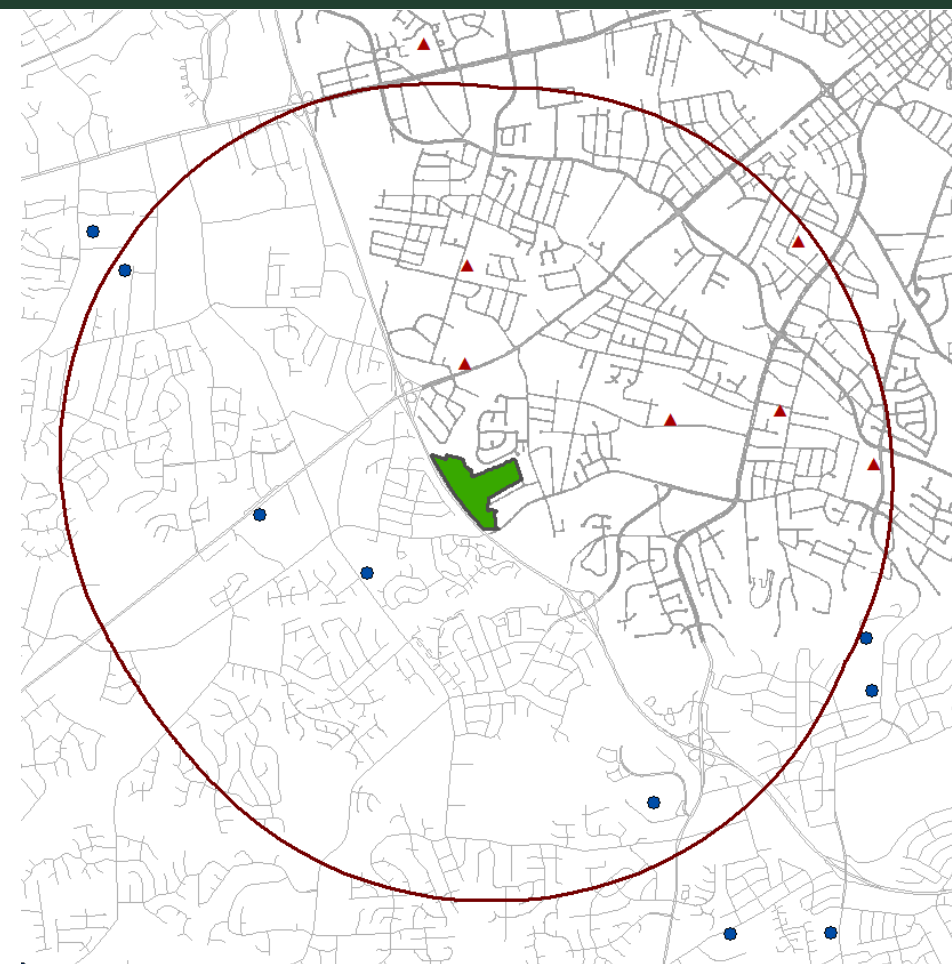
Map 2: Pocosham Park Study Area
City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities, 2020

Legend

- Pocosham Park Two Mile Radius
- Pocosham Park
- ▲ Richmond Public Schools
- Richmond Roads
- ● Chesterfield Public Schools
- Chesterfield Roads

0 0.225 0.45 0.9 1.35 1.8 Miles

N

Pocosham Park Creek from Trail
Norrell, 2020

Regional Collaboration for Park Planning

The desired greenway between PSP and the JRPS involves collaboration between the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County, as shown in Map 3., The greenway will cross the border between the two municipalities at an approved area that will allow visitors to traverse between the parks. This collaboration is not a new concept for Virginia and not a new concept for the City of Richmond. Looking locally, the Capital Trail which runs through Richmond's downtown into Henrico County, Charles City County, and James City County, is an example of successful regional collaboration that provided access on one connected trail.[16]
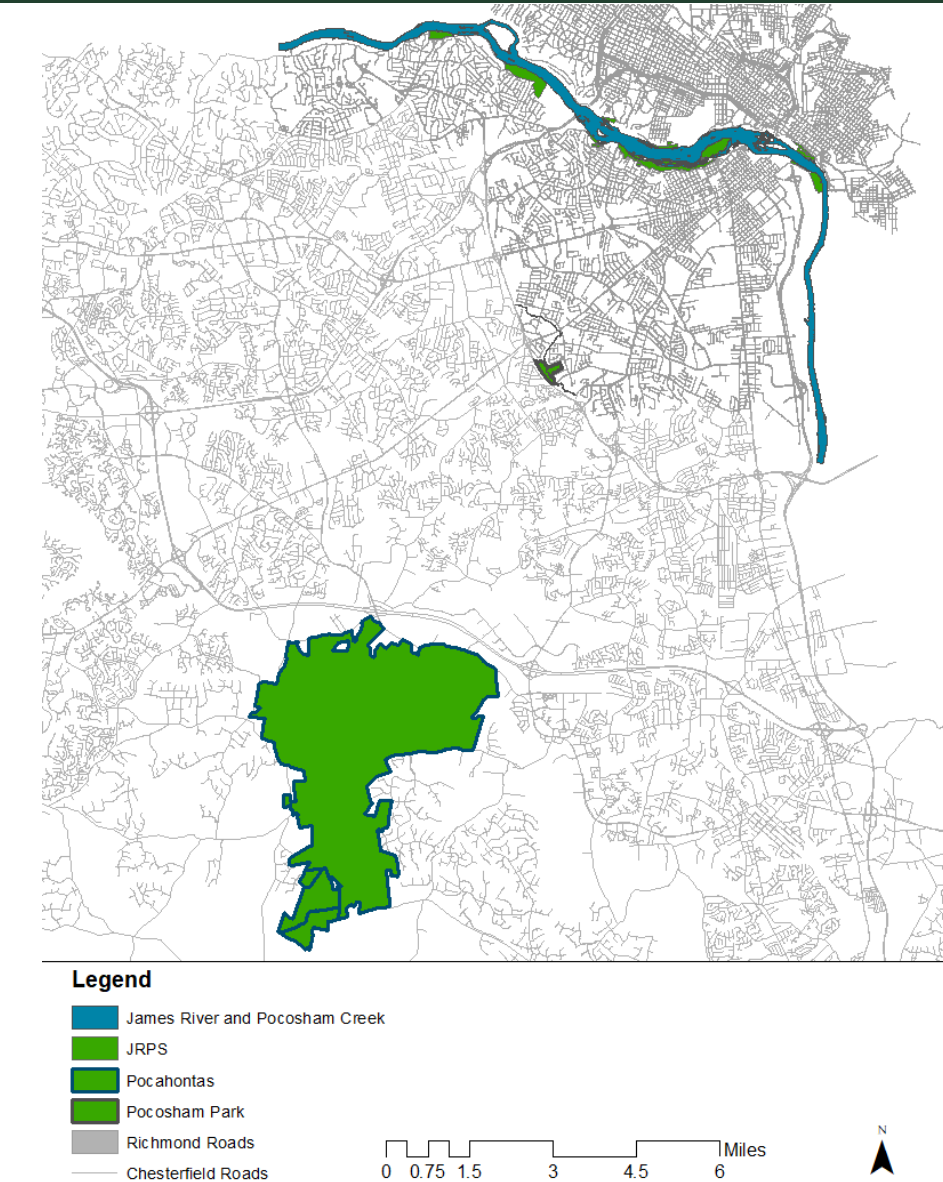
In 2004, The Virginia Capital Trail Foundation was formed as a "nonpartisan advocacy partner to provide Trail expertise, to raise public awareness of the Trail, and to seek funding and contributions to enhance and promote the Trail,".[17]

The Ashland to Petersburg Trail (ATP) is another local example of regional trail collaboration. The ATP is currently being looked into and goes from Ashland to Petersburgh through Chesterfield County, Hanover, Country, Henrico County, City of Colonial Heights, and City of Richmond.[18] Bike Walk RVA, a Richmond local non-profit organization that promotes and advocates for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, is in support of the ATP. Bike Walk RVA shows a couple of case studies on their website to show the impact of trails through urban areas – The Indianapolis Cultural Trail which brought un over 11,000 jobs and a $1 billion in economic impact and the Minneapolis Midtown Greenway which increased local development projects and resulted in $750 million in new homes.[19]

Georgetown Climate Center released a report on regional collaboratives in 2017. In this report it has been shown that regional collaboration is effective and a best practice to develop coordinated policies across jurisdictions.[20] It is important to establish this relationship for trail projects to help connect residents to other jurisdictions instead of having trails dead-end at City lines.

The park governmental agency, The National Park Service, whose mission is to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations," understands the importance of national and regional collaboration.[21] According to the National Park Service there are nine characteristics of a successful partnership in planning:[22]
1. A shared vision, created through full engagement of all partners, agency and on-agency alike
2. Ownership of the partnership throughout each partner organization
3. A genuine commitment to sharing responsibility in problem-solving and decision making
4. Strong interpersonal relationships, trust, and on-going communication
5. An appreciation and reliance upon one another's strengths
6. A flexible administrative environment for the partnership that encourages and rewards creativity, risk-taking, innovation, and entrepreneurship

Legend

- James River and Pocosham Creek
- JRPS
- Pocahontas
- Pocosham Park
- Richmond Roads
- Chesterfield Roads

0 0.75 1.5   3   4.5   6   Miles

Map 3: Pocahontas State Park to James River Park System
City of Richmond Department of Planning and Review, 2019

Pocahontas to JRPS - City County Conncetion Points
City of Richmond, VA - Chesterfield County, VA
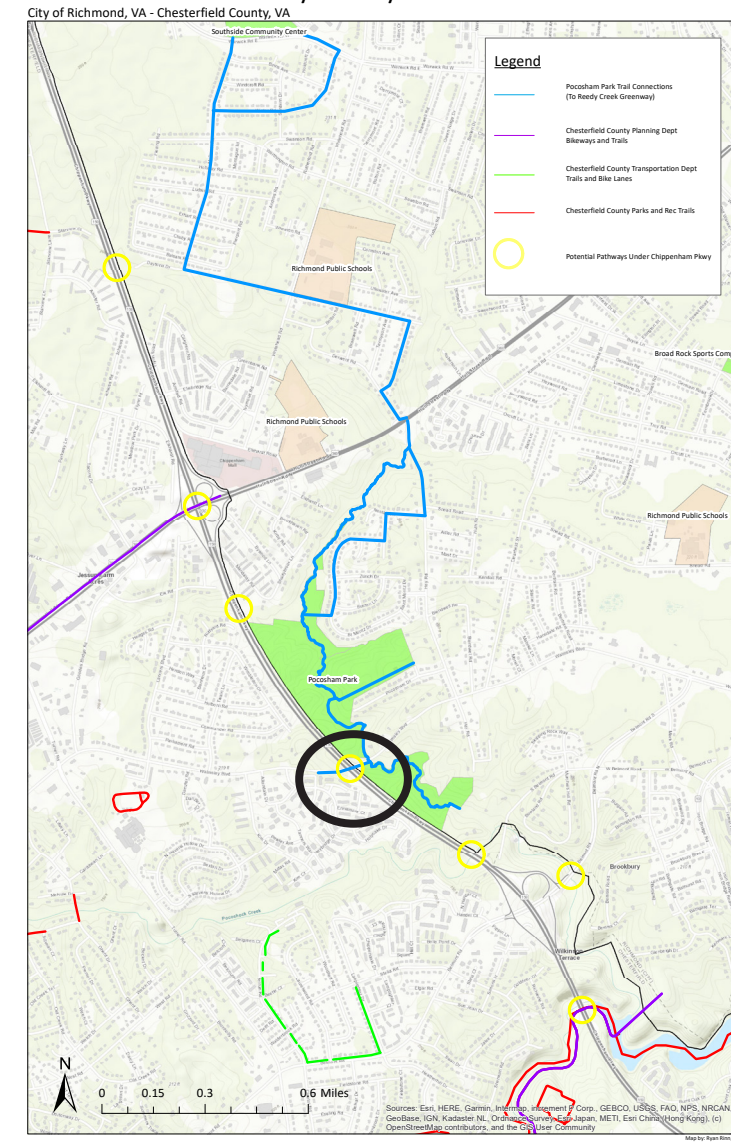
Map 4: Pocosham Park Entry Points from Chesterfield County
City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities, 2020

7. Sustained leadership at a variety of levels within each partners organization
8. A strong local "taproot" that grounds the partnership in place, heritage, and traditions
9. Place-based education initiatives that catalyze citizen engagement

If it is decided that the partnership between Richmond DPR and Chesterfield DPR will continue as a municipality partnership, it is important to establish on the front end the vision and mission of the partnership, address strengths and gaps within the partnership, identify barriers to partnership, build capacity for the project and partnership, and create milestones to identify and celebrate success.[23] Most Americans live a regional life, very few stay just within their municipality, but many regions do not have a regional identity.[24] Because of the lack of regional identity, it is important that the collaboration focuses on creating a culture of joint resident responsibility instead of focusing on government control of the project to establish the identity of the greenway. The greenway between PSP and JRPS needs to meet the needs of the surrounding communities attached to the greenway and then the needs of non-residential users.

A regional example of park regional collaboration includes areas in northern Virginia. NOVA Parks is an organization created through the partnership of Arlington county, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Falls Church, and the City of Fairfax.[25] Through partnership, there are over 12,000 acres of public greenspace preserved for residents to use.[26] Outside of preserving land, benefits of the collaboration are pooled funds from each local government and connected trails that move through each jurisdiction.[27]

The Minneapolis metropolitan area includes park and open space development in their regional planning similar to transit and sewage planning.[28] In 1974, the regional planning agency, Metropolitan Council, established a regional park system of 53 parks and 340 miles of interconnected trails.[29] Similar to NOVA Parks, one major benefit of regional collaboration is the grouping of funds for park development and maintenance.

Looking at the interconnectedness of metropolitan economies, especially in eco-tourism, developing access between sites through collaboration will help build out the economic unit around park development and access in the region. Partially due to the influence of urban sprawl, regions are becoming more interconnected and need to establish regional cooperation to compete on a national, and global, level to engage both businesses and residents.[30]

Pocosham Park Neighbors
Norrell, 2020

People without access to parks have an increased risk of stress, depression, poor mental health, heart disease, diabetes, poor physical health, heat waves, flooding, and other extreme weather events.[31] All of the above benefits are tied to park access, but the one benefit that is impacted by poor park design is psychological benefits. And many cities are starting to decide resource allocation and capital investments by using local data to create objective equity frameworks.[32]

According to the Trust for Public Lands, 100 million United States residents don't have access to a high-quality park within 10-minutes. A high-quality park is defined as a park that is "safe, well maintained, and designed and programmed to meet community needs,".[33] The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) listed five elements of a successful park: engaging, adaptable, authentic, connected, and iconic.[34] Outside of the definition established by the Trust for Public Lands, NRPA added that parks should be "connected to larger amenity infrastructure of sidewalks, bike paths, greenspaces, streetscapes, and mixed-use environments."[35]

Increased walkability has been seen to impact the relationship between the built environment and diseases (obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases). Neighborhoods that provide the ability for residents to walk to destinations have healthier residents due to increased daily activity.[36] Streets that are designed to favor cars are wider, have aerodynamic geometries, have low street parking, and the ability for drivers to reach high speeds.[37] In contrast, streets with high pedestrian density are seen in areas with narrow streets where drivers do not feel comfortable reaching high speeds.[38] Neighborhoods that have speed limits trying to regulate speed are not as safe due to the lack of street design used to control vehicle speeds.

One consideration that park planners and this plan must emphasis is the risk of green gentrification, or displacement of current residents due to the desirable increase in green public infrastructure. While we know that for every dollar that cities invest in greenspace there is on average a $7 return on investment.[39] Cities, especially, need to have the established property value increases to continue to improve all infrastructure in many underinvested areas. Residents that do not have current green infrastructure deserve to have the City invest in new green infrastructure in their neighborhood to increase health equity and climate change resilience. Unfortunately for some current residents, the addition of greenspace can increase the value of their home by $81.54 per square foot.[40]

Access

Park access is impacted by the design of the roads and sidewalk access to and near the parks. There are street design standards that impact accessibility from a pedestrian's point of view. According to the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), speed limits in high pedestrian areas should be 18 mph or lower to reduce the risk of injury during a crash.[41] Research has shown that speed limits do not do much to impact the speed of drivers, but street design has a larger impact in reduced speeds. High pedestrian areas need investments in infrastructure that separates pedestrians, cyclist, and automobiles with physical barriers.[42]

There are a limited number of parks within City of Richmond boundaries that offer an abundance of amenities and activities. It is important to broaden access to everyone across the city, while also increasing the access locally. It has been shown that parents are concerned by the lack of safety (perceived or actual) accessing parks and there are major gaps with park access and sustainable transportation in Richmond.[43] Eventually, all sustainable transportation users will walk through a part of the walk shed of the parks. While the bike lanes are not a connected system throughout the city, identifying where there are missing connections to parks can help promote areas where bike lanes are needed to help transition people of all ages to and from public park activities and events.

Walkability is a feature that is present in equitable park designs. In New Urbanism, walkability is achieved when neighborhoods are arranged in compact walkable blocks.[44] These blocks serve a diverse group of people in age and income with access to stores, schools, restaurants, and other destinations that do not require the use of a vehicle to access.[45] Increased walkability has been seen to impact the relationship between the built environment and diseases (obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases). Neighborhoods that provide the ability for residents to walk to destinations have healthier residents due to increased daily activity.[46] Streets that are designed with cars in mind are wider, have low street parking, and the ability for drivers to reach high speeds.[47] In contrast, streets with high pedestrian density are seen in areas with narrow streets where drivers do not feel comfortable reaching high speeds.[48] Neighborhoods that have speed limits trying to regulate speed are not as safe due to the lack of street design used to control vehicle speeds.

Walmsley Boulevard
Norrell, 2020

Pocosham Park Parking Lot
Norrell, 2020

Most parks have amenities beyond open public space. The largest correlation of park use is park size and the amount of organized activities provided in and by the park.[49] It is important in redistributing materials to establish equity to acknowledge the cultural needs of the community through programming.

The goal of equitable access in design, is to first create parks that are quality parks within every neighborhood and second to provide universal access to the parks. Vulnerable neighborhoods, historically, have not had access to quality parks and those inequalities follow their families for generations after. Many cities are working to address these inequalities through focusing their park investments to communities in need.[50] To create equitable park systems, funding has to be appropriated to historically underfunded parks and communities. Updating, creating, or changing a park all involve additional funds outside of the operating budget.

Currently, Pocosham Park has no amenities outside of a paved parking lot and one (1) water fountain, as shown in Photo 2. Future efforts of providing amenities should center around community meetings to meet the desires and concerns of the neighborhood.

Vision & Goals

City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities' Vision
The City of Richmond's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities seeks to be recognized by the community and the region as a department that provides high quality and well maintained parks, recreation facilities, and programs that are accessible, cost effective and support the citizens' vision and values for cultural unity, affordability, livability, and healthy lifestyles that will create high economic value and working in Richmond.[51]

Park Access Vision
The City of Richmond's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities seeks to provide 10-minute pedestrian access to a high-quality park for all City of Richmond residents.

Goals
1. Provide universal access to exceptional recreation and leisure
2. Improve and establish recreation opportunities in all communities
3. Establish equitable access and a development framework to use in all parks

Goals	Objectives	Actions
1. Provide universal access to exceptional recreation and leisure	1.1 Regional collaboration between Richmond and surrounding counties 1.2 Partnership with DPW and DPU to create pedestrian and cycle access to and from Pocosham 1.3 Create clear access points from each neighborhood to parks to establish a 10-minute walk shed	1.1.1 Establish official partnership between City of Richmond and Chesterfield County to build access into Pocosham 1.1.2 Create greenway access from Chesterfield on Walmsley Blvd 1.2.1 Support Capital Improvements on Hey Road 1.2.2 Improve sidewalk access to and from Pocosham 1.2.3 Utilize Complete Street Guidelines from City of Richmond 1.3.1 Identify Pocosham access points 1.3.2 Begin retrofitting access points for universal accessibility to Pocosham 1.3.3 Increase GRTC Access to Pocosham
2. Improve & establish recreation opportunities in all communities	2.1 Provide access to recreational opportunities in all communities 2.2 Increase the number of residents that have 10-minute access to a park	2.1.1 Develop a framework to access park infrastructure 2.1.2 Establish rotating educational programs 2.2.1 Identify and rank City owned parcels that can be turned into parks 2.2.2 Improve signage and information about activities
3. Establish equitable access and a development famework to use in all parks	3.1 Develop an equity lens to incorporate into park projects 3.2 Participate in equity cultural changes within the City of Richmond	3.1.1 Support the Equity Resolution in City Council 3.1.2 Create an equity framework for park investment 3.1.3 Use Equity Lens to access unintentional impacts on communities 3.2.1 Identify how park access impacts goals of other departments 3.2.2 Partner with other departments to develop holistic improvements through addition of park improvements 3.2.3 Partner with other City organizations to increase collaboration on project developments

Goal One

Provide universal access to exceptional recreation and leisure.

Objective 1.1: Expand regional collaboration between Richmond and surrounding counties.
Pocosham Park is located on the boarder of the City of Richmond and Chesterfield County. Disparities with park access do not end at municipality borders. Continuing established collaboration and partnership with Chesterfield County Department of Parks and Recreation will allow connected access to Pocosham Park between municipalities and improve the regional 10-minute walkshed.

Action 1.1.1: Establish an official partnership between City of Richmond and Chesterfield County to build access to Pocosham Park.
Creating an official partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will establish roles for each municipality in terms of planning and funding for current improvements and future developments.

Action 1.1.2: Create greenway access from Chesterfield County.
Identifying and developing an entrance/exit point between municipalities for the greenway between Pocahontas State Park and James River Park System will allow access between the two municipalities and can potentially connect to Pocosham Park.

Objective 1.2: Partner with the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Department of Utilities (DPU) to create pedestrian and cycle access to and from Pocosham Park.
Partnering with DPW and DPU allows DPR to establish right-of-ways and identify street and sidewalk improvements that are close to parks, as shown in Figure 3. DPW is currently in the process of funding their Capital Improvements starting in 2020. DPR can advocate for funding improvements that provide access to parks around the City, as funding becomes available.

Action 1.2.1: Support Capital Improvements on Hey Road and Hull Street.
In the adopted Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2024, Hey Road near Pocosham Park is listed for road improvements.[52] In the listed improvements, Hey Road will receive "wide travel lanes, curb and gutter, sidewalk, utility relocations, and a closed drainage system". [53] This will not only improve flooding and other environmental factors in the neighborhood, but can also be the start of establishing access to Pocosham Park in the neighborhood. With the wider travel lanes, there is an option to place bike lanes on Hey Road. The placement of sidewalks provides safer access for pedestrians in the neighborhood.

The current Capital Improvement Plan, also, includes improvements on Hull Street from Hey Road to Warwick Road.[54] These improvements include "a raised median, turn lanes, curbs, gutters, bike lanes, new sidewalk and shared use path on the northside of Hull Street and new sidewalks on the southside of Hull Street, street lighting and an underground drainage system."[55] Using the allocated funding to develop equitable infrastructure around the park will establish momentum on the rest of the project.

Action 1.2.2: Improve sidewalk access to and from Pocosham Park.
With the improvements on Hey Road, DPR can work with DPW to make a connection from the entrance of Pocosham Park to the pedestrian improvements on Hey Road, as shown in Figure 2.

Action 1.2.3: Utilize Complete Street Guidelines from the City of Richmond.
The City of Richmond's Better Streets Manual 2018 provides guidelines for Vision Zero improvements throughout the City. This will create safer connections between parks and the communities they are near.

Objective 1.3: Create clear access points from each neighborhood to parks to establish a 10-minute walkshed.
The City's DPR is currently working on ways to increase the number of residents that live within in a 10-minute walkshed of a park. Creating clear access points between neighborhoods can improve access without the development of new parks in some areas of the City.

*Action 1.3.1: Identify Pocosham Park access points.*
Pocosham Park is located near a lot of cul-de-sacs, as shown in Map 5. The nature of street design in that 9th District does not allow direct connections between a lot of amenities. Developing trails outside of the street grid will provide better, safer, and faster connections between some neighborhood points, as shown in Figure 4.

Action 1.3.2: Begin retrofitting access points for universal accessibility to Pocosham Park.
In the process of establishing access to Pocosham Park, DPR should evaluate the accessibility of their access points. Creating American Disability Act (ADA) curb ramps and pedestrian crossings provides access to all residents in the community.

Action 1.3.3: Increase GRTC access to Pocosham Park.
Providing access to Pocosham Park outside of the neighborhood is important if this park will be used as the midpoint on a greenway between Pocahontas State Park and the James River Park System. This will create access to the park that is not limited to driving if you are coming outside of the walk-shed. Current GRTC access to Pocosham Park is shown in Map 6. Partnering with GRTC to establish bus routes to parks will open opportunities for community members to experience different parks throughout the City.

Legend
- Streams
- Pocosham Park
- Roads
- Waterways

0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 1.6 Miles
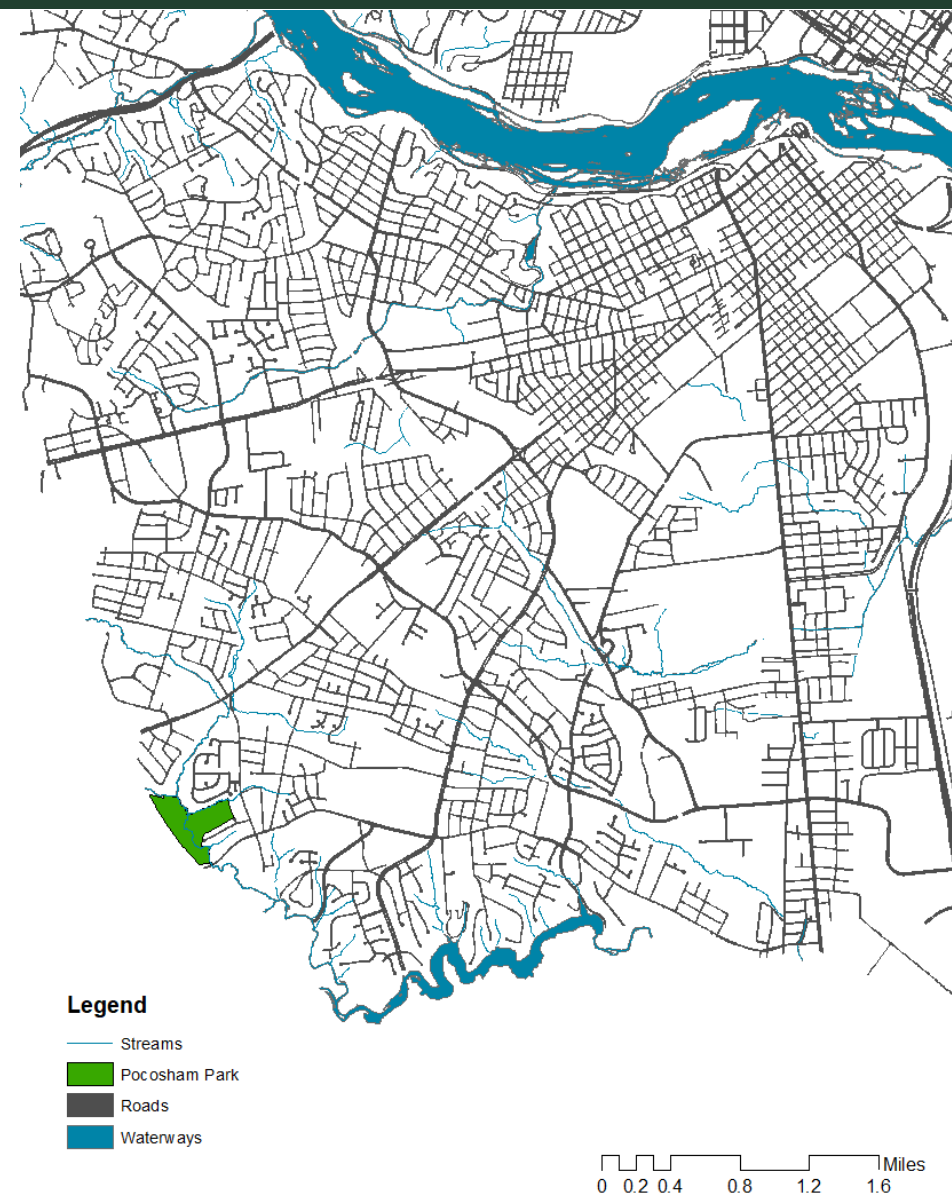
Map 5: Pocosham Park Overview
City of Richmond Department of Planning and Review, 2019

Legend
- Streams
- Pocosham Park
- GRTC
- Roads
- Waterways

0 0.15 0.3 0.6 0.9 1.2 Miles

Map 6: Pocosham Park Bus Access
City of Richmond Department of Planning and Review, 2019

Pocosham Park Water Fountain
Norrell, 2020

Improve and establish recreation opportunities in all communities.

Objective 2.1: Provide access to recreational opportunities in all communities.
After establishing access points to community parks, DPR will need to invest in recreation infrastructure and programming to make the parks culturally relevant to the communities in which they reside.

Action 2.1.1: Develop a framework for park infrastructure improvements.
DPR should develop a framework to establish minimum park infrastructure requirements for a site. This will help to establish which parks need infrastructure investments objectively to create reason for residents to use the parks.

Action 2.1.2: Establish rotating educational programs.
Investment in mobile programming can provide educational opportunities to communities that do not meet the requirements for permanent programming. This will allow residents who are not near community facilities to experience what programming DPR has to offer and encourage residents to visit multiple parks to experience the variety of programming.

Objective 2.2: Continue to increase the number of residents that have 10-minute pedestrian access to a park.
Continue actions on identifying trails or parcels that can be developed to increase the number of residents that have access to parks in City limits through the Green Team.

Action 2.2.1: Continue to identify and rank City owned parcels that can be turned into parks.
Identification of City owned parcels allows for an easier transfer of land to DPR to increase the number of parks near residents. This allows DPR to establish a framework of objectively ranking which parcels will have the largest impact on City residents prior to property transfers and capital investments.

Action 2.2.2: Improve signage and information about activities around the City.
With increased access, improved signage and City-wide information can provide knowledge of activities happening in City parks outside of the community.

Goal Three

Establish equitable access and a development framework to use in all park projects.

Objective 3.1: Develop an equity lens to incorporate into park projects.
An equity lens allows DPR to look at all projects – past, present, and future – with the goal of identifying both positive and negative impacts on all communities.

Action 3.1.1: Support the Equity Resolution in City Council as funding permits.
City of Richmond City Council currently has resolution RES. 2020-R013 on their docket. If it is approved by City Council, the City will have funds dedicated for a contractor to complete an equity analysis to measure equity in the City and provide training to a specific group of City employees and officials. This resolution can be used by DPR to help objectively identify areas of improvements in City parks.

Action 3.1.2: Create an equity framework for park investments.
An equity framework for park investments will allow DPR to objectively rank where capital improvements need to be made throughout the City. In many communities that have been underinvested in by the City, there are not many residents making it known that they need improvements in the park infrastructure or access. The framework will allow DPR to also identify what infrastructure is needed in each park to meet the specific needs of each community.

Action 3.1.3: Continue to use an equity lens to assess unintentional impacts on communities.
To combat the risk of green gentrification and displacement, the City should continue to use strategies to reduce the impact of improved green infrastructure. Policies can be created that reduce the impact on low-income communities by establishing a land bank, a freeze on property taxes for vulnerable residents, zoning regulation changes that make development easier and affordable, and / or partnering with local non-profits that help with property maintenance for residents.[56]

Objective 3.2 Participate in equity culture changes within the City of Richmond.
With pending investment in RES. 2020-R013, the City will move towards more equitable development in each department to meet the needs of City residents. The equity framework developed for park projects can be used by DPR to identify where partnerships with other departments within the City need to be made.

Action 3.2.1: Identify how park access impacts the goals of other City departments.
Parks provide a variety of benefits, many of which have been mentioned above, to urban spaces. Parks provide active and passive recreational experiences which can improve mental and physical health of residents.[57] They also operate in the environmental sphere by providing stormwater and flood management.[58] Not to mention the afore mentioned economic benefits associated with park infrastructure development.

Action 3.2.2: Partner with other City departments to develop holistic improvements through addition of park improvements.
There are opportunities for DPR to partner with other City departments to identify and holistically meet the equity needs of the City. Collaborating with the Office of Sustainability, RVAH2O, Community and Housing Development, Community Wealth Building, and other City departments could benefit budgeting processes and will benefit residents.

Action 3.2.3: Partner with other City organizations to increase collaboration on project developments.
While the City can offer expertise and put in the effort to increase awareness, it will be important to establish a Foundation or non-profit partner to help accept donations to improve development, infrastructure, and public engagement. Partnering with a non-profit will allow outreach to occur outside of City branding and representation and potentially create space for authentic feedback on plans and processes. Examples of non-profits within the Richmond area that the City can partner with are: Bike Walk RVA, Groundwork RVA, or Plan RVA. The first two non-profits have established community engagement strategies with relevant neighborhoods.

The Minneapolis regional parks have an established semi-autonomous parks board that makes regional decisions for park improvements, developments, and investments.[59] The local planning district has also established an equity toolkit that all regional park development must use. In this equity tool kit, "parks seeking grants from the council must answer a series of questions about how those grants will encourage greater park use by people of color and other underserved populations."[60] Establishing a regional equity framework will allow for interconnected green and open spaces to serve each community, regardless of jurisdiction, equitably.

Implementation

Quick implementation of equitable access to parks in the City of Richmond will potentially be affected by the decrease in City revenue caused SARS-Coronavirus-2 (COVID-19) global pandemic in the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2020. The implementation section of this plan will create a timeline of actions with the assumption that funding will come from grants and sources other than the City of Richmond.

Phase 1
The first phase of implementation focuses on develop the community engagement

Phase 2
The second phase of implementation focuses on identifying funding for improvements

Phase 3
The third phase of implementation focuses on access improvements to Pocosham Park

Phase 4
The fourth phase of implementation focuses on tactics to sustain improvements

All phases are the responsibility of the City of Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities.

Topic	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three	Phase Four
Equity	Develop a racial equity toolkit to use for all park projects	Create regional discourse connecting local parks to health equity initiatives	Create an equitable maintenance plan	Incorporate equity into internal planning and policies
Funding	Identify local organizations the City can partner with to fund and maintain	Identify national grants DPR can apply to fund improvements and community engagement		Develop a sustainable financing model
Community Engagement	Advertise park improvements to neighbors	Identify community approved access points to and from		Measure the impact of development to identify increased access and use
Community Engagement	Identify community-based infrastructure needs	Establish a community park improvements committee		
Access	Identify areas of the neighborhood that need sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian infrastructure	Identify and establish connections to other bike paths and pedestrian ways	Create neighborhood trails for cul-de-sac access	
Access		Support Capital Improvements on Hey Rd and Hull St	Provide GRTC access	

Pocosham Park Entrance

Pedestrian Crosswalk

Paved and Marked Entrance

Sidewalks

Pedestrian Crosswalk

Street Markings

Bike Lanes
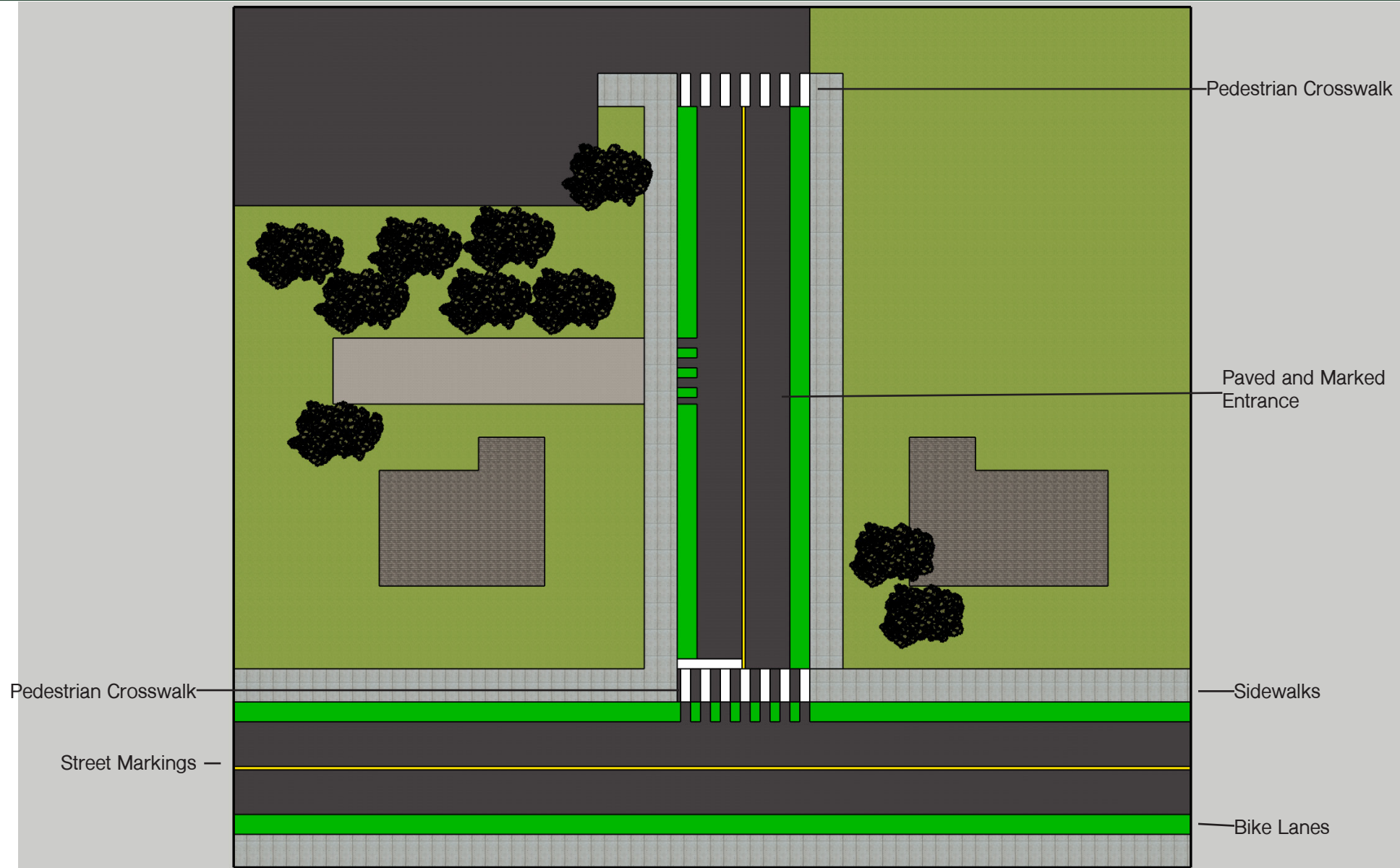
Figure 2: Pocosham Park Entrance Improvements
Norrell, 2020

Pocosham Park Entrance
Google Maps, 2020

Templeton Rd

Pocosham Dr

Pocos

Walmsley Boulevard Entrance
Norrell, 2020

3 Foot Bike Lane   8.5 Foot Vehicle Lane   8.5 Foot Vehicle Lane   3 Foot Bike Lane

R-O-W Width

Figure 3: Walmsley Boulevard Entrance Improvements
Norrell, 2020

Geneva Drive Trail

Proposed Bike Greenway
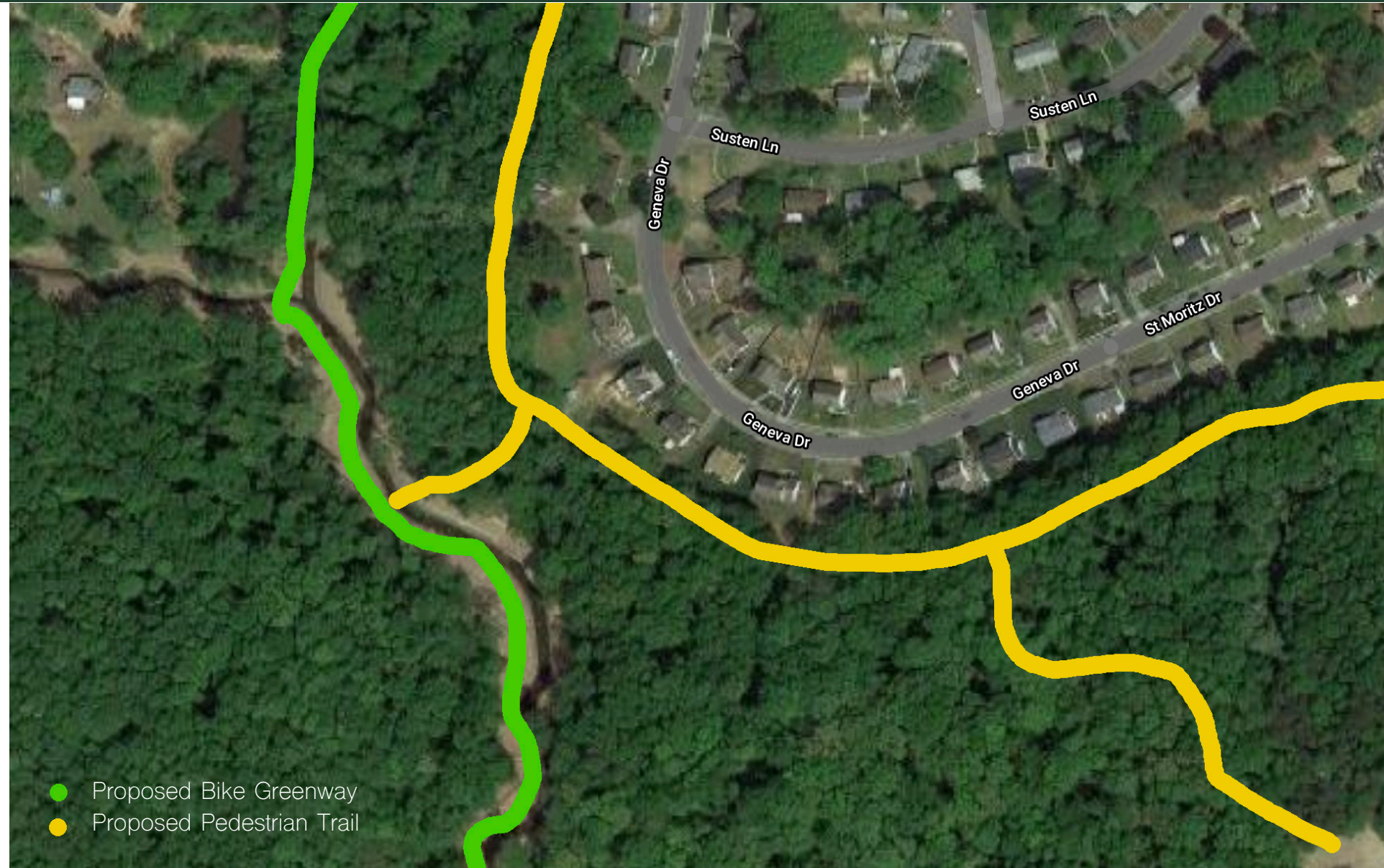Proposed Pedestrian Trail

Figure 4: Geneva Drive Trail Improvements
Norrell, 2020

Geneva Drive Trail
Norrell, 2020

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