

River Street Park Steering Committee

Summary Recommendations – November 9, 2021

The existing River Street Park, for community planning purposes, can be divided into three key areas: (a) the Southern Entrance Plaza, (b) the area Under the Freeway, and (c) the Northside Waterfront. Each of these park areas has unique assets and amenities that were installed with intention during the original design in 2006. The following is a brief summary of the three principal areas of the park:

- **Southern Entrance Plaza:**

This area includes a large plaza that provides a gathering space for activities or small events. The entryway includes decorative brick pavers, ornamental black fencing, signage, trees, landscaping and benches.

- **Under the Freeway (VDOT Right of Way):**

Some of the most unique features of the park are located Under the Freeway and/or adjacent to the VDOT right-of-way. These include a history walk timeline of significant Hampton events, an intricate pattern of decorative pavers and plants, true-north pavement compasses, a waterfront walkway with commanding views of the Hampton River, benches, landscaping, gravel walking trails, as well as some on street parking.

- **Northside Waterfront (VDOT Property):**

Located north of the freeway on the VDOT property is a Kayak launch/pier, landscaping, and water views.

A River Street Park Steering Committee was comprised of residents from Pasture Point, Downtown Hampton stakeholders, and the Neighborhood Commissioner for the area. The Steering Committee members were asked to guide a process to determine community priorities. They were also instructed that their valuable input would be used to inform, but not necessarily determine, future decisions. The Committee held discussions at neighborhood meetings, conversed with neighbors, and conducted an online survey to capture community input. Over the course of 6 meetings, the Steering Committee developed the following preferences regarding the various elements in the park based on the input from their community.

Ultimately, the Committee expressed a desire to see the park restored to its original condition as quickly and completely as possible. The Committee desired that any structural or element changes to the park be considered through minor redesign work to move elements within the whole area of the park if at all possible. The following guidance is provided for each of the three main areas of the park.

1. Southern Entrance Plaza:

- 1.1 The City's portion of the plaza should be closed during construction.
- 1.2 Pavers/furniture should be placed in storage to avoid potential damage.
- 1.3 The plaza pattern should be redesigned for post construction installation based on the way the new park would function and the remaining footprint of the VDOT ROW with the potential to incorporate some of the elements from under the freeway.
- 1.4 Decorative fencing, landscaping and trees, and the entryway signage located on City property should remain as much as possible during construction and replaced after construction.

2. Under the Freeway:

- 2.1 The compasses & history walk will likely need to be removed for construction and should be replaced if possible,
 - If relocation is necessary, the area where the history walk/compasses once were should incorporate a low-maintenance paver/pathway solution.
 - If necessary, these elements should be incorporated into the redesigned plaza, or
 - Relocate to another location within the neighborhood, such as the linear park/trail.

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- 2.2 Preserve and repair the pedestrian bulkhead pathway under the bridges and remove/replace benches. Consider allowing and installing enhanced overlook elements (i.e. pier, lighting, railing enhancements) along the bulkhead pathway.
- 2.3 Allow a crushed stone path to loop back between the pylons to either connect to any potential surplus VDOT property or back out to River Street on the northside of the interstate.
- 2.4 Ensure use of low maintenance landscaping and materials (i.e. pavers, crushed stone) throughout.
- 2.5 Preserve open design as much as possible, limit the use of chain-link fencing only where required.
- 2.6 Replace the decorative fencing and use such fencing along both sides of River Street under the freeway.
- 2.7 Remove the parking spaces under the freeway.

3. Northside Waterfront

- 3.1 Depending on the ultimate outcome of the VDOT project's project impact on the northside property, and the City's opportunity to acquire or secure access to any surplus property acquired as part of the project, then the recommendation is to explore reinstalling the boat launch, along with replacement parking.
- 3.2 If the boat launch cannot be located near the existing park, then relocation to another site in the neighborhood should be explored first. Storage for the elements should be provided until a new, suitable location is determined, up to and including time for any necessary property use or acquisition to take place.
- 3.3 If relocating the boat launch within the neighborhood is not feasible, then the funds intended to relocate the pier should be reinvested into a new or existing pier on the Hampton River (e.g. Mill Point) to improve accessibility.

***River Street Park
Steering Committee Members:***

*Kevin Steele
Imara Gabe Diaz
Philip Egert
Sheri Thurrott
Tom Wilson
Jeffery Woodstock
Kendal Tarkington
James Montgomery
Kimberly Gibson
Darren Green
Bill English
Mary Tanner
Warren Coleman*

***Hampton City
Staff Support:***

*Terry O'Neill
David McCauley
Jonathan McBride
Dan McCormick
Anna Hammond
Donald Whipple
Lynne Keenan
Sunny Deming
Angela King
Brian Marchese*

Report Attachments:

- *Survey Summary & Comments*

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River Street Park Survey Results (August 2021)

Questions	Responses				Total Responses
	Paper Surveys PP	Online In PP	Online In HMPTN	Online Outside HMPTN	
1. Where do you reside?					
In Pasture Point/Downtown Hampton	31	40			
In other area of Hampton			43		
Outside Hampton				4	
Total Survey Responses:	31	40	43	4	118
2. How often do you visit River Street Park?					
Daily	8	3			11
Weekly	15	8			23
Monthly	2	15	12	3	32
Annually		7	17	1	25
Never	6	7	12		25
3. What, if any, features of River Street Park do you use?					
History Walk	12	12	13	3	40
Compass Map	6	8	5	1	20
Benches	18	15	14	4	51
Dock and Launch	12	17	16	3	48
I do not use the park	6	6	15		27
Other - see comments below	2	7	5		14
4. What elements or aspects of the park are most important to you?					
History Walk	11	12	15	3	41
Compass Map	5	10	5	1	21
Benches	18	17	17	4	56
Dock and Launch	11	22	24	2	59
I do not use the park	6	3	9		18
Other - see comments below					
5. The elements of the park must be either relocated or placed in storage for the next 3-5 years. Do you think the park elements should be temporarily or permanently relocated or placed in storage?					
History Walk					
Temporarily	9	18	17	1	45
Permanently	13	13	19		45
Storage	9	7	6	3	25
Compass Map					
Temporarily	3	18	18	2	41
Permanently	9	13	16	2	40
Storage	16	7	7		30
Benches					
Temporarily	13	29	15	2	59
Permanently	3	5	17		25
Storage	14	5	9	2	30
6. If you said temporarily relocated, please indicate generally where you think elements should be located					
Within the Pasture Point neighborhood	25	21	2	2	50

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In the downtown	6	12	8		26
Anywhere in the City that would be practical	2	9	27	2	40
7. Specifically considering the dock and launch, do you think these water elements should be relocated or placed in storage?					
Relocated on the Hampton River	22	35	38	2	97
Placed in storage	8	7	6	1	22
8. What will you miss most when this park is closed for bridge construction?					
Close to my house	18	8	3		29
Meet with neighbors	17	1	1		19
Place to walk my dog	12	13	1		26
Sit and enjoy the view	13	11	14	2	40
The unique history pavers	1		5	1	7
Other - see comments below		4	12	1	17
9. What does this park offer you that is not available in other downtown parks?					
Close to my house	18	20	2		40
Meet with neighbors	17	3			20
Place to walk my dog	12	2	1		15
Sit and enjoy the view	15	3	12	3	33
The unique history pavers	4	3	9		16
Other - see comments below		3	9	1	13

COMMENTS & "OTHER" RESPONSES

3. What, if any, features of River Street Park do you use?

Pasture Point Paper Survey Responses -

Walk dog (4)

Sidewalks

Online Pasture Point Survey Responses -

The visual of the park and landscaping.

Walking. Events.

My 3 year old , loves taking his scooter & watching fishes by the dock

Just stroll around

Just walk thru it with dogs.

All

I enjoy the serenity of the River. I have walked down by the water and sat on the benches for presentations that were offered there.

Online Hampton Residents -

No place to easily park to use features.

Have not been, but works consider going

walking paths

observation

drive by

4. What elements or aspects of the park are most important to you?

Pasture Point Paper Survey Responses -

Walk dog (9)

Sidewalks and water view

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Online Pasture Point Survey Responses -

waterfront view

Resolves issue of people living under bridge

Tidiness.

It is a waste of open space

The ability to walk around in park

Walk 2 times a day

Online Hampton Residents -

The historic walk would be.

walking path

observation

8. What will you miss most when this park is closed for bridge construction?

Online Pasture Point Survey Responses -

Its dangerous for neighborhood children

Landscaping and fencing/benches. Well kept.

None of the above. It's too noisy to be a peaceful spot

kayak launch

Online Hampton Residents -

Access to the dock

Not used. Could be better served with parking.

I use the kayak launch a couple times a year and will miss it.

launch

The opportunity to explore something different

water/boat access

observation

Wont miss it. it should be closed I never see anyone using the park.

None (2)

observation

Wont miss it. it should be closed I never see anyone using the park.

The eye sore that it is

Park is a waste of city money

Did not use the park

It is aesthetically pleasing to the neighborhood

Online Responses from Outside Hampton -

Kayak Launch

9. What does this park offer you that is not available in other downtown parks?

Online Pasture Point Survey Responses -

Nothing

kayak launch

Launch and dock close to home

Online Hampton Residents -

A place to do monthly water testing for DEQ

Unknown

Kayak launch

launch

Not sure at the moment

Launching

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Boat launch / dock

Everything could easily be relocated to Mill Creek

Nothing (5)

Online Responses from Outside Hampton -

Kayak Launch

10. What would lead to you to use the park more in the future?

Pasture Point Paper Survey Responses -

Gazebo with lights at night;

A garden;

Dog park (8);

More access to water (4);

Picnic tables;

Close to my house (6)

Online Pasture Point Survey Responses -

Make it more dog friendly

Better safety measures

Closer to my home.

remove the restriction for riding bikes in the park and have a closer car dropoff area for kayaks etc. for the pier

Make it more dog friendly

More plantings.

Dog Park

Tables and chairs to sit and relax or read during lunch.

More benches close to river. Events in the park.

Tables and chairs to sit and relax or read during lunch.

More benches close to river. Events in the park.

I would use it a lot if it were a dog park.

More Park Ranger/Police walk throughs

Playground

If there were some grass and not as noisy

Would be nice if the park had at least a little grassy area

We do have kids in the neighborhood, maybe a small park in the middle by the benches would be great

Swing set or other children's play set

improved boat launch

I already use it.

Playground

More amenities.

I don't know

I use everyday with my dog we sit on beach talk to people walk out dock look at water so very peaceful

A playground

If it had a handball court or some kind of physical activity at the park.

Online Hampton Residents -

It actually is a poor location for most traditional park uses. Noisy and somewhat dangerous as people do throw things out of cars passing overhead. Also has limited parking available. Have also observed the dog walkers in

that area do a poor job of picking up after their dogs, and that dog poop can affect the water quality of the

Hampton River

Parking.

Boat

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The park is so loud from the highway noise it is hard to imagine using it for relaxation or visiting with friends. Access to the Hampton river from the kayak launch is important to me. I hope there will be another access available when this launch is closed. I would not want to have to wait for years for another site to be determined and developed.

It is a great location and I see people use it and they enjoy it. Would hate to see a place disappear that is getting used and that we as tax payers paid a lot of money to have installed. I personally think the state should pay to relocate it and/or store it.

Area beautification measures, better security, noise reduction, parking, easy kayak launching

Perhaps an occasional mention on Hampton E-News to remind those of us who don't reside in that area that it's there for our use.

More history

comfortable, safe, and attractive place to walk, sit, and relax and enjoy the views

When I get a kayak.

Regular water taxi service (summer weekends, holidays) from Downtown to various docks, including River Street Park

I will probably use more once the construction is complete

The water access needs to continue.

Time to use it

Picnic amenities

The availability to use it.

nothing (2)

Nothing it is poorly located and very noisy.

Fishing pier

Stop the damn constant road construction that just screws up everything around here.

If they closed the park and moved everything to a place where it was usable

Moving the park to Mill Creek

Safer overall city

Not much

Kayak/canoe launch

Small playground and classes to connect with nature

More advertisement of its amenities

LIKE IT THE WAY IT IS

Somewhere else in Hampton with convenient parking for usage of ramp launch or sitting on bench enjoying the view of the water.

Online Responses from Outside Hampton -

Better lighting and more benches

I grew up on that land - my Family History is there - 2 of their houses (Wood and Brittingham) were demolished when 64 was built in mid 50s and we had to move.

no suggestions

A user-friendly Kayak Launch

11. Any additional comments or recommendations you would like to make to the River Street Steering Committee

Pasture Point Paper Survey Responses -

Save everything that we can;

Another park within Pasture Point or near Pasture Point w/ better water access and/or a real permanent relocation, maybe near Mary Peak cemetery;

Build another park within Pasture Point in new development area and turn River Street Park into a dog park (3)

Online Pasture Point Survey Responses -

Thanks for trying on our benefit!

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Leave some benches

I suggest that the elements be relocated to what is now a parking lot for city employees located on the corner of Lincoln and Washington streets. It would offer a view of the Hampton River and would rid a hard surface that contributes to street flooding in that area.

It brings value to the community and is amongst the reasons why I bought an older home in Pasture Point that needed some TLC. If the park was not here, I probably would not be living in this neighborhood.

This is the first I've heard about future widening and it will take my property. I am shocked to find out this way. I do love the compass and the pavers. While I don't personally visit the park, I like the uniqueness of these elements. It seems this park is not used that much. Maybe we should take this time to relocate these elements permanently. I drive by the park daily and I live in the neighborhood and enjoy the idea of the park and observing it from the outside.

More law enforcement presence would be nice. Some unsavory/illegal activities happen there.

It's a nice area and the history and compass map is nice but it's not something that brings me back again and again. It's a nice place to walk with the dog and have events and sit and check the view. The boat launch is also a nice feature that I use from time to time. A playground would be great for kids and to attract families and neighbors to come congregate. There are no playgrounds in a close proximity. The pavers make it a hard place to just run and play.

The park is a waste of space. It had to be locked up to keep the bums out at night. It's a bad location!

None

Hampton river access for canoes/kayaks is already limited, losing the launch in River Street Park would be a huge loss to not only the residents in the immediate area but to the city as a whole.

Very concerned about relocating and having things damaged. Truly feel storage is best.

Online Hampton Residents -

Need the DOT to put some sort of nets under the highway to catch tossed debris.

No. (3)

Boat

Don't let it go away permanently.

The park should be relocated...it is a bad location aesthetically and security wise.

We are hopeful that the park will be reinstated because green space is so important for citizens to relax and become closer to nature.

is it necessary to keep/relocate the history walk? could it just be removed altogether OR reworked/redesigned completely and provided elsewhere in the City?

The City could move the benches and docks to Ridge Way Park. They would like ideal platforms for model sailboat racing.

Close the park and move the amenities to the community center/ park being built on Lincoln Street.

Close it

If you or VDOT are going to just keep closing it then just close it forever and spend the money on something we actually have some control over. Screw VDOT.

Save the city some money and move the park so everything is usable

Close the park and be a better steward of city money

Close it.

If it was anyway to be designed where some of the sound from the highway could be blocked, it would be a wonderful spot for small concerts and outdoor events. Also need area designated and paved for parking. With more events, there would be more traffic and a parking lot would be important.

Online Responses from Outside Hampton -

Love the view and Hampton History that came from the land.

To remove everything that's possible, because it won't be there in five years after the construction.