



MANCHESTER HISTORY

LEFT *Manchester Mills viewed from the mouth of Shockoe Creek, 1865* | LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
 RIGHT *Detail of Baist Atlas, 1889* | CITY OF RICHMOND DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

IN 1769, William Byrd III founded the City on a portion of south bank of the river known as Rocky Ridge. He recognized the industrial potential the Falls of the James River afforded this site, and named the new city Manchester after England's great industrial center. Hydropower and its position as a gateway to Southside Virginia made Manchester a transportation and industrial center in the nineteenth century.

FALLS PLANTATION Around 1663, William Stegge received a 5000-acre royal land grant extending up and down the south bank of the James River that he and his heirs developed as the Falls Plantation, including the future site of Manchester.

THE MANCHESTER STREET GRID The street grid of Manchester dates to its founding in 1769. The Manchester Town Council renamed the streets in Manchester after heroes of the early American Navy in 1817.

MANCHESTER COMMONS The 1769 Manchester plan included a town commons along the river to serve as an open space for the general use of the town population.

THE MANCHESTER CANAL SYSTEM Byrd's charter for Manchester ensured that his new town would share access to the hydropower of the James River with Richmond, paving the way for Manchester to develop as an industrial area.

MANCHESTER MILL CANAL Around 1730 William Byrd of Westover constructed a small grist mill and mill canal on the south bank of the James. Byrd's canal probably provided the alignment of the present Manchester Mill Canal completed around 1800. The canal received water from a small wing-dam in the river (rebuilt and enlarged over the years) and provided hydropower to Manchester's industries. The mill canal terminated just east of Hull Street at a large pond that overflowed into the natural channel of Walker's Creek.

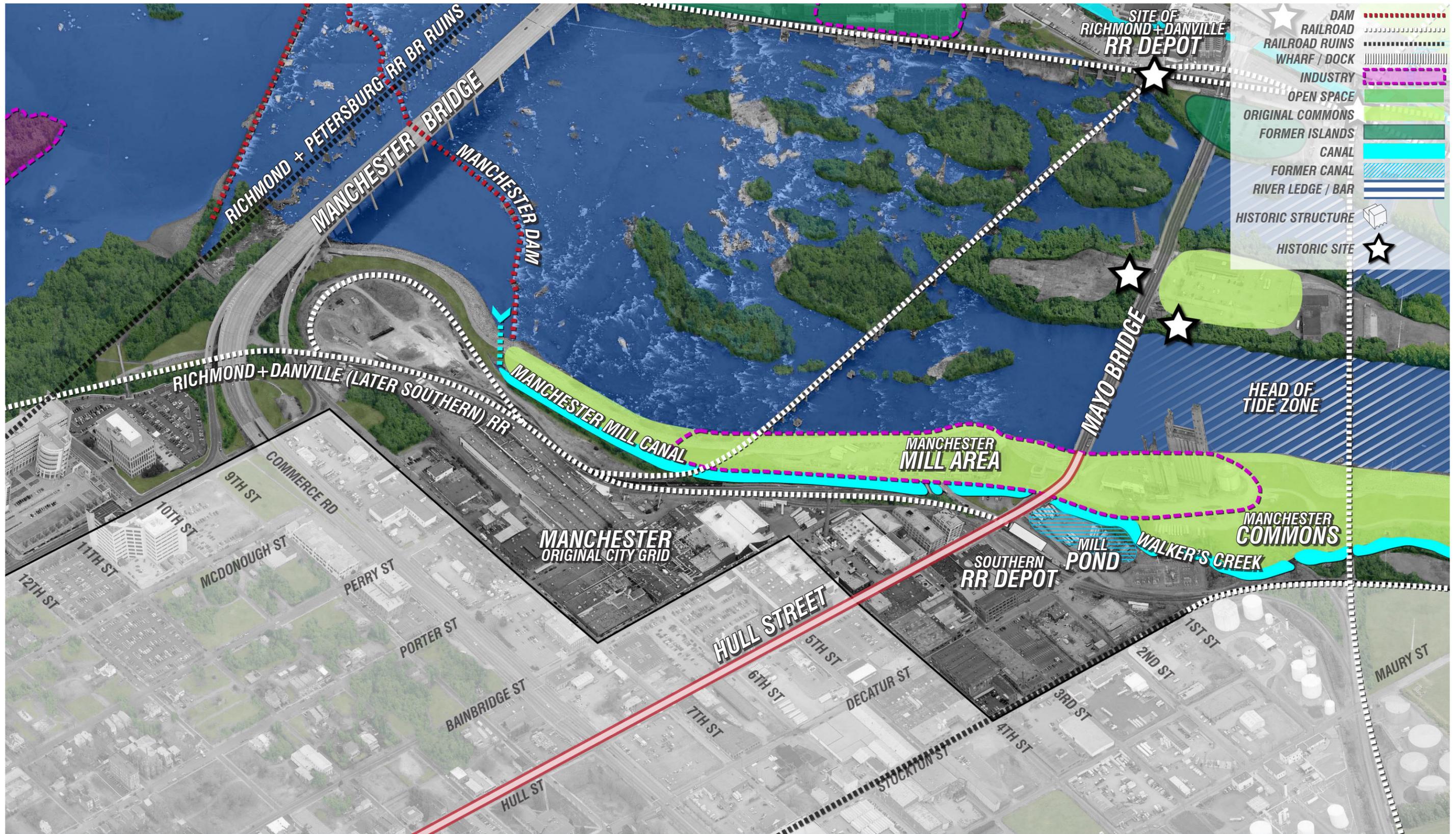
MILL AREA Following the completion of the Mill Canal, textile mills and grist mills were erected along the old Manchester Commons, west of the pond dam. This complex of massive buildings rivaled the industrial buildings on the north bank of the river. The Mill area, presently demarcated by the Manchester Floodwall, survived the Civil War unscathed only to be demolished in the twentieth century.

MAYO BRIDGE The location of the first Mayo Bridge abutment at the foot of Hull Street in 1788 assured Hull became the primary corridor of Manchester.

MANCHESTER BRIDGE The first Manchester Bridge (also known as the Free Bridge) was chartered in 1873 and provided a free alternative to the toll bridge operated by the Mayo Family. The present bridge completed was completed in 1972, and is the third on this site.

RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG RAILROAD BRIDGE In 1836, this stone-supported wooden bridge connected Richmond and Manchester by rail for the first time. A bridge on this alignment survived into the twentieth century, leaving the southern abutment (the Manchester Climbing Wall) and bridge piers as majestic ruins.

RICHMOND AND DANVILLE (LATER SOUTHERN) RAILROAD In 1849, the Richmond and Danville Railroad constructed the second railroad bridge across the James and established the rail alignment through Manchester used today. In 1894, the Southern Railroad acquired and expanded this line and in the opening decade of the twentieth century built the Manchester Depot (now the Virginia Railway Museum) and the present rail bridge across the James.





MANCHESTER

“RIVERFRONT ACCESS” 10 ACRES

The Manchester side of the James River, between the Manchester Bridge and the I-95 Bridge, is dominated by the 5,550-foot long Manchester Floodwall and levee, lined with an extensive amount of armoring rip rap. This promises secure flood protection, while offering little access to the river itself and virtually nothing in terms of riparian landscape. The US Army Corps of Engineers included a public trail along the top of the floodwall, corresponding with the 2,000-foot upriver end of the structure. This flood wall walk crosses the Norfolk Southern tracks on a bridge structure that prevents the path from being universally accessible for its entire length. Nevertheless, this elevated walk offers stunning views north across the river and rapids to downtown. This vantage point suggests future strategies for reconnecting Manchester to the James River, despite the floodwall, as well as ways to render the path universally accessible for its entirety.

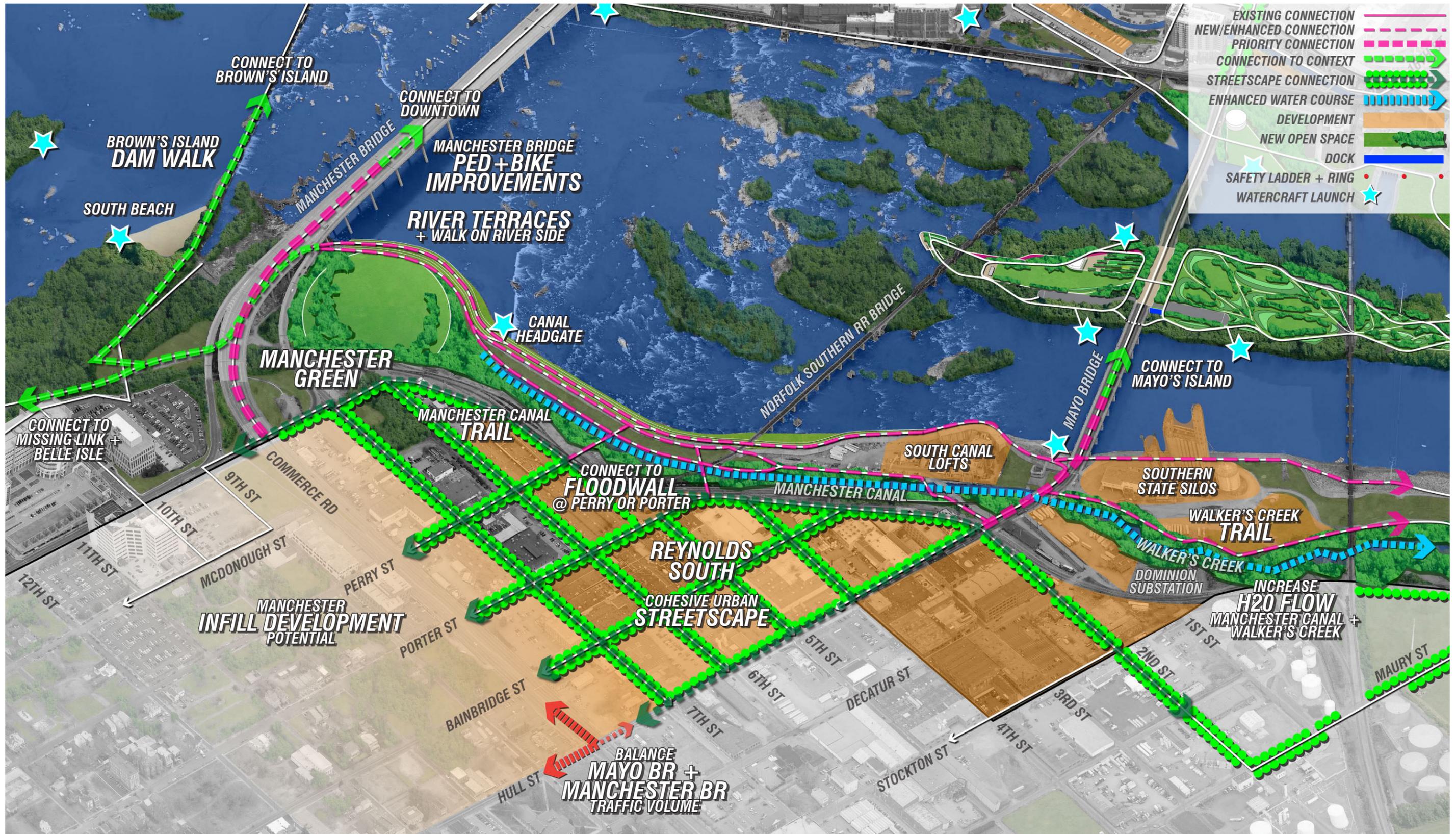
Norfolk Southern owns a 7-acre rail yard behind the floodwall. The active main line is situated to the south side of the parcel, leaving the majority of this teardrop-shaped property largely underutilized. An active, single spur follows the arc of the floodwall curve, for intermittent storage of rail cars. Through acquisition of this private property, the City of Richmond could establish a substantial new, public open space on the south bank of the James River, spurring catalytic redevelopment of the former Reynolds South property. This new open space, Manchester Green, would effectively provide a bookend to Brown’s Island, directly connected along the Brown’s Island Dam Walk.

The Reynolds South property is currently under study by private developers for mixed-use redevelopment of the now closed manufacturing facilities; this will include adaptive reuse of historic structures and new construction. It is imperative to reincorporate the Reynolds blocks back into the Manchester street grid by reopening closed streets to full access. The fundamental objective of the Riverfront Plan in this development is to maximize public passage through and between the new and adapted structures, reinforcing the perception of this area as a fully integrated, and publically-accessible mixed-use district rather than a self-contained enclave. Detailing the Reynolds South streetscape through a combination of public and private funding needs will ensure continuity of vocabulary from Commerce Avenue and Hull Street to the floodwall. This is particularly important where multi-story parking structures are to be configured, and elevated streets and pedestrian bridges are anticipated; one or more spans will need to extend to and connect with the existing Manchester Floodwall Walk.

Positioned at the Manchester Floodwall, on either side of the Mayo Bridge, two industrial buildings offer a commanding view of the river and of the downtown skyline. The former Federal Paper Board Co., upriver of the Mayo Bridge, is in the process of conversion to less than one hundred residential units. The Southern States Silos, downriver of the Mayo Bridge, remains in operation as a grain transfer operation, relying on truck transport rather than rail or barge traffic. When the lessee ends operations at the silos, the owner anticipates future redevelopment as a mixed-use project. Both sites are protected from flooding by the floodwall, which also provides a sizable physical and visual barrier to the river. Once both properties are adapted to post-industrial use, they will take advantage of spectacular river views from above the floodwall.

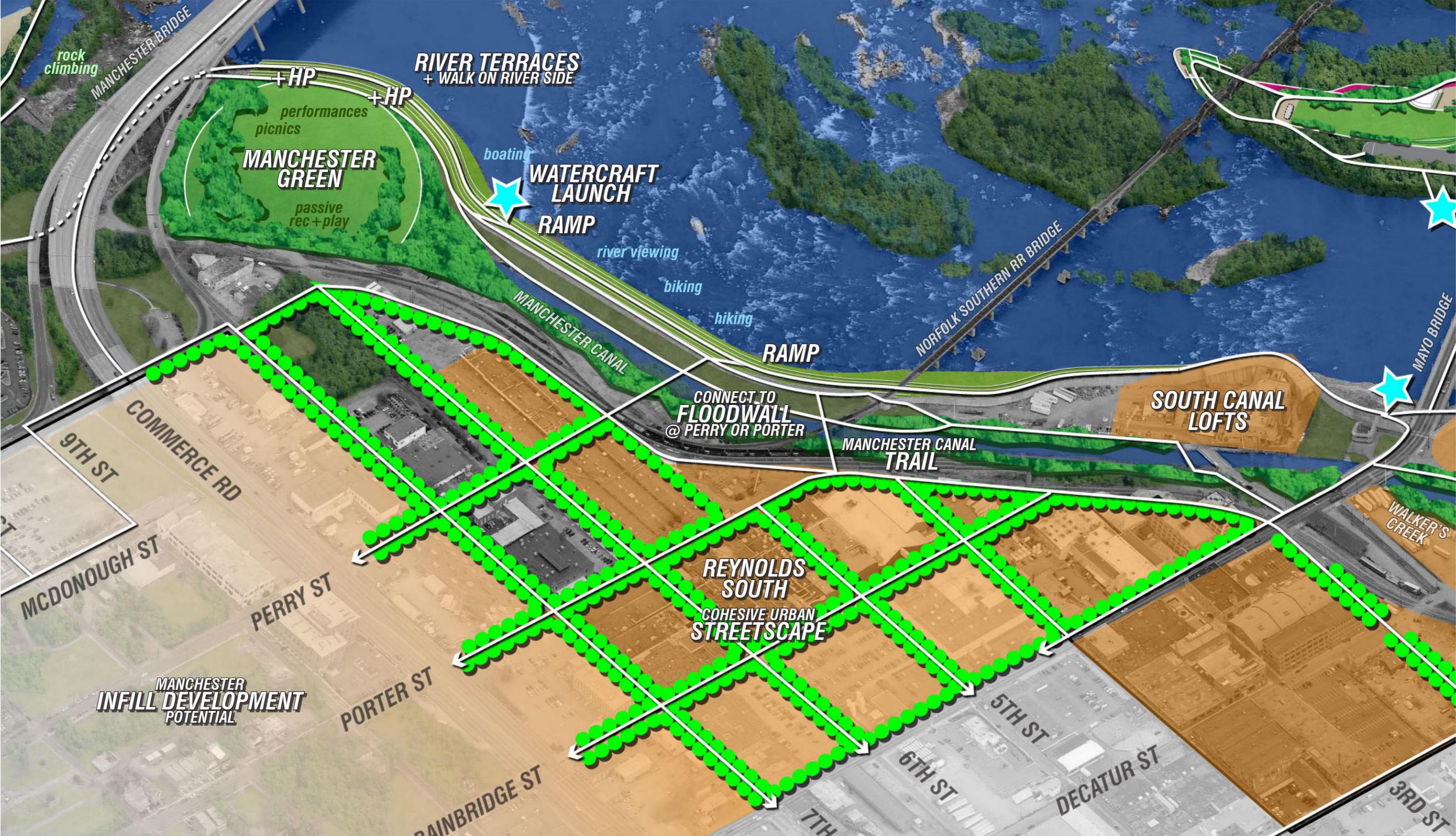
Southern States in particular boasts unparalleled panoramic views of Richmond. The structure could be pulled down, and replaced with a structured parking podium, with mixed-use commercial and residential components above. The current structure is the tallest on the south bank of the river, with any replacement structure unlikely to attain the same height through zoning constraints. The current height then becomes a positive aspect to balance against the potential complexity and cost of adapting a grain elevator to new residential or commercial uses.

The Manchester Canal and Walker’s Creek are as yet unrealized opportunities for accessible water frontage. While the canal morphs into the creek as it passes under Hull Street, the flow velocity is so slight as to be misinterpreted as stagnant. There are two opportunities for this water course: First, open the Manchester dam wider to allow a greater volume of water into the canal/creek, facilitating increased flow. Improve pedestrian access along the canal/creek to bring visitors into closer contact with the water, while improving vegetation along this corridor, upgrading habitat. Second, maximizing opportunities for an abrupt drop of the water course would attract more attention to the function of the canal, and provide a river-powered ‘event’ which visitors can view and hear, behind the floodwall. The Dominion substation may be the ideal location, assuming that the structure is now merely a pass through, and no longer generating power.



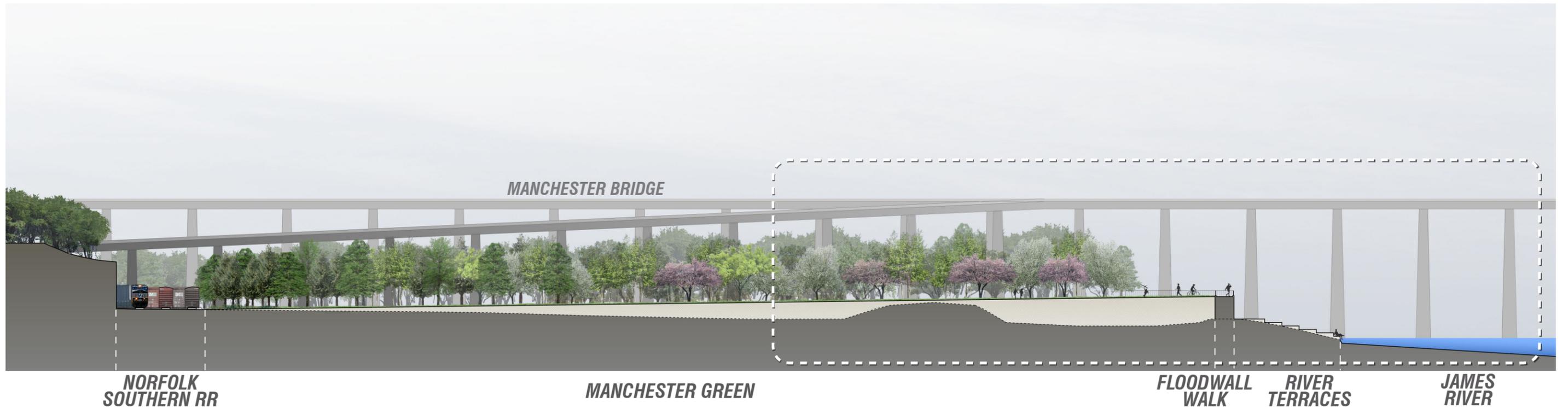
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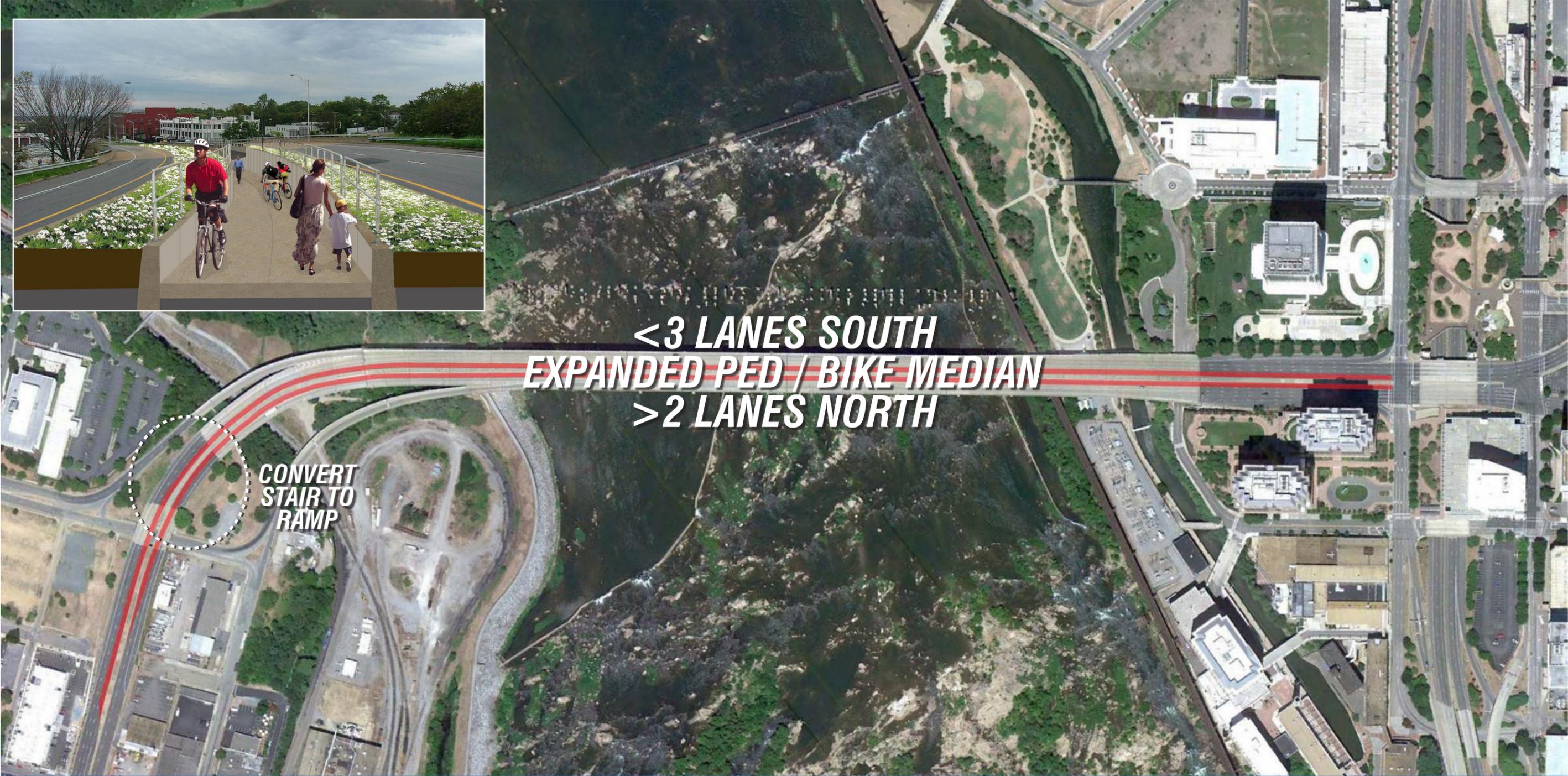
MANCHESTER RIVER TERRACES

Taking advantage of existing City plans for a vehicular access maintenance road under the Manchester Bridge to the Manchester Canal intake valve, the rip rap is transformed through replacement and armoring with a stepped series of terraces. The access road is configured primarily as a dual use pavement for public recreation and City maintenance vehicles. The terrace walls would either be integrated into the existing rip rap armor, or engineered as a new structure capable of withstanding seasonal floods, doing nothing to undermine the existing floodwall structure. The stepped terraces between walls would be vegetated with a variety of non-woody, riparian species to maximize habitat, while minimizing maintenance and erosion. All improvements in proximity to floodwall and rip rap armoring require coordination and permitting with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



MANCHESTER GREEN

The fundamental intervention is to back fill the Norfolk Southern rail yard with engineered fill and tie backs to ensure that floodwall stability remains uncompromised. Filling in this parcel will yield a new public landscape coinciding with the existing Floodwall Walk, and subtly sloping back toward the active rail line. This 7-acre landscape would be vegetated with an adequate shade buffer and access restrictions along the rail, orienting views out across the river to downtown. Programming for the Green will be primarily passive, with an emphasis on informal play and picnicking, while accommodating occasional seasonal performances or events. Lighting, site furnishings, and possible playground and shelter will help make this landscape a family destination for daily and seasonal events.



MANCHESTER BRIDGE N >

The existing median of the Manchester Bridge is open to pedestrian traffic; however, because of the sizable stair on the Manchester terminus, it is not universally-accessible nor reasonably available for bike traffic. Preliminary study suggests that the median at Semmes Avenue could be reconfigured to replace the stair with a universally accessible ramp. A road diet of the Manchester Bridge could possibly eliminate one innermost lane in each direction. This would allow for the potential repurposing of this space as a linear, perennial landscape, greatly enhance the current experience of crossing the James River along the half-mile span. This stair/ramp substitution would dramatically improve public access on the Manchester side, shifting

focus back to the north bank intersection of 9th Street with E. Byrd Street, where the number of turning and merge lanes total eleven, for study to improve bike and pedestrian access and safety. Reconfiguration of the intersection of Hull and Commerce to allow left hand turns onto Commerce would make possible the option for northbound traffic to access downtown without being channeled across the Mayo Bridge.



MANCHESTER: VIEW FROM FLOODWALL WALK, LOOKING NORTH TOWARDS DOWNTOWN RICHMOND