



City Of Jacksonville | Mayor Deegan Transition Infrastructure Committee | Riverfront Subcommittee Report August 14, 2023



Executive Summary

The Riverfront Subcommittee is tasked to explore what it will take to create a vibrant, active riverfront (with a special focus on the downtown riverfront and adjacent areas) that will benefit all of Jacksonville's residents and encourage visitors. The recommendations provided in this report come from research, previously adopted plans and reports, and many public meetings with numerous stakeholders and citizens. The

valuable discussions identified the challenges and opportunities surrounding the riverfront. These discussions served as the foundation for the provided recommendations to promote positive economic and environmental outcomes as well as creating opportunities to make the entire riverfront more accessible, vibrant, and inclusive.

Introduction:

With the exception of our citizenry, the majestic St. Johns River is the greatest asset of our City. Yet, a great majority of the River is only accessible to those privileged enough to own a riverfront house, a boat, and/or a private club membership. It is imperative that the public spaces adjacent to the River become more welcoming, accessible, and vibrant so all Jaxsons, regardless of socio-economic status, have the opportunity to enjoy this unique public asset.

A majority of this Report focuses on the Downtown Riverfront for good reason. Currently, there are several major public and private developments under construction or in design along the Downtown Riverfront and the momentum cannot be denied. **The City should capitalize on this once-in-a-lifetime growth and heightened public advocacy to create an iconic Downtown Riverfront for generations to come.** To maximize results, we recommend taking a more holistic approach to the northbank and including more voices in design decisions.

Over the past several years, the City, the DIA, and several for-profit and nonprofit organizations have invested substantial time and effort into planning and developing the Downtown Riverfront. The City has taken proactive steps towards repairing and improving the Northbank riverwalk bulkhead – essential for upcoming park enhancements. Concurrently, investments have been made in new infrastructure like boat ramps, kayak launches, and boat docks. Launched in 2018, The Corkscrew, Downtown's outdoor gym, is nestled under the Acosta Bridge, it houses sculptural workout equipment, movable exercise gear, a bike ped counter, and is attended to by the Downtown Ambassador team throughout the week and offers a model for future riverfront activations. Furthermore, a riverfront wayfinding signage system was installed in 2019, aimed at aiding pedestrians in accessing both the north and southbank riverwalks.

Notable among mixed-used development projects currently under construction are projects like One Riverside Park in Brooklyn and RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns on the Southbank, which are reserving land for new riverfront parks just steps away from hundreds of planned residential units. Simultaneously, numerous ongoing initiatives are centered on broadening water access, rehabilitating creeks, and enhancing themed

riverfront park nodes. This network of public space along the riverfront will drive economic development, enhance community health and wellness, advance access and equity, and cultivate community pride. They include:

- St. Johns River Park and Friendship Fountain Activity Node: Envisioned as the "Exploring the St. Johns River" area, this project encompasses a botanical garden, a history-themed play park, and upgraded fountains. These elements weave together the narratives of the indigenous Timucuan people, historic landings, settlements, and botanical explorations in Jacksonville's history.
- Musical Heritage Garden: The Center for the Performing Arts' riverfront lawn is being transformed into a musical heritage-themed activity hub. Characterized by symbolic landscaping and a children's musical play area, it will also feature a new Wallcast Outdoor Venue for live-streamed performances and movie screenings.
- Riverfront Plaza: Encompassing seven acres, the central lawn in Downtown is being thoughtfully designed by Perkins&Will. The envisioned features include a destination playground, river terrace, park pavilion, pedestrian and bike connections, iconic public art installations, and native landscaping.
- Shipyards West Park: With a vacant riverfront property as its canvas, Agency Landscape + Planning is crafting a vibrant space linking Riverfront Plaza and Metropolitan Park. This future hub will house notable attractions such as the Museum of Science and History (MOSH), the Jacksonville Fire Museum, and the USS Orleck Naval Museum.
- McCoy's Creek Greenway Restoration & Trail: A comprehensive project aims to bring McCoy's Creek to light, address environmental concerns, and mitigate flooding. It involves introducing a pedestrian bridge, greenway trail, and kayak launch facilities.
- Hogan's Creek Greenway Restoration & Trail: An initiative to restore Hogan's Creek seeks to enhance resilience and water access. Its highlight is a planned trail that seamlessly connects the riverwalk, creek, and Sports & Entertainment District.
- Metropolitan Park: a major redesign in the planning stages that is adjacent to the Four Seasons Hotel and the stadium. This is the largest public riverfront park along the downtown riverfront at 14 acres.

However, the general public is often confused by the multiple projects in the pipeline or is skeptical of the “fancy renderings” since the full potential of the Downtown Riverfront has never been fully realized in decades. On February 8, 2023, the DIA, the Parks & Recreation Department, Build Up Downtown, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and Riverfront Parks Now co-hosted “ Riverfront 2025: A Look Ahead,” a live update on Downtown Riverfront parks and private developments on our Northbank and Southbank. Speakers presented over 20 under-construction, in design, or planned projects along the Riverfront to a packed auditorium in the Main Library. The event was a success and indicated that a vibrant, inclusive, and world-class Riverfront is a top priority for the public.

The Riverfront that is not within the Downtown footprint is just as important and valuable as the Downtown Riverfront. Increased accessibility to the waterways, as well as regular maintenance and programming of these spaces is critical for all Jaxsons to enjoy the River.

Finally, the JaxPort is a significant economic driver in the City. In the last five years it has attracted \$1.2 billion in investment, which provides jobs and economic impact for the city and beyond. The City should build on its existing relationship with the Port to optimize communication, coordination, and resiliency efforts between the two entities.

Major Points of the Report:

- 1. Provide strategic leadership, collaboration, and community engagement for the Downtown Riverfront and establish the Riverfront as a Mayoral Initiative.**
- 2. Complete all Riverfront projects that are in design or under construction so that the public can enjoy these spaces as soon as possible.**
- 3. Support the activation and enhancement of the Riverwalk and adjacent park spaces to create a welcoming, fun, and unique destination that attracts diverse visitors year-round.**
- 4. Improve overall maintenance of City-owned riverfront property, including but not limited to the riverwalk, parks, bulkheads, marinas, and docks.**
- 5. Hire a full-time dedicated Grants Director with additional staff as needed to be strategic and proactive in obtaining grants for the Riverfront and the rest of the City.**

- 6. Improving accessibility and the health of the waterways and riverfront environments.**
- 7. Create a Strategic Partnership between the Navy, Army, COJ, Private Carriers, JaxPort to increase coordination, funding, and unified response to sea level rise.**
- 8. Continue to utilize, implement, and re-evaluate where necessary, existing and adopted plans or reports concerning the Riverfront.**

Observations/Current Conditions

Strengths

- St. Johns River is a major and unique asset of Jacksonville.
- Significant amount of publicly-owned land concentrated along the Downtown Riverfront.
- Existing riverwalk infrastructure on north and south banks with planned expansions and bike/ped connectivity.
- City-owned lands along the riverfront have been identified for new or renovated parks for public access and enjoyment, with a connected riverwalk.
- Prior riverfront plans have been commissioned and adopted, and contain ideas and programs that we can draw upon and implement.
- Strong community interest in the river.
- Remarkable river geography that is unique due to its bends and curves and size.
- Downtown Riverwalk is already a member of the High Line Network, along with the Emerald Trail.

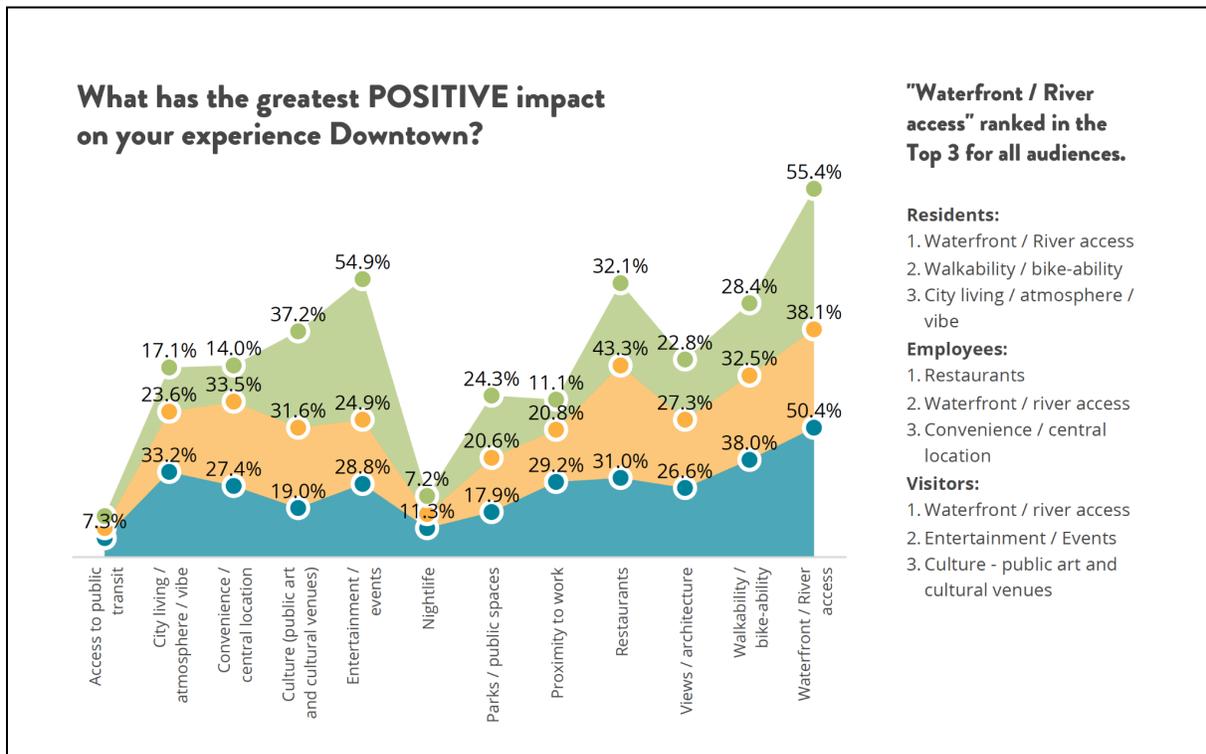
Weaknesses

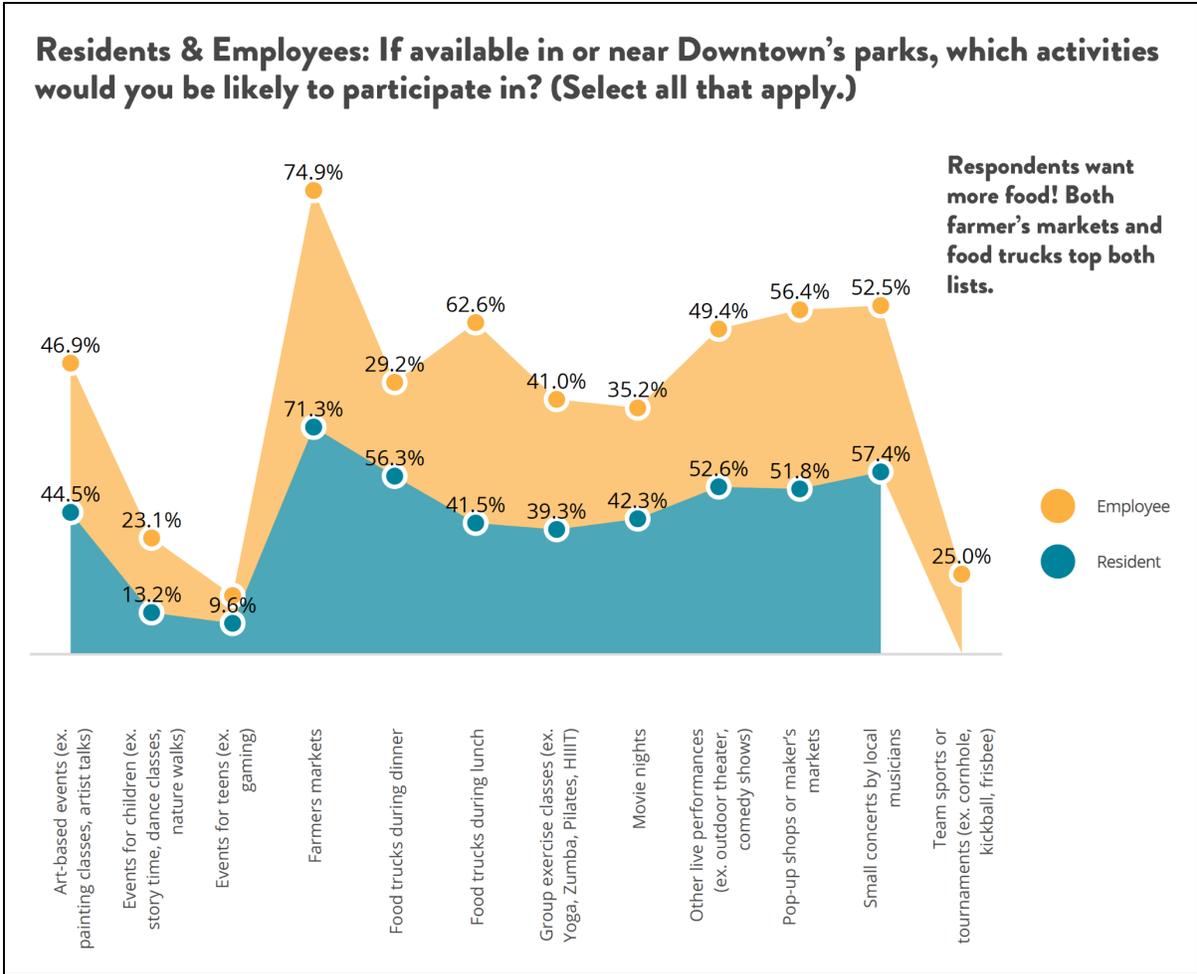
- Long vacant riverfront properties that have yet to be developed into usable or enjoyable places, with the current state unsightly and uninviting.
- Projects undertaken years ago are still under construction with uncertain timelines for completion. (Friendship Fountain, as an example.)
- The City has commissioned plans that have gathered dust on the shelf.
- Lack of regular and diverse programming, especially smaller activities.
- Facilities out of service and lack of connectivity during construction.
- Insufficient funding to complete projects.
- Aging infrastructure.
- Public skepticism or apathy due to lack of significant progress.

- Sparse amenities such as public restrooms, sufficient shade, public art, and furniture.

Opportunities

- Currently strong funding cycle for federal grants for this type of infrastructure project (see Tampa Riverwalk expansion).
- Capitalize on Downtown momentum and consensus.
- Public's desire for improved utilization of the Riverfront (Downtown Vision annual survey).
- To complete parks already in design or under construction.
- Riverfront-focused conservancy is already established.





Downtown Vision 2023 Survey

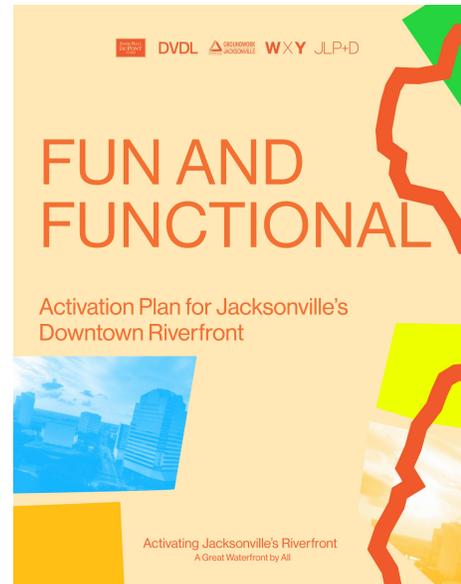
Challenges

- Coordination challenges, government silos, lack of clear responsibilities.
- Lack of a unified, cohesive, and iconic Downtown Riverfront.
- Lack of “things to do” along the Riverfront.
- Increased costs of construction materials, complex land issues, high labor costs, and lack of urban/riverfront contractors and skilled labor.
- Riverwalk not yet fully connected.
- Construction delays for private development.
- Climate change that causes extreme weather events, excessive heat, and sea level rise creates health, environmental, and resilience issues on the Riverfront.

Key Takeaways

As of August 11, 2023, the Riverfront Committee held nine publicly noticed meetings and encouraged collaboration with the Parks Subcommittee through attendance at each other's meetings. Members of the public were present at all of the riverfront subcommittee meetings and provided public comment and helpful input.

The subcommittee received and reviewed the Riverfront 2025 presentation, the DIA Business Investment & Development Plan, Fun & Functional: Activation Plan for Jacksonville's Downtown Riverfront, recommendations from the St. Johns Riverkeeper, as well as the presentations from Public Works and the Chief Resilience Officer to the Resilience Subcommittee.



Key Takeaways:

1. **Provide strategic leadership, collaboration, and continued community engagement for the Downtown Riverfront.** This can be accomplished by making the Riverfront a Mayoral Initiative and assigning a point-person from the Administration to provide oversight and coordination. No need to reinvent the wheel- the City should learn from other cities that utilize a conservancy/nonprofit organization model for park stewardship, operations and management on behalf of the city. Proven successful in many great public spaces across the country, these partnership models provide long term value, efficiency, flexibility and ensure continuity beyond administrations. The City should build upon its

partnership with Riverfront Parks Conservancy, who should be a key partner in the stewardship of the Riverfront. Finally, the creation of a Riverfront Taskforce will allow more voices in the design and planning process.

- 2. The need for additional funding to complete the design and construction of the Riverfront parks at a world class level for the public's enjoyment in the near future.** The DIA identified the amount of funds necessary to complete several parks that are either under construction or in design. Completing these parks will reassure Jaxsons that the Riverfront momentum is real and, most importantly, provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy the riverfront as soon as possible.
- 3. The importance of activating the Riverfront to be welcoming to a diverse audience through programming and everyday amenities that will bring people enjoyment all year-round.** Some laudable efforts are underway but more is needed, to include creative approaches to a riverfront that will be under construction for up to five more years. Successful activation in recent years include the annual Jax RiverJams Presented by VyStar Credit Union, monthly Sip & Stroll Presented by PNC, and weekly health and fitness classes.



Jax River Jams

4. **The need to address the riverfront access outside of Downtown,** We learned that the vast majority of our riverfront (approximately 90%) is privately owned outside of Downtown, and that there is opportunity for more access and better access from existing facilities. The subcommittee felt more time was needed to more deeply explore this topic. We discovered the 2018 Maritime Management Report that should be revisited.
5. **The JaxPort is a significant economic driver in the City. In the last five years it has attracted \$1.2 billion in investment, which provides jobs and economic impact for the city and beyond.** The City should establish a strategic alliance with the U.S. Military, the Port, and other pertinent authorities to coordinate responses to climate change and resilience.
6. **Continue to utilize, implement, and re-evaluate where necessary, the following existing and adopted plans or reports.** All of the provided Plans and Reports sought public input and engagement and are valuable tools to achieving a vibrant, active riverfront that will benefit all of Jacksonville's residents and encourage visitors. Each should be revisited and implemented where possible.

Recommendations

1. Provide strategic leadership, collaboration, and continued community engagement for the Downtown Riverfront.
 - a. Strategic Leadership: The Riverfront should be an official Mayoral Initiative, with a special focus on the Downtown Riverfront. Since several city departments and organizations have different jurisdiction on decision making with the Downtown Riverfront, there is a pressing need to align efforts for effective execution on the vision, and include partner organizations and the public. Assigning a point-person from the Administration to provide oversight in this crucial space to increase coordination, communication, and efficiency.
 - b. Collaboration: We heard from several organizations that collaborate with the City to enhance riverfront access, vibrancy, and activation and how within Jacksonville and across the country, Conservancy/nonprofit partner organizations provide long term value and ensure continuity beyond administrations. These strategic collaborations are necessary to quickly build an active, diverse, and publicly supported Riverfront, especially when the city does not have the capacity or resources to provide the same level of public benefit. The subcommittee also learned from consulting firms

JLP+D, Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, and LS3P about possible revenue sources, funding and operational models.

c. In addition to the learning from other cities, we had input from our own partner organizations in Jacksonville that have been successful:

i. Memorial Park Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Florida nonprofit entity, whose mission is to preserve, enhance and promote Memorial Park as the premier historic city park in Jacksonville, Florida. It was created in 1986 by a group of park enthusiasts and local philanthropists concerned with Memorial Park's persistent state of decline and disrepair, just a year after Memorial Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Riverside (now Riverside-Avondale) National Historic District.

ii. For almost 10 years, Groundwork Jax has been tirelessly focused on the Emerald Trail which will connect and restore 30 miles of the trails and creeks throughout the urban core Groundwork. Jacksonville showed how they can be flexible, faster, and apolitical to bridge changes in city leadership.



- iii. MOSH is working with the City to design and construct public park space on the site of their new facility.



- iv. Iguana Investments is constructing the riverwalk, marina, and amenities adjacent to the Four Seasons Development on behalf of the City.
 - v. The newly formed Riverfront Parks Conservancy will establish a comprehensive partnership agreement with the City to steward the entire Downtown Riverfront.
 - vi. Events and programming along the Downtown Riverfront are produced by organizations, such as Downtown Vision, yoga4change, and the YMCA in partnership with the City.
 - vii. Commissioned by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, the Riverfront Study and Activation plan was initiated to serve as a resource for the City in the planning and development of the Riverfront. The goal of the Plan is to create a Riverfront that is for, and by, all.
- d. Community Engagement: One of Mayor Deegan’s goals is to bring more citizens to the table. Intentionally increasing community engagement around the riverfront will create more opportunities for civic involvement, public support, and stewardship.

Actionable Items:

Short Term:

- a. Establish the Riverfront as a “**Mayoral Initiative**” with a **point-person** identified on the staff to provide oversight and coordination amongst

stakeholders & constituents to drive the Downtown Riverfront Parks and Riverwalk Initiative. Role could expand to other downtown parks and public spaces once a riverfront initiative is established.

- b. Develop and implement a mutually beneficial park stewardship program that is flexible and appropriate for the park space and city. Park partners can manage, maintain, operate, and/or program city-owned public spaces on behalf of the city for the benefit and enjoyment of the public.
- c. Commit to the Riverfront Parks Conservancy partnership as the governance model for the downtown riverfront parks. Like Groundworks Jax with the Emerald Trail, this type of framework will allow nonprofit organizations to focus on the public space, mobilize faster, and implement plans.
 - i. Immediately begin to include the Conservancy as a key partner for riverfront parks and riverwalk design and planning.
 - ii. Renegotiate the agreement for a five year term, with renewal options.
 - iii. Provide start-up operational funding \per year over a three-year period.
- d. Create a **taskforce of subject matter experts**, to be co-led by the Conservancy and Jessie Ball duPont Fund that would evaluate and oversee the design and implementation of iconic and destination riverfront parks and public spaces, including the Riverwalk.
- e. Ensure that the Riverfront parks are legally protected for the long term.

Mid-Term: n/a

Long Term: n/a

Funding Needs:

- a. Salary for Mayoral Riverfront Point Person (if additional hire)
- b. Funding for the start-up operational support for the Riverfront Parks Conservancy over a minimum three-year period. NOTE: Funding sources to be expanded through the work of the proposed task force.

Who Needs to be Involved:

- a. Office of the Mayor,
- b. DIA,
- c. Parks Department,
- d. Conservancy,
- e. Jessie Ball duPont Fund,

- f. and nonprofit partner organizations such as DVI, BUD, Cultural Council and others.

Evaluation and Success:

- a. Clear, transparent and timely decision making
- b. Demonstrated collaboration and effective public involvement
- c. Parks are designed to world class levels and constructed within defined budgets and timelines.
- d. Interim design and activation is implemented during the construction phases.

2. Complete all Riverfront projects that are in design or under construction so that the public can enjoy these spaces as soon as possible.

The public sentiment is that Jacksonville is the “city of renderings” and citizens have become incredulous to the possibility of a highly activated and fully developed riverfront. In order to restore hope and public support for increased and continued investment in downtown, the need to complete the Riverfront parks in the pipeline cannot be understated. According to experts from JLP+D, who specialize in place based economic development, “[a]cross the country, various waterfront activations and public space improvement demonstrate the investments’s potential to spur new development, improve quality of life, create good jobs, attract talent and business, and generate compelling public sector return on investments.”

	<p>HEALTH & RECREATION <i>Denver Confluence Park:</i></p> <p>Outdoor recreation helped park users get healthier and save \$65M in medical costs.</p>		<p>EQUITY <i>11th Street Bridge Park, Washington DC</i></p> <p>A plan links park development to programs, policies, and government investments in workforce training, small business opportunities, arts and culture, and affordable development.</p>
<p>REAL ESTATE <i>Pittsburgh Three Rivers Park:</i></p> <p>\$130M public investment catalyzed \$2.6B in real estate development.</p>		<p>JOBS & BUSINESSES <i>Chattanooga Waterfront, TN</i></p> <p>Attracting Volkswagen to create jobs for local residents and fostering businesses in the Innovation District</p>	

Activating Jacksonville's Riverfront



Actionable Items:

a. Short Term:

- i. Fully fund and accelerate implementation of the following projects that are ***under construction*** so that they can open in Mayor Deegan's first two years. These projects are:
 1. Riverfront Plaza Phase 1- fully funded but per the DIA, there may be unforeseen cost increases
 2. St. Johns Park/Friendship Fountain- needs additional \$3M in FY 23/24 per DIA request
 3. Musical Heritage Garden (behind Performing Arts Center)- needs additional \$750K in FY 23/24 per DIA request
 4. Hogan Street Connector (connects to Riverwalk)- needs additional \$2.5M in FY 23/24 per DIA request



Riverfront Plaza Phase 1



St. Johns Park / Friendship Fountain



Musical Heritage Garden

HOGAN STREET LINK – SEGMENT 2



- 60% Design
- Construction Expected to Begin Mid 2024



- ii. Identify funding sources to fully complete the development of all Downtown Riverfront parks currently *in design*, specifically:
 - 1. Riverfront Plaza- Phase 2 immediately- Phase 2 needs \$20M FY 25/26 per DIA request
 - 2. Shipyards West Park- needs additional \$33-40M in FY 24/25; per DIA request
 - 3. Metropolitan Park- needs additional \$7M in FY 24/25; per DIA request
 - 4. Fund the Riverwalk connectivity plan, currently known as “Run the Bridges”
 - i. Increase support for MOSH in the following ways:
 - 1. Integrate the new museum into the overall Downtown revitalization.
 - 2. Allocate funds to construct the Riverfront park that will be designed surrounding the new MOSH museum.
 - ii. Expedite and explore complementary public investments in public spaces and natural features, including Hogans Creek and the Emerald Trail.
- b. Mid-Term:
- i. Fund the Riverwalk Extension from Catherine St. to Metropolitan Park
 - ii. Design the Riverwalk Extension to Memorial Park
- c. Long-Term:
- i. Construct the Riverwalk Extension to Memorial Park.
 - ii. Fund and construct the Southbank Riverwalk Extension to the west toward the SUP

Funding Needs:

- a. Allocate more funds in the CIP as identified above
- b. Seek grant opportunities from diverse sources
- c. Seek corporate sponsorships, partnerships, and naming rights

Who Needs to be Involved:

- a. Mayor’s Office
- b. Parks Department
- c. Public Works
- d. Downtown Investment Authority
- e. Grant writers/lobbyists

Evaluation and Success:

The evaluation of this action item can be measured by how quickly the Riverfront parks and spaces can be fully completed and open to the public.

3. The importance of activating the Riverfront to be welcoming to a diverse audience through programming and amenities that will bring people enjoyment every day.

In order to achieve this recommendation, the city must be innovative, bold, and creative in funding, designing, and activating the Riverfront year after year. The Activation Plan developed five social and cultural principles to guide future programming and development of Downtown Riverfront: (1) welcoming and accessible to all, (2) attracts a diversity of audience and experience, (3) is flexible and community-driven, (3) is fun and functional, and (4) promotes well-being and care. The subcommittee also received examples of world-class waterfront public spaces and learned that cities can experience significant economic and social benefits from a vibrant and inclusive destination waterfront space.



Sip & Stroll

Actionable Items:

- a. Short Term:

- i. Engage a professional design firm, such as WXY, to enhance the Riverwalk into a cohesive, iconic, safe, culturally vibrant place.
 1. Address existing and new segments and include shade, public art, furnishings, lighting, food and beverage needed in the expansive public spaces along the Downtown Riverfront.
 2. For the art, partner with local artists and art organizations, such as the Cultural Council.
 3. Invest in temporary solutions, such as furnishings and amenities on the Riverfront to provide more shade, seating, and food trucks or small kiosks for vibrant activation of the Riverfront to support the destination parks. These should not be permanently installed until construction is completed.
 4. Design revenue-generating amenities to support the ongoing maintenance and operations of Riverfront Public Spaces.
- ii. Activation/Programming: Streamline the permitting process for Riverfront events and programming, including improving the risk management analysis. This will allow more groups and organizations to activate and enjoy the Riverfront.
- iii. Purchase wayfinding signage, including Run the Bridges programming on the Riverwalk to help direct visitors during and after construction and improve real-time communications, including celebrations, about closing and opening of spaces along the Riverwalk and to educate the community about river history and ecology and raise awareness about the pollution problems impacting the health of our waterways.
- iv. Riverfront parks provide an outstanding opportunity to educate the community about our river and its tributaries. Coordinate with universities and nonprofits, like MOSH, Emerald Trail, St. Johns Riverkeeper and Timucuan Parks Foundation, to increase programming at the various riverfront parks. Work with schools to engage students in field trips and waterfront activities and programs.
- v. Encourage collaboration among organizations to implement green infrastructure demonstration projects (living shorelines, bioswales,

pervious pavers, cisterns, etc.) to raise awareness about stormwater runoff and resiliency solutions.

b. Mid-Term:

- i. Target and support more boat tours on the River.
- ii. Implement technology for wayfinding and marketing.

c. Long Term:

- i. Design improvements including riverwalk extensions continuing the emphasis on unified design.



Courtesy of the Downtown Investment Authority

Funding Needs:

- a. Philanthropy and grant applications
- b. Partnerships with other organizations that want to utilize the Riverfront for activation
- c. Allocation of funds to the Downtown Economic Development Fund specifically earmarked for activation
- d. Allocation of funds to build and install amenities that could be revenue generating

- e. Explore seeking contributions from adjacent property owners

Who Needs to be Involved:

- a. Public
- b. Park Partners, i.e. Conservancy
- c. Public Works Department
- d. Downtown Investment Authority
- e. Parks & Recreation Department
- f. Mayor's Office
- g. Organizations desiring to activate the Downtown Riverfront

Evaluation and Success:

The evaluation of this action item could be accomplished by the overall appearance of the Riverfront and usage of the space.

4. Improve overall maintenance of City-owned Riverfront property, including but not limited to the riverwalk, parks, bulkheads, marinas, and docks.

We heard from the public and several speakers that emphasized the importance of regular and enhanced maintenance along the riverfront to improve the access, attraction, and enjoyment of visitors to the riverfront. The City is making a historical investment in its riverfront and it is imperative that the investment is protected for generations to come. A 2018 Northbank bulkhead inspection report indicated that all of the bulkheads had reached their useful lifespan and would need to be replaced in 2023-2025.

Riverwalk Pavers



Actionable items:

a. Short Term:

- i. Fund park managers who are responsible for specific riverfront spaces to efficiently manage and monitor maintenance needs or contract with park partners (i.e. Conservancy) or organizations that manage or maintain public spaces.
- ii. Fund a professional horticulturist or master gardener to prioritize the protection and addition of shade trees and native plantings. Consider collaboration with Groundwork Jax's stewardship program.
- iii. **Be proactive**- immediately retain a professional consultant to estimate and forecast the costs of operating, securing, maintaining, and **generating revenue** in the Riverfront parks so each is successfully maintained and utilized by the public.
- iv. Budget for enhanced maintenance and security of the Riverfront.
- v. Annually transfer remaining Tax-Increment Finance Funds from the DIA CRAs to the Downtown Economic Fund for park maintenance, operations, and programming.
- vi. Delegate the responsibility of, and funding for, maintenance or inspection of each public space or infrastructure asset (i.e. park or bulkhead) to the appropriate city department or Park Partner.

- vii. Utilize existing technology to monitor maintenance needs in real-time.
- b. Mid-Term:
 - i. Investigate and evaluate the feasibility of receiving contributions from riverfront adjacent private property owners for maintenance, operations and activation of the Riverwalk and destination parks.
- c. Long Term:
 - i. Routinely inspect all city-owned bulkheads (every 7-8 years) and repair in a timely manner.
 - ii. Budget for long-term capital expenditures for Riverfront investments.

Funding Needs:

- a. Allocate sufficient funds to expand and strengthen the capacity of the City and its partners to manage the additional operations and maintenance needs of the Riverfront.
- b. Support budget transfer of tax-Increment Finance Funds from the DIA CRAs to the Downtown Economic Funds for park maintenance, operations, and programming.

Who Needs to be Involved:

- a. Public
- b. Park Partners, i.e. Conservancy, Downtown Vision
- c. Public Works Department
- d. Downtown Investment Authority
- e. Parks & Recreation Department
- f. Mayor's Office
- g. Potential Downtown Riverfront Taskforce

Evaluation and Success:

The evaluation of this action item should be measured by the following metrics:

- a. the overall appearance and condition of the Riverfront and infrastructure,
- b. the speed in which maintenance or repair is completed, and
- c. Positive feedback from visitors of the Riverfront.

5. Hire a full-time dedicated Grants Director with additional staff as needed to be strategic and proactive in obtaining grants for the Riverfront and the rest of the City.

Hiring a Grants Director for Jacksonville can lead to improved grant acquisition, enhanced and efficient funds allocation & utilization, and increased funding opportunities. Their expertise and focus on grants can contribute to the overall success of the Jacksonville Riverfront's initiatives and projects.

Actionable Items:

a. Short Term:

- i. Dedicate a budget line item to hire and onboard a Grants Director and staff, such as grant writers and administrators.
- ii. Build up staff of Grant Writers, Grant Administrators, and support staff under Grants Director to increase grant application capacity.
- iii. Continuously review Jacksonville's current grant portfolio. Assess the status of ongoing grants, deadlines, reporting requirements, and any potential funding gaps.
- iv. Grants Manager to work with city leadership and experts to refine and update the city's grant acquisition strategy.

b. Mid-Term:

- i. Continuously evolve Jacksonville's grant acquisition strategy to align with changing priorities, emerging opportunities, and evolving community needs.
- ii. Investigate and pursue diverse funding sources beyond traditional grants, such as endowments, impact investing, and social enterprise initiatives.
- iii. Develop a succession plan to ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities and knowledge when there are changes in the Grants Manager role.

c. Long Term:

- i. Explore and implement innovative financing mechanisms, such as pay-for-success models, that align funding with measurable outcomes.
- ii. Forge strategic alliances with academic institutions, research centers, and think tanks to leverage their expertise in grant writing and funding strategies.

- iii. Explore the integration of technology solutions that streamline grant management processes, enhance collaboration, and provide real-time insights into the city's grant portfolio.

Funding Needs:

Dedicated COJ funding for the Grants Director position, along with the necessary support staff positions for a rebuilt and fully staffed COJ Grants Office.

Who Needs to be Involved:

- a. Mayor's Office
- b. City Council
- c. Downtown Investment Authority
- d. City Departments
- e. Neighborhood and Community Organizations
- f. City Citizen Action Committees (CPAC, etc.)

Evaluation and Success:

The evaluation of this action item could be accomplished by such metrics as grant funding increases, grant success rate, diversification of funding, number of grants, the initiation and completion of grant-funded projects, community impact, grants compliance and efficient closeout procedures, long-term funding sustainability, innovative funding approaches, and Grants Office efficiency and process improvement.

6. Improving accessibility, and the health of the waterways and Riverfront environments.

Actionable Items:

- a. Short Term:
 - i. Identify opportunities to provide more on-the-water experiences or programming that engages residents with the river and its tributaries. This may require subsidizing the river taxi and outfitters in some instances where it is not financially viable for a private company to provide those services.
 - ii. Pursue relevant studies with the Army Corps of Engineers.
 - iii. An assessment of the types of access opportunities provided (fishing, boating, walking, wildlife watching, etc.) should be

conducted to ensure the needs and interests of residents are being sufficiently met and are inclusive. This should include evaluating the construction of a Catherine St. non-motorized hand launch.

- iv. Revisiting the 2018 Maritime Management Plan Recommendations. The plan was produced by the city by JU, UNF and the NE Florida Regional Council and adopted by City Council. The plan addresses in detail individual parks, maintenance of existing facilities and increased water access opportunities.
 - v. Produce a map to show all riverfront parks and watercraft access facilities within Duval County.
 - vi. Pursue a regular weekly boat tour of the Timucuan Preserve.
 - vii. Evaluate the accessibility of a Jacksonville Zoo-Downtown tour/route.
- b. Mid-Term:
- i. Assess the feasibility and viability of converting city owned properties along the riverfront to publicly accessible waterfront parks or watercraft access points.
- c. Long Term:
- i. Take steps to legally preserve public riverfront parks in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations and to accommodate climate change.

Funding Needs:

Funding needs will be determined upon further review.

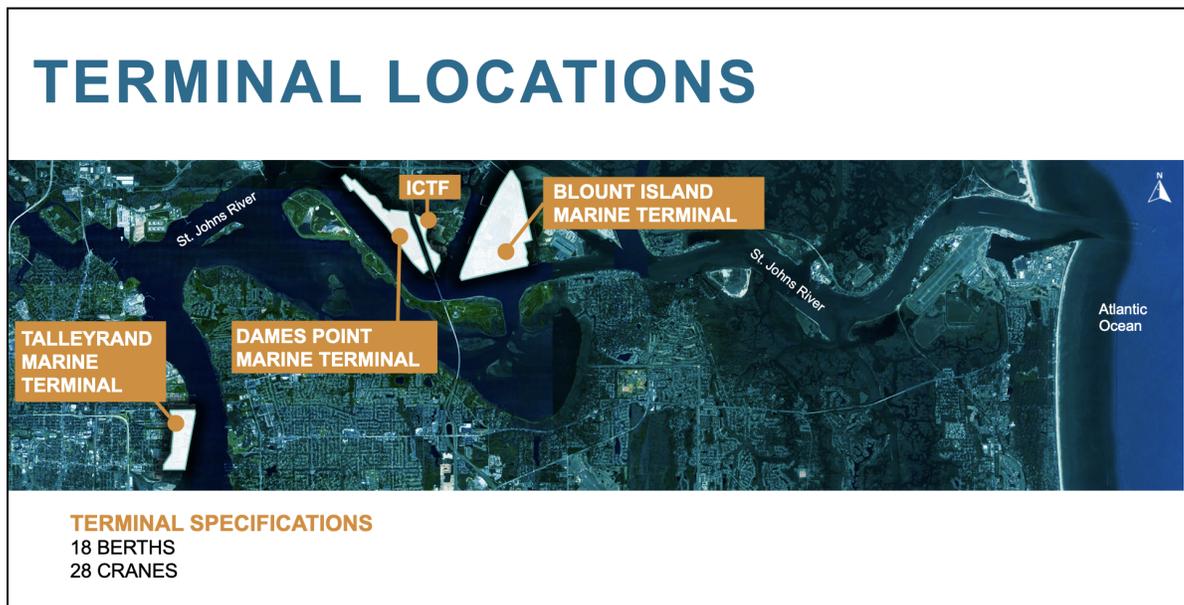
Who Needs to be Involved:

- a. Mayor's Office
- b. City Council
- c. Parks Department
- d. Public Works
- e. Parks Department
- f. St. Johns Riverkeeper
- g. Water Taxi/Boat Tour operators
- h. Jacksonville Zoo

Evaluation and Success:

- a. The public will have ready information of all the places within Duval County where individuals and families can enjoy the St. Johns River, whether on the river's edge or in and on the river itself.
- b. Facilities will be updated, safe and modernized.
- c. Regular boat tours will expose more visitors and residents to the natural beauty of Jacksonville.

7. Create a Strategic Partnership between the Navy, Army, COJ, Private Carriers, JaxPort to increase coordination, funding, and unified response to sea level rise.



8. Continue to utilize, implement, and re-evaluate where necessary, the following existing and adopted plans or reports.

All of the following Plans and Reports sought public input and engagement and are valuable tools to achieving a vibrant, active riverfront that will benefit all of Jacksonville's residents and encourage visitors.

- a. DIA Business Investment & Development Plan (2022, [2022-0372-E](#))
- b. Fun and Functional: Activation Plan for Jacksonville's Downtown Riverfront (Jessie Ball duPont Fund) (2022, in [DIA BID Plan](#))
- c. Maritime Management Plan (2018, adopted by City Council [2018-393-A](#)).

- d. [Emerald Trail Master Plan](#) (Revised 2021)

References, Data, and Supplemental Information

In addition to the plans listed above, the following links are provided.

- Zoom Recordings: [Here](#)
- Presentations and Reports: [Here](#)
- DIA Master Plan Executive Summary: [Here](#)
- Fun & Functional: Activation Plan for Downtown Jacksonville: [Here](#)
- Riverfront 2025 Presentation: <https://buildupdowntown.org/riverfront2025/>

Subcommittee Members / Subject Area Experts / Presenters

Subcommittee Members



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Director of Placemaking
Jessie Ball duPont Fund



Katherine Hardwick, Vice Chair
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Crowley Maritime



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Patrick Tamasitis General Manager, Crowley Logistics

United States Army Corps of Engineers
Jason Harrah, Senior Project Manager

Museum of Science and History
Bruce Fafard, CEO

Riverfront Parks Now
Nancy Powell

Jessie Ball duPont Fund
Mari Kuraishi, President

Parks & Recreation Department
Daryl Joseph & Jill Enz

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JLP +D
Yuxiang Luo, Director,

Riverfront Parks Conservancy
Barbara Goodman, Board Chair

Groundwork Jacksonville
Kay Ehas, Executive Director

Jacksonville Jaguars/ Iguana Investments
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