

A Riverfront For All



**Riverfront
Parks Now**

GREAT CITIES HAVE GREAT PARKS

And Great River Cities Have Great Riverfront Parks

This is an historic moment. For the first time in our history, we have over 75 acres of publicly owned available downtown riverfront land. We have an unprecedented opportunity to invest in and improve the quality of life for all the citizens of Jacksonville by unifying our downtown riverfront into a world class network of active parks and green space, to include at least one signature park. Now is the time to finally capitalize on our greatest natural asset and re-establish our downtown riverfront as the community heartbeat of Jacksonville. With over ninety percent of the lands along the St. John's river owned by private landowners, this is our best last chance to create a Riverfront for All.

- ▶ A Downtown Riverfront Park system will welcome all of the citizens of Jacksonville in a world class public green space to gather, recreate, relax, play, engage in conversation, and appreciate the beauty of the St. Johns River.
- ▶ A Downtown Riverfront Park system will serve as an economic stimulator to catalyze the redevelopment and revitalization of downtown by serving as a common public space that benefits both the public and commercial development.
- ▶ A Downtown Riverfront Park system will be designed as a natural infrastructure to buffer storm surge, alleviate flooding, and protect adjacent public infrastructure and private investment.
- ▶ A Downtown Riverfront Park system will complement the Riverwalk and Emerald Trail as a primary pedestrian connector of greenspaces and greenways to downtown and major event areas, river crossings, and significant pathways to neighborhoods nearby.

We ask our city leaders to consider the entire Northbank riverfront from the Riverside Arts Market to Metropolitan Park and the Southbank riverfront from the Fuller Warren Bridge to The District as a unified green space along the St. Johns River. The purpose is to provide an integrated parkway that serves the citizens of Jacksonville by connecting to the St. Johns River and simultaneously enhancing future investment of commercial property and public infrastructure along the downtown waterfront, such as the restoration of McCoy's and Hogan's creeks.

Through an inclusive public process, we can bring the community together and develop a shared vision that ensures equitable outcomes, provides the much-needed access to our magnificent river, prioritizes the interests of the people, and gives downtown an identity that will be vibrant, healthy, and more resilient. This will attract people and economic investment.

This paper will help describe what can happen if we imagine it and see it through. We will show examples of how other cities have seized the moment and leveraged their waterfronts to create exceptional experiences that benefit all their citizens, the surrounding business districts, and visitors to the area.

WHAT CAN A WORLD CLASS RIVERFRONT PARK LOOK LIKE?

How It Will Feel

A unified waterfront experience in downtown along both sides of the river will provide public access nodes from land and water. This will be a place for the people of Jacksonville to go, relax, play, enjoy the river, enjoy a meal, listen to music, hear the sounds of our fellow citizens, interact, meet new people, spend family time together, watch kids explore, walk your dog, experience public art, recreate, boat, fish, bike, work out, stroll, attend a gathering, talk, or just be still under the shade of a cool tree canopy. It will be a memorable place to enjoy the river every day.

How the Parks, Cultural and Commercial Space Will Work Together

The signature park – and unified network of parks and green spaces - will serve as a natural amenity not only to the public but to business, culture and events in the area. There will be zones along the waterfront for public space, cultural places, art, nature, play areas, watercraft, and event activities. Buildings will be set back from the river to allow for a continuous greenspace of varying sizes that will accommodate these activities. All structures will be designed as part of the walking experience at ground level.

This is much more than a Riverwalk; this is an experience made up of well-planned cultural corridors, greenspaces and infrastructure design that will allow for activities to occur while simultaneously providing resiliency, thus helping to protect the downtown commercial area from flooding. There will be numerous opportunities for activation of the riverfront that may include performance areas, cultural centers, museums, restaurants, coffee shops, food trucks, retail stores or kiosks, boat or bike rentals, along with enhancing the existing amenities already in place.

Connectivity and Community

Our riverfront will serve as an experiential path that will welcome people of all income levels, families, and young children; provide access to nearby neighborhoods and introduce the river to many; become a delightful pedestrian pathway to and from the sports complex and have easy connectors across the river; enable connections to other public spaces internal to downtown; connect to public transportation; and be a destination places for boaters. This will be fully integrated with the Emerald Trail's 30-mile path in and out of downtown, as well as the McCoy's and Hogan's Creek restoration.

The Importance of Art

All great cities are ultimately defined by elevated thinking and then reaching for something greater. Great parks are often the realization of this dream. The artistic approach to design at every level is required to achieve this level of quality. Every opportunity starting with the concept of the parks to the execution of playgrounds, pathways, shade structures, retention ponds, benches, interactive play structures, public art, and so on, will be required as part of this overall effort.

HOW WE GET THERE

Jacksonville has a complex history with planning and community engagement; however, it is our view that we must take the steps needed to make a large transformational idea possible; to listen, to create, to listen some more, and take ideas into action.

We believe the process starts with robust community input that reaches out to many areas of our community, through a variety of in person, surveys and virtual methods, and in a concentrated timeframe to address a broad spectrum of interests and to develop support.

Experienced professionals will be engaged and through an iterative process develop a design concept and carry the plans through to completion. This will be a shared, collaborative effort with many stakeholders and community participation. Funding and a multi-year phased implementation approach will be identified, and the entire plan will be adopted by City Council.

This effort will not be without challenges and some changes. Yet, it should not deter us from embarking on this path.

It is our time, Jacksonville!

WHO WE ARE

We are Riverfront Parks Now.

Riverfront Parks Now is a citizen-led initiative consisting of twelve non-profit organizations including Scenic Jacksonville, St. Johns Riverkeeper, the Late Bloomers Garden Club, The Garden Club of Jacksonville, Greenscape, Memorial Park Association, the Sierra Club of Northeast Florida, the Jacksonville Urban League, the Duval Audubon Society, the League of Women Voters First Coast Chapter, the First Coast Freethought Society and the Ixia Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society.

We want something special for Jacksonville's citizens, our children, and our grandchildren. We want the people of Jacksonville to be proud of our city for something that we all accomplished together. We want to invest in our citizens by putting people first. We want to reach for something greater than any one individual or political entity can provide. We want to consolidate the best thinking on how to create a world class unified riverfront park system that will enrich downtown, become a place where our citizens can enjoy the river every day, and serve as a memorable and defining identifier for Jacksonville.

We all need communal outdoor places in which to recreate and exercise, enjoy and experience public art, connect to our majestic St. Johns, and gather as a community. The citizens of Jacksonville are starved for a visionary waterfront destination.

This is our moment. Let's seize this opportunity.



WHAT WE HAVE

Downtown Riverfront Properties



NUMBER/COLOR	PROPERTY	PUBLICLY OWNED	PUBLIC BUT UNDER CONTRACT	NOTES
1	Northbank Riverwalk	Yes		
2	Sidney Geffen Park	Yes		From RAM To Berkman
3	Jax Landing	Yes		2 Parcels
4	Jax Landing Parking Lot	Yes		
5	Old Courthouse	Yes	Spandrel	DIA Negotiating Terms
6	Shipyards	Yes		2 Parcels, Hogans Creek
7	Metropolitan Park	Yes		Land Swap Potential
8	Friendship Park	Yes		
9	Southbank Riverwalk	Yes		From Friendship Park To Duval School Building

Downtown Waterfront

- ▶ 75+ acres of waterfront land available
- ▶ Numerous publicly owned parcels that can be unified

Downtown Riverfront Amenities in Place

- ▶ The Riverwalk, Corkscrew Park, Friendship Fountain
- ▶ Museum of Science and History (MOSH) – possibly moving to Northbank
- ▶ The Times Union Performing Arts Center and planned musical park
- ▶ Public boat docks, marinas, and Water Taxi
- ▶ Hotels on the river – Hyatt (Northbank), Doubletree (Southbank)
- ▶ Restaurants with a river view: Ruth’s Chris, Morton’s, Cowford Chophouse Rooftop

Projects in Process

- ▶ Multi-use path across Fuller Warren Bridge and Southbank extension
- ▶ The Emerald Trail, Hogan’s Cycletrack, restoration of McCoy’s and Hogan’s Creeks
- ▶ Improvements to Friendship Park and the Performing Arts Center Park
- ▶ The former Landing: repair of docks and design competition for public space

WHAT OTHER CITIES HAVE DONE

Cincinnati | Smale Riverfront Park



- ▶ 32 acre Smale Riverfront Park, completed in 2015, is one of a series of parks along the Ohio river in downtown Cincinnati.
- ▶ Moved a major roadway to open riverfront park land.
- ▶ The Banks development (between stadiums) is set back from the river. Development fees support park maintenance and improvement.
- ▶ Resiliency features are built into the design to anticipate flooding.



Children and parents can play together



Artistic shade structures along the Riverwalk



Interactive play areas encourage children and adults of all ages to be together, while also providing respite from the heat.



Park was designed for resiliency, to protect the downtown buildings and allow the park to be easily restored for use.

Louisville Waterfront Park



- ▶ 85-acre Louisville Waterfront Park was built in three phases; Phase 4 will add 22 acres
- ▶ Once home to industrial use next to the elevated interstate
- ▶ Attracts over 2.2 million visitors each year and generates over \$40 million annually in economic impact.
- ▶ Louisville's Waterfront Park: How 20 Years of Change Revitalized Downtown | [READ MORE...](#)



Louisville Dragon Boat Festival
photo courtesy of Courier Journal



Subway Fresh Fit Hike, Bike & Paddle 2018

Chattanooga



Ross's Landing
Photo: Hargreaves Jones

- ▶ The original Tennessee Riverpark plan initiated redevelopment of 129 acres along the river, creating multiple public spaces for citizens to enjoy Chattanooga's waterfront.
- ▶ Ross's Landing, Coolidge Park and Renaissance Park are three core riverfront parks that connect to over 20 miles of River Trails.
- ▶ Integral to this redevelopment is a commitment to public art.
- ▶ These efforts have attracted over \$1 billion in adjacent private investment including residential and retail development.
- ▶ Chattanooga, 21st Century Waterfront Park | [READ MORE...](#)



Coolidge Park with pedestrian bridge, looking towards Ross's Landing. Renaissance Park is to the right.

Nashville



Cumberland Park

- ▶ Underground cistern captures \$1 million gallons of stormwater, which is filtered and then reused for park irrigation.
- ▶ There has been over \$1 billion in commercial investment within two blocks of these parks.
- ▶ Across the river is Riverfront Park and West Riverfront Park



Art is incorporated into all park features

West Riverfront Park

Memphis | Tom Lee Park



- ▶ This 30-acre riverfront park is designed to connect to downtown core and neighborhoods
- ▶ Groundbreaking was in Fall 2020; completion scheduled for 2022.
- ▶ A Walk in the Park: Discover the New Tom Lee Park Designs | [READ MORE...](#)



Tampa



Curtis Hixon Park, located next to the Straz performing arts center, is home to numerous popular city festivals and events.



The Tampa Riverwalk

Tampa's downtown is graced by numerous waterfront parks and trails: Curtis Hixon Park, Julian B. Lane Riverfront Park, Water Works Park, and a 2.4 mile connected Riverwalk with plans to add 22 more miles.

- ▶ Julian B Lane ULI Open Space Award Finalist | [READ MORE...](#)
- ▶ The Tampa Riverwalk – Overnight Success 40 Years in the Making | [READ MORE...](#)

St. Petersburg, FL



- ▶ A 26 acre “pier-park” with beaches, groves, play areas, restaurants, discovery centers, museum, a multitude of adirondack chairs, and a promenade for local vendors.
- ▶ \$80 million in annual economic impact expected for the pier alone.
- ▶ The pier is one of six waterfront districts, each with its own plan for preserving and improving public space with varying amounts of complementary private development.



Beaches, restaurants, discovery centers, splash pads, fishing areas, and open green space combine to provide a variety of activities.

- ▶ St. Petersburg Pier opens with restaurants and activities abound | [READ MORE...](#)
- ▶ St. Petersburg Downtown Waterfront Adopted Master Plan | [READ MORE...](#)

Chicago's Grant Park



Grant Park with Buckingham Fountain in the foreground. The 24-acre Millennium Park is in the upper right corner, alongside the Pritzker Pavilion and the newly revitalized Maggie Daley Children's Park.

- ▶ Chicago's "Front Lawn" is in a constant state of change and renewal.
- ▶ "Free, open and clear" restrictions on development within the park results in magnificent views and valuable real estate across Michigan Avenue.
- ▶ Grant Park connects to the 18-mile Lakefront Trail and Chicago Riverwalk, as well as to Museum Campus and Soldier Field to the south, continuing to the Northerly Island peninsula.



Cloud Gate Sculpture in Millennium Park



Maggie Daley Park

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Steering Committee

Barbara Ketchum, chair; Nancy Powell, executive director, Scenic Jacksonville; Jimmy Orth, executive director, St. Johns Riverkeeper; Susan Caven, president, Scenic Jacksonville; Michael Kirwan, Scenic Jacksonville, Ted Pappas, AIA, Scenic Jacksonville; Barbara Goodman, former superintendent, Timucuan Parks Preserve