

SHOCKOE LANDING HISTORY

View north from Manchester across Mayo's Island, 1816 | COLLECTION OF T. TYLER POTTERFIELD

Shockoe Landing is the area where Shockoe Valley, Shockoe Creek, and the Shockoe Bottom and Shockoe Slip neighborhoods meet the James River. This portion of the Riverfront is rich in transportation and Civil War history, and has a complicated history of physical development.

SHOCKOE CREEK Shockoe Creek forms one of the largest natural drainages in Richmond north of the James River, and it shaped the valley that separates Church Hill to the east from Shockoe Hill to the west. Shockoe Creek meandered through the floodplain of the valley until sewer projects slowly transformed the creek from stream to sewer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

ROCK LANDING Shockoe is apparently an English corruption of the Powhatan Native American word for stone, a probable reference to the Rock Landing, a granite outcropping that once flanked the western side of Shockoe Creek at its mouth (the present-day northwest corner of 15th and Dock Streets). The landing marked the upper limit of navigation on the tidal James. The construction of the Richmond Dock made the landing a feature of that canal structure, but subsequent urbanization obliterated it.

CANALS The construction of Richmond Dock, started in 1816, completed the first leg of the canal system through Shockoe Landing, east of 14th Street. In 1854, the Tidewater Connection Locks linked the Richmond Dock to the Great Turning Basin. Railroad construction, following the closing of the James River and Kanawha Canal in 1877, obliterated the Canal between Virginia and 18th Streets. These alterations necessitated the use of a modified canal footprint in the 1992 canal reconstruction through this area.

FORMER ISLAND Originally, the northern section of Mayo's Bridge spanned a small island incorporated into the north shore after 1816.

SANDY BAR In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Sandy Bar (also known as Chapel Island) formed the east side of the mouth of Shockoe Creek opposite the Rock Landing. Recent scholarship suggests that on April 4, 1865, the United States Navy rowed Abraham Lincoln to this landing, and from there he walked up 18th Street to Main Street for his triumphal tour of Richmond.

RICHMOND AND DANVILLE RAILROAD In 1850, the Richmond and Danville Railroad established a depot on this site and constructed a bridge across the river. Confederate President Jefferson Davis and the members of his cabinet left Richmond on a train from the Richmond and Danville on April 2, 1865 and the next day retreating Confederate forces started burning nearby warehouses, which caused the Richmond Evacuation Fire. The fire consumed all of the bridges along the Riverfront, as well as the area north of the river between Shockoe Creek, Capitol Square, and Gamble's Hill.

A RAILROAD CROSSROADS Richmond's railroads rebuilt and grew substantially in the decades following the war. The reconstruction of the Richmond and Danville line after the war and the establishment of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in 1877 inaugurated this new rail era. The convergence of these lines with the expansion of the Southern Railroad after 1894 resulted in railroad gridlock. To ease the congestion in the area in 1904, the new Seaboard Airline and the Chesapeake and Ohio railways constructed elevated rail lines, resulting in the great railroad curiosity known as the Triple Track Train crossing.



DAM	.....
RAILROAD	.....
RAILROAD RUINS	.....
WHARF / DOCK	.....
INDUSTRY	.....
OPEN SPACE	.....
ORIGINAL COMMONS	.....
FORMER ISLANDS	.....
CANAL	.....
FORMER CANAL	.....
RIVER LEDGE / BAR	.....
HISTORIC STRUCTURE	.....
HISTORIC SITE	.....

SHOCKOE LANDING HISTORY





SHOCKOE LANDING

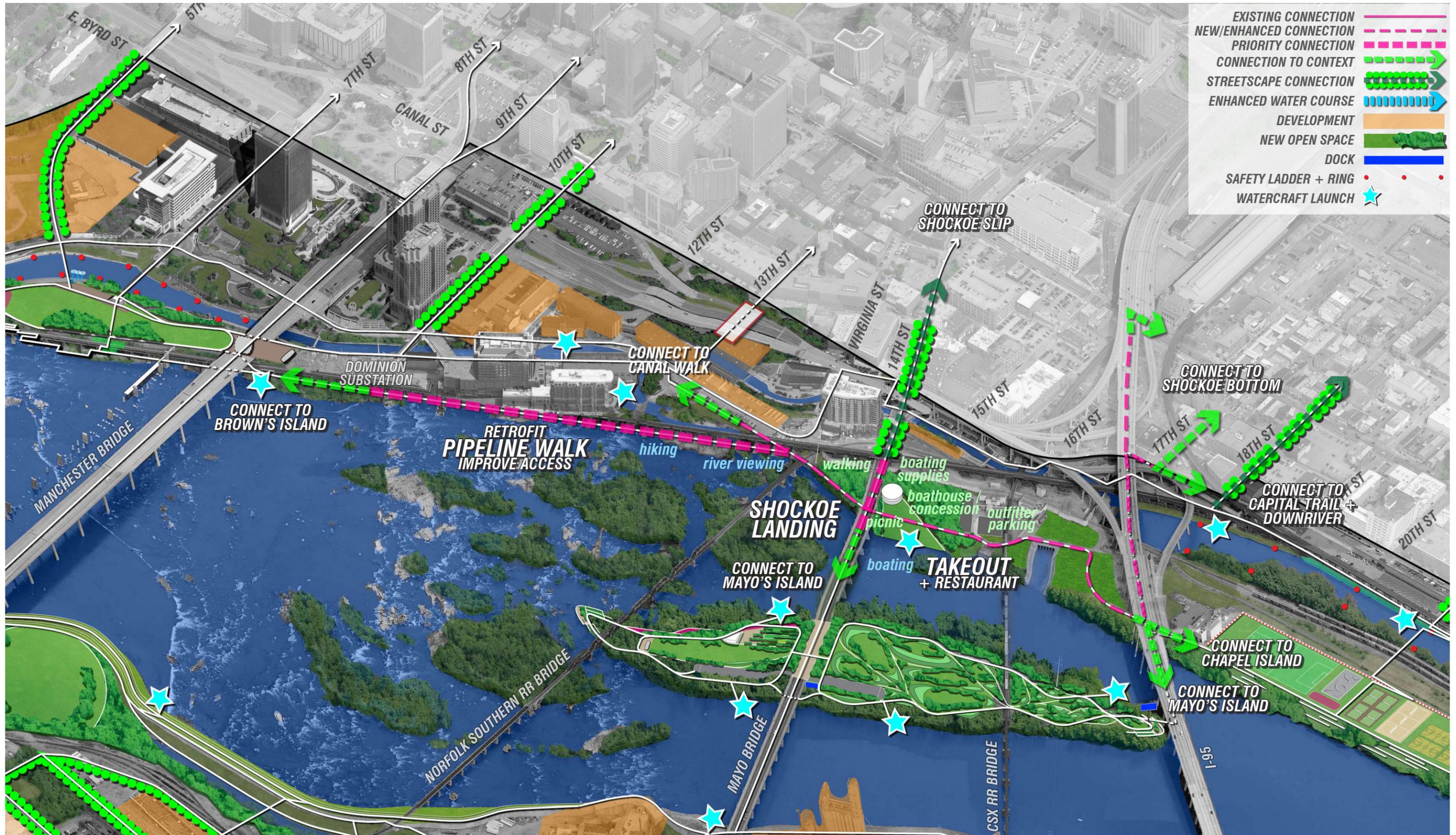
“RIVER RECREATION” 2 ACRES

The Mayo Bridge lands on the north bank of the James River traversing various residual properties unprotected by the floodwall in an area the Plan refers to as Shockoe Landing. Ownership of the parcels includes Norfolk Southern and the City of Richmond. Portions of these properties are being used for or being contemplated for surface parking. The Riverfront Plan envisions a different future, where this 2-acre area is transformed into a pivotal nexus of recreational connections, including the 14th Street Takeout, and access trails along the river and across to Mayo’s Island. Acquisition of the Norfolk Southern parcel will help upgrade these parcels into a cohesive public landing, providing access downriver to Chapel Island. These parcels were previously occupied by rail and port facilities that witnessed the departure of the Confederate Government, the origin of the Evacuation fire, and arrival of U.S. President Lincoln within the same week in 1865, providing an as yet untapped opportunity for interpretation.

Acknowledging the cow path leading from the upriver Canal Walk at 12th Street to Mayo Bridge, the Plan anticipates that this rough trail can be upgraded to full multi-purpose use and extended downriver along Chapel Island, making 14th Street a crossroads of linear river edge trails. The triangular grass parcel upriver of 14th Street is therefore a pivotal City-owned parcel. As such, the Plan advocates against repurposing publicly-owned parcels as dedicated parking for private development protected by the floodwall.

The existing gravel lot is to be transformed into a public landscape anchored by a vendor-operated ‘boathouse’ restaurant situated above the floodplain, affording views south across to Mayo’s Island and watercraft activity associated with the 14th Street Takeout. The reconfigured takeout would effectively expand upriver, with a more generous access ramp to the river, and expanded public parking, metered to deter daily parking. The boathouse may have a vendor-operated concession for river-related outfitting and recreation, and publicly-accessible restrooms for visitors exploring the river by foot, wheel or water.

Further upriver of 14th Street, additional connective projects make access to and along the river easier, including upgrades to the Pipeline Walk. Taken together, these discrete projects reinforce existing or establish new routes of passage for greater River access.



EXISTING CONNECTION	
NEW/ENHANCED CONNECTION	
PRIORITY CONNECTION	
CONNECTION TO CONTEXT	
STREETSCAPE CONNECTION	
ENHANCED WATER COURSE	
DEVELOPMENT	
NEW OPEN SPACE	
DOCK	
SAFETY LADDER + RING	
WATERCRAFT LAUNCH	

SHOCKOE LANDING



WIDENED WALKING SURFACE
UNIVERSALLY-ACCESSIBLE **GUARDRAILS FOR SAFETY**
INTERMITTENT TURNING ZONES
ROOKERY VIEWING



PIPELINE WALK RETROFIT - DOWNRIVER

The Pipeline Walk is an existing 30" diameter steel pipe fastened to the massive concrete footings of the CSX viaduct. From just upriver of Virginia Street, the pipe is topped with a 26"-wide, open steel decking for routine maintenance access. The decking and associated handrail continue upriver nearly 1750', where the handrail ends. Total immersion in seasonal flooding subjects this structure to extreme structural stress and debris strikes. The Pipeline currently rewards a small percentage of visitors willing to scale a ladder to reach stunning views of the James River archipelago upriver of Mayo's Island and Pipeline Rapids. Broader public access to this impressive natural resource could be provided by retrofitting the existing steel decking and guardrails. Universal-access could be accommodated by: widening the steel decking and guardrails; integrating intermittent code-compliant turning zones; and substituting an accessible ramp for the existing ladder access. The objective is to improve access and safety along an exhilarating stretch of the Pipeline Rapids.

LEVEL WALKING SURFACE
UNIVERSALLY-ACCESSIBLE **CURBS FOR SAFETY + DRAINAGE**
INTERMITTENT TURNING ZONES
ROOKERY VIEWING



PIPELINE WALK RETROFIT - UPRIVER

The Pipeline Walk grating abruptly transitions to a concrete-encased vault, approximately 5' wide, continuing upriver beneath the viaduct for another 650' before veering off into the river just below the Brown's Island Dam. A topping slab of concrete can be added to flatten the crown into an accessible pedestrian surface. Low curbs would allow for drainage and a greater sense of safety, free of guardrails where the vertical drop distance is less than 30". In the vicinity of the Manchester Bridge, the existing grades allow for an accessible connection between the Pipeline Walk and Brown's Island. This would provide for a linear loop rather than a dead end. In any improvement scenario, recurring 5' x 5' rest zones will need to be provided to allow visitors to linger and change direction without impeding passage of all users.