



## **ANCARROW'S LANDING** HISTORY

*Fishing on the James, view to west from Rocketts, 1895* | SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES, VCU LIBRARIES

The Ancarrow's Landing area marked the southeastern boundary of the Falls Plantation and formed a broad, flood-prone plain between the confluence of Walker's Creek upriver and an unnamed and now-vanished creek down river. While the problem of floodwaters spreading over this area discouraged settlement and urbanization, it proved a suitable landing for watercraft down river from navigation hazards and shallow water.

**JONES' ROCK** Jones Rock is a portion of a granite ledge that marked the beginning of shallow water on the south side of the river. The combination of this rock ledge and shallow water upriver from it made navigation upriver to Manchester difficult and prompted ships to dock at Ancarrow's Landing and the Manchester Docks.

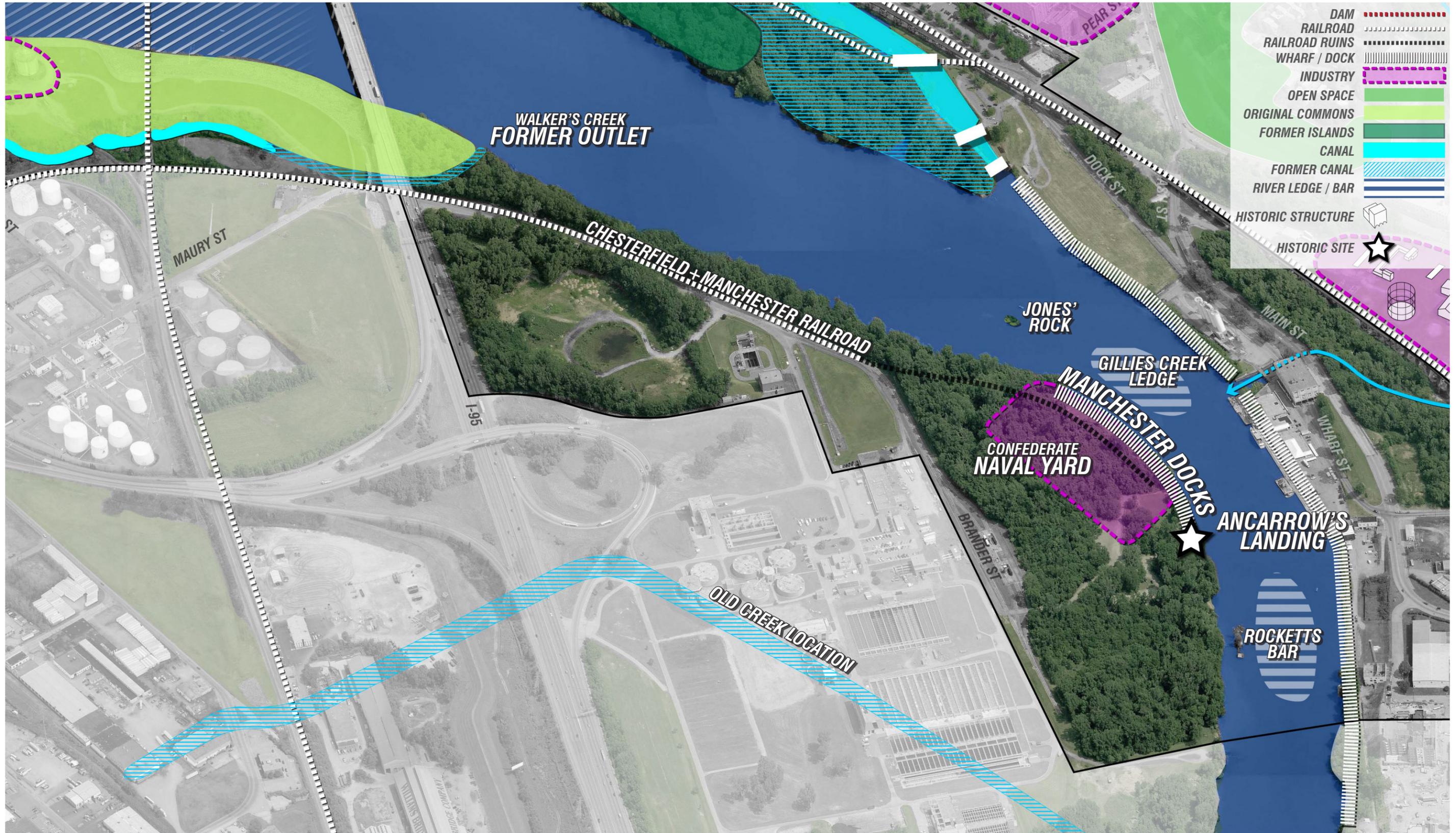
**ANCARROW'S LANDING** In spite of being evocative and ancient-sounding, Ancarrow's is the name of a twentieth century boat yard that operated on this site, the infrastructure of which remains today. This area provided a docking place for the landing of African slaves and British goods, and the loading of hogsheads of tobacco.

**UP RIVER ROAD** A road probably connected the landing at Ancarrow's to Manchester and points upriver early in the history of the area. Maps suggest that modern Brander Street follows the alignment of this roadway.

**CHESTERFIELD AND MANCHESTER RAILROAD** In the early nineteenth century, the Midlothian Coal fields in Chesterfield County became the first substantial coal mining area in the United States. The Chesterfield and Manchester Railroad, a gravity-powered rail line completed in 1831, economically moved coal to shipping at Manchester Docks. Later in the nineteenth century, the Richmond and Danville Railroad (later the Southern) operated this as a steam rail line.

**MANCHESTER DOCKS** The massive granite retaining walls of the Manchester Docks are some of the most impressive waterfront infrastructure in Richmond. The docks were part of a nineteenth century effort to improve port facilities of the south bank of the river. As coal waned in importance as a source of outbound freight following the Civil War, fertilizer imports, for the Virginia-Carolina Fertilizer Company plant located just upriver, became a significant type of freight on the docks.

**CONFEDERATE NAVAL YARD** During the Civil War, the Confederate Naval Yard occupied much of the Ancarrow's area, as well as a portion of Rocketts. The yard made a significant contribution to Civil War and naval history with the construction of Confederate ironclads. These ironclads guarded the Confederate Capitol against naval attack until their sinking downriver during the Confederate evacuation in 1865. The wreck of the ironclads proved a significant navigation hazard after the Civil War and contributed to the decline in shipping at Ancarrow's and Rocketts.



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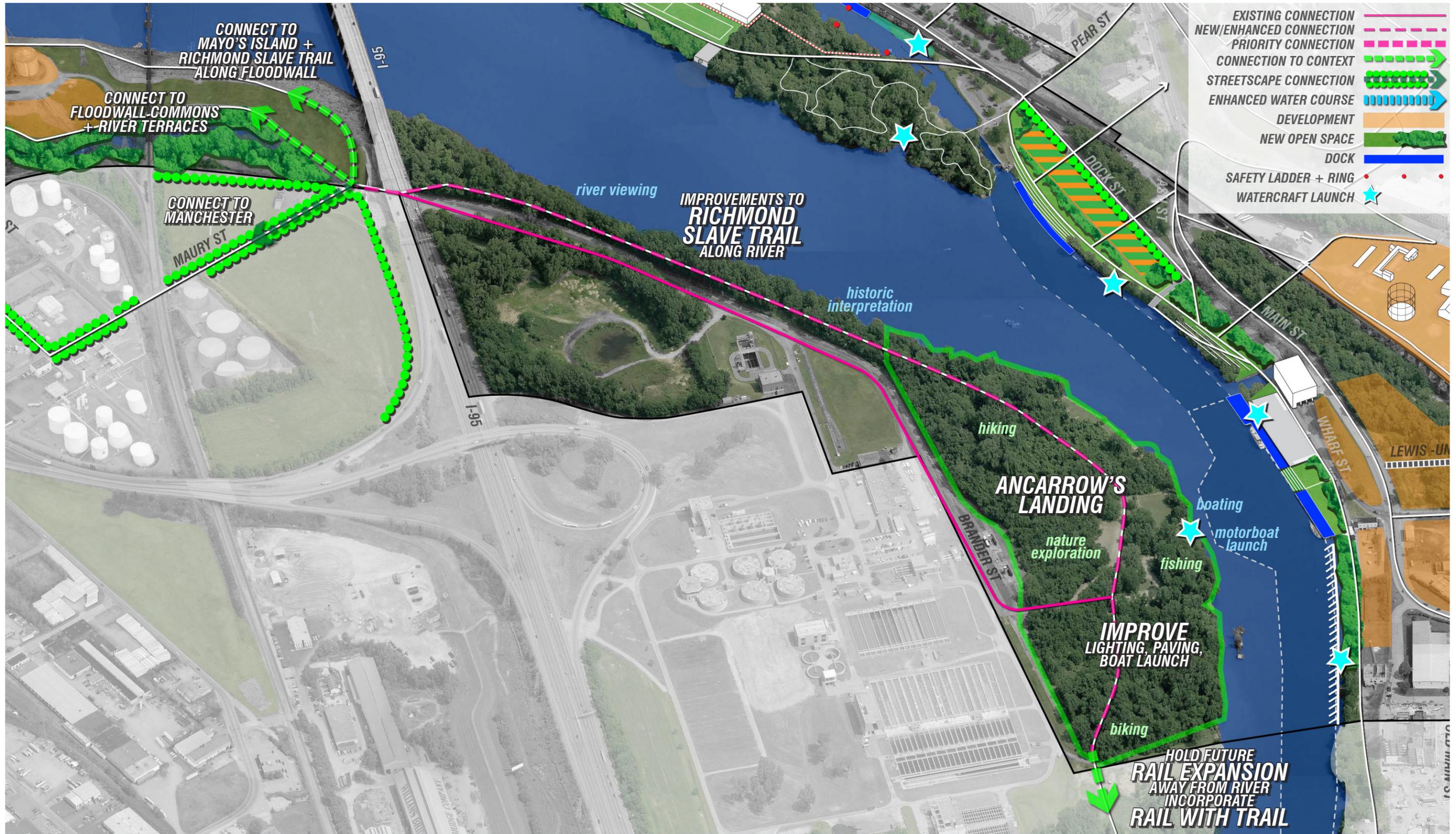


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## *"Riverfront Wild"* 30 ACRES

Ancarrow's Landing on the downriver south bank is widely perceived to have few constraints and therefore offer broad potential for Riverfront attractions and public use. Ancarrow's is accessed by land along Brander Street, a dead end providing access to both the Landing and to the sewage waste water treatment facility. This relative end-of-the-line location suffers from a lack of through traffic and adjacent activity that would otherwise attract impromptu visits. Located on the unprotected side of the floodwall, subject to seasonal flooding, and constrained by the Norfolk Southern rail tracks, more than a mile-and-a-quarter from Hull Street, Ancarrow's is remote, and perceived unsafe by some. This combination of remoteness, absence of flood protection, perceived safety, and adjacency to the occasionally odoriferous treatment plant have kept the Landing largely unimproved. Vehicular distance from downtown has historically proven to be a hurdle for developing and improving the Landing. The boat ramp remains well used, with ample parking. The Richmond Slave Trail originates in the Landing, and proceeds upriver as a walking trail along the narrow forested bank between river and rail on Norfolk Southern property. The Richmond Slave Trail chronicles the trade history of enslaved Africans, and their local movement between the Manchester Docks, Rocketts Landing, the downtown slave markets, and transport to points beyond via water and rail.

Discussion of various strategies for Ancarrow's has considered its potential for a boathouse, marina, and bridge to the north bank. Ultimately there were few compelling programmatic recommendations beyond improved operations and maintenance. Anticipated changes likely to affect Ancarrow's include the discontinued use of the chlorine tanks at the treatment facility, triggering the end of rail service to these tanks. Nevertheless, rail traffic may increase along this siding if plans to extend the Norfolk Southern line to the deep water port come to pass. Rail expansion is contingent on the development of rail-dependent customers further downriver. The extension of rail downriver across City-owned property should be contingent on freeing up underutilized railroad parcels elsewhere in the middle of the Riverfront. Any rail extensions should furthermore look to incorporate pedestrian and cycling paths consistent with the rails with trails effort to establish multi-modal opportunities for both commerce and recreation. Where possible, trails along the river should be extended downriver to connect to southerly routes, with the objective of increasing through-cycling and pedestrian traffic to Ancarrow's Landing.



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