



Urban Agenda Report

Richmond, Virginia

April 2015 – December 2017

New City-Specific Initiatives that Demonstrate the Urban Agenda



Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) Enhanced Connections at Historic Tredegar, Belle Isle, James River, and the Community

The physical proximity offers an opportunity to expand on existing community collaboration among the National Park Service, the City of Richmond, the James River Park System, and other community partner organizations. The initial kick off meeting with primary partners was March 3, 2016.

Through the Urban Agenda, the park service has been building alliances with local government and with community partner organizations that help to identify and achieve shared goals and accelerate collaboration and implementation, as well as leverage the full suite of NPS programmatic and park assets.

It has been estimated that nearly 1.2 million visitors explore these sites or attend special events along Richmond's downtown riverfront, while a tiny fraction of these visitors are from the urban population. These diverse committees have decided the most important aspects of new enhanced connections and are moving forward with implementation. Currently, there are ten different community partner organizations involved in the following projects:

Signage, Wayfinding, and Multi-Modal Access Improvements:

Expanding bike access by adding Bike Share stations to the riverfront to encourage increased access and healthy recreation.

Successfully advocating for the development of two public (GRTC) bus stops close to the riverfront to increase access for residents and visitors and to decrease parking volume.

Youth Engagement and Stewardship:

Created a new Youth Leaders Workshop to support one another's youth programs and provide learning and networking opportunities for (adult) youth leaders in the region, using Richmond's riverfront as a nexus for collaboration. Workshops are held quarterly as forums to increase skills and quality mentorship, and are peer to peer opportunities to learn from one another and build a professional and social community.

Created a digital platform for sharing information and resources.





Promoting Healthy Outdoor Recreation:
Updated and expanded the existing James River Park System trail map adding elements like: universal trail accessibility, bathrooms and baby changing areas, public water fountains, public transit stops (GRTC Pulse stops), bike racks, and indication of the canal boat tour and museums, etc. Working with the James River Park System to help update and add the same map elements to their existing printed map brochure. Ensuring that the updated trail map digital link is shared regionally to all partners.

Estimated project completion: December 31, 2017

Funding Sources: RTCA, Urban Agenda, Venture Richmond, GRTC, City of Richmond, American Civil War Museum

Partners: NPS, RTCA, City of Richmond, American Civil War Museum, Venture Richmond, Sports Backers, Active RVA, Greater Richmond Transit Company, Groundwork RVA, James River Association, YMCA of Greater Richmond

RTCA Rep, Ursula Lemanski, plays a technical support role. RTCA Fellow, Renesha Chiles (full-time, 1 yr)

Partner Initiatives that Align with the Urban Agenda



Capital Campout: June 28-29, 2016

Worked with Virginia State Parks to expose underserved youth in urban areas to the world of camping while also giving an opportunity for the Governor to show his support for parks. Involved 4th graders who go fishing, kayaking and hiking along the James River at the NPS RICH Tredegar Ironworks site, and then to the State Capitol for the campout.

Partners: State of Virginia, State Parks
Youth # - 30



Groundwork RVA and Urban Archeology Corps: June 8-August 19, 2016

To foster and awaken the potential of underserved neighborhoods through a series of neighborhood-focused programs and projects utilizing youth volunteers. An urban archeology dig at Chimborazo Medical Museum in the Church Hill neighborhood, in the City of Richmond. Public Day dig at Chimborazo Medical Museum July 30; Public Archeology Day on August 19. Urban Fellow will work with UAC/Groundwork RVA to promote the public days to the community as well as assist with general social media promotion throughout the entirety of the summer program. The Urban Fellow spoke to the incoming program participants on their first day about the Urban Agenda and how their UAC/Groundwork RVA program is a great example of the Urban Agenda principles.

YouTube link to wrap-up video: <https://youtu.be/Kt5qLwUHGEY>





Funding: NPS, RTCA

Partners: NPS, RTCA, Groundworks, City of Richmond

Youth # - 20



PARK(ing) Day: September 16, 2016

Created a park-like trail scene within a metered parking space in a busy downtown urban setting during lunchtime hours to promote Richmond's national parks: where they are, why they're important, and that it's the Centennial year. The RTCA Fellow and Centennial Ambassador worked with the Urban Fellow to organize and lead this effort. PARK(ing) Day is a nationwide event, and many model urban cities participated.

Partners: City of Richmond

Funding: Urban Agenda



Capitol Square Fair: September 24, 2016

Working in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office to highlight the story that Virginia's Capitol Square is the oldest urban park in America. NPS assisted with multiple interpretations during the day-long event. Urban Agenda pre-promoted the free event to surrounding urban neighborhoods through social and online media.

Partners: VA SHPO, State of Virginia, State Parks

Funding: Urban Agenda

Est. youth # - 100

Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site Video Launch: January 30, 2017

The Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site (MAWA) hosted a premiere of the new 20-minute orientation film *Carry On: The Life and Legacy of Maggie Lena Walker* at The Grace Street Theater on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University. The event was free and open to the public. The video was produced by MAWA park staff. Urban Agenda pre-promoted the event to surrounding urban neighborhoods through social and online digital media.

Partners: Richmond Region Tourism, Virginia Commonwealth University

Funding: Richmond Region Tourism, NPS



VUU Partnership through the RTCA Fellow: April 18, 2017

On April 18, Virginia Union University's (VUU) Dr. Cobb-Abdullah's plant science class came out to participate in a Field Carbon Sequestration Lab at Gaines Mill Battlefield National Park. The class enjoyed a hike that taught them about the history of the area as well as the importance of the land trees around them. Students calculated the carbon sequestration of some of Virginia's greatest resources. The RTCA Fellow assisted with planning this event. The RTCA Fellow and NPS staff also scheduled a meeting to determine how NPS will continue a strong partnership with VUU into the future.

Partners: Virginia Union University, RTCA, NPS

Youth # - 15



“Find Your Park Night” at the Diamond: July 6, 2017

National Park Service sponsored a night at the local baseball stadium in an effort to reach as many as possible in the region with the “Find Your Park” message.

Funding: NPS, Urban Agenda
Est. youth # – 500



Mountains to Main Street: July 25, 2017

This program ties urban life with the natural world. NPS, Groundwork RVA and Urban Agenda worked with local partners to bring a group of middle schoolers to downtown Richmond’s riverfront to learn about the importance of James River during the Civil War through a historically narrator canal boat cruise.

Partners: Groundwork RVA, NPS, Urban Agenda, Venture Richmond
Youth # - 25

James River - Bridging the Watershed (BTW): Fall 2017

The James is one of the most significant rivers in Virginia, with a watershed that encompasses over 10,000 square miles. Although it travels through the City of Richmond, many urban youth have never been to or explored its banks. BTW is a community outreach program of the Alice Ferguson Foundation, in partnership with the National Park Service and area schools. It promotes environmental stewardship through hands-on curriculum-based outdoor studies for middle and high school students. This is the first time the program is being implemented in Richmond. The RTCA Fellow researched and compiled information, and worked with park staff to establish sites and school partners. NPS has 21 teachers signed up for a 3-day Teacher Workshop.

Partners: Alice Ferguson Foundation, RTCA, Henrico County Schools
Funding: Alice Ferguson Foundation
Est. youth # - TBD

2016 Centennial Projects that Demonstrate the Urban Agenda

“Every Kid in a Park”

President Barack Obama created Every Kid in a Park so fourth graders and their families could discover our wildlife, resources, and history for free. NPS in Richmond received over \$10,000 in NPF transportation grant funding for FY 2016, and a second round of NPF transportation grant funding for FY 2017 for \$14,800. Bringing Richmond Public Schools and Henrico County fourth graders to Tredegar, Fort Harrison and Maggie Walker.

Funding: ONPS, NPF, Urban Agenda

Partners: Richmond Public Schools, Henrico Public Schools

Youth # – 1400 for FY2016





**“Every Kid in a Park,” Event with Deputy Director Peggy O’Dell:
March 22-23, 2016**

Educational engagement program celebrating Women’s History Month in conjunction with Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site. Deputy Director O’Dell directly engaged with urban youth at a Richmond City School EKIP program (Carver Elementary) with regalia buttons and EKIP passes and lanyards.

Funding: NPF, Urban Agenda

Partners: Richmond Public Schools

Youth # - 90



Premiere of Richmond’s Film at the “National Parks Adventure” IMAX Debut: April 18, 2016

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, the IMAX movie takes viewers on a trek through more than 30 national parks. In Richmond, the premiere of the film debuted at the Science Museum of Virginia with a lightly catered reception as a private event with 175 people in attendance.

In order to showcase and introduce RICH/MAWA parks, NPS with Richmond Region Tourism produced a 60-second film clip that will play at the beginning of the IMAX film through August 31, 2016. This short clip of Richmond NPS parks will also be used for social media and website promotion.

YouTube Link Here: <https://youtu.be/1PlbAjqTkA>

Funding: Urban Agenda

Partners: Richmond Region Tourism

First Lady’s “Let’s Move Outside”: June 7, 2016

DOI and YMCA partnered with NPS to create a summer Play, Learn, Serve, Work outdoor program for thousands of low-income, minority youth to have their first National Park experience. At Chimborazo Medical Museum, we held a press conference with DOI, NPS, YMCA, and City of Richmond, as well as a 30-minute service project for youth on NPS property: a beautification of all park entrance signs that involved planting and mulching that naturally frame the NPS signs.

Partners: DOI, NPS, YMCA, and City of Richmond

Youth # - 12



“Find Your Park Night” at the Diamond: August 20, 2016

National Park Service in partnership with the Virginia State Parks and Richmond Region Tourism sponsored a night at the local baseball stadium in an effort to reach as many as possible in the region with the Centennial message and the “Find Your Park” campaign. The Buddy Bison mascot was on hand for the event. The local baseball team donated 50 tickets to the local YMCA to bring underserved youth on this night.

Funding: NPS, Urban Agenda

Partners: Richmond Region Tourism, State of Virginia, State Parks
Est. youth # – 2500





Richmond National Battlefield Park BioBlitz: October 1, 2016

A Bioblitz is a rapid biological survey in which scientists and volunteers work together to collect field data and compile a "snapshot" of biodiversity at a national park site. As part of the NPS Centennial, parks have been hosting Bioblitz events throughout the year to discover and document biodiversity. Richmond's RTCA Fellow worked alongside park staff at Richmond National Battlefield Park to engage local college students from Virginia Union University (VUU) to participate in the event. This new partnership with a diverse and young audience helps to develop a foundation for an on-going relationship between the park and VUU students.

Partners: Virginia Union University, RTCA, National Geographic Youth # - 3 from VUU



Programmatic Support for the Urban Agenda

NER One NPS Workshop: July 2015

Introduce the Urban Agenda to NER Program Managers and discuss NPS programs and collaborative opportunities to support the Urban Agenda.

NER One NPS Workshop: November 18-19, 2015 in Philadelphia.

Discussion of NPS programs, assets and collaborative opportunities to support the Urban Agenda. Share work and ideas. In attendance from Richmond: David Ruth, Kristen and Erika

Virginia Subcluster Meeting: January 21, 2016 in Richmond, VA

Urban Agenda PowerPoint presentation to all VA Superintendents by Erika Gay

Foundation Document Workshop: Richmond National Battlefield Park: January 12-14, 2016

Urban Fellow participation

Foundation Document Workshop: Maggie Walker National Historic Site: February 2-4, 2016

Urban Fellow and community participation

Urban Agenda Model City Host Meeting: February 22-23, 2016 in Atlanta, GA

In attendance from Richmond: David Ruth (host)

National Community Assistance Training Conference: May 8-13, 2016 in Jacksonville, FL

Urban Fellow participation

ASALH Conference Speaker, What is the Urban Agenda?: October 5, 2016 in Richmond, VA

Urban Fellow participation, and park staff participation

Urban Agenda Presentation to the Leadership Team at Colonial National Historic Park: January 18, 2017

Urban Fellow and Host presentation



Greater & Greener, Parks Connecting Cities, Cultures, and Generations Conference: July 29, 2017 in Minneapolis, MN
Urban Fellow: Sessions Speaker, “NPS Urban Fellows: The Next Generation of Park Agency Leaders”

Participation in the Urban Fellows Cohort

Participate in monthly Urban Fellows conference calls, monthly NER Fellow conference calls, webinars, conventions, meetings, etc.

Urban Agenda Urban Fellows Conference: November 9-13, 2015 in New Orleans, LA

Urban Agenda Urban Fellows Conference: June 13-17, 2016 in Washington, DC

Urban Agenda Urban Fellows Conference: February 2-10, 2017 in San Antonio, TX

What We Have Learned in Richmond

BRIGHT SPOTS

- Fostered greater collaboration with new and existing community partners.
- Hired diverse candidates for the “Play, Learn, Serve & Work” initiative, including a new SCA Intern and RTCA Fellow.
- Confirmed that the National Park Service is viewed as a valuable partner, and the community is eager to work with us.
- Saw increased attention, attendance and positive reinforcement from the community and the media in the Centennial year.
- Saw very positive impacts in the community from the results of the Urban Agenda program.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Urban Agenda funding has been important to leverage new projects as match or in-kind.
- Urban Agenda is not just about new projects and implementing the three principles through large-scale, one-time activities, but about embedding the three principles into the National Park Service’s standards and behaviors moving forward. Urban Agenda is a way of doing business, not just a project or a program.
- Urban Fellows have been essential tools to assist park staff in effectively collaborating, communicating, and facilitating with park partners.
- The National Park Service does not always have the staff capacity to prioritize external communications, including communication with media, surrounding communities, park partners, and visitors.
- Park staff is not always accustomed to thinking about reaching and being relevant to new audiences, and developing new narratives.
- Parks do not always have the staff capacity to gather, hold, or run collaborative community meetings.



- There's no lack of interest from park staff or from the community to engage directly in collaboration or discussion of relevancy or inclusion. It's most often a lack of staff capacity or experience in how and where to make that dialogue take place.
- Two years is not enough time to pilot cultural change (through the Urban Agenda program).
- There is concern about sustainability once the Urban Agenda Fellowship wraps up.
- There have been some issues with internal culture and politics, and the cohesiveness of national leadership (i.e. transition).

Recommendations for the Future of Urban Agenda

It is our recommendation that a person who is qualified and trained in community outreach and engagement, and who embodies the three principles of the Urban Agenda, is hired at each national park and at the regional level. This person would be an asset to all park staff and a liaison to the community. The position description for this new person was written in part by all ten Urban Fellows in a joint effort to play a role in the legacy of the Urban Agenda program.

The Urban Fellows from Richmond, VA and Tucson, AZ took a lead in moving this process forward.

UPDATE: With the help of RTCA staff, the position description has been completed, PROGRAM SPECIALIST (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT) GS-0301-12, and we are now in the process of working to have it classified and put in the NPS PD Library.