



RIVERFRONT PARK PROJECT

Project Overview

The City of Columbia is excited about leading an effort around opportunities for implementing the long-term vision of a riverfront park along the Congaree River that will connect Riverfront Park to Granby Park. The intention is to identify features and parameters that will provide for connectivity while also establishing a regional destination park that celebrates the natural features of the geography, honors the history of the area and also adheres to regulatory parameters guiding the park and surrounding private development.

The City has worked alongside project partners to select a design team for a Master Plan of the site and schematic plan for the park. Field Operations will be tasked with identifying opportunities for private development that is complementary to the park but also supports economic growth of the region. While there are many plans and studies that will be provided as reference, it is the intention of the project team to allow the designers to understand the parameters guiding park development, gain knowledge and awareness of public interest in various park features and work alongside the project team to create a Master Plan that is unique to Columbia. It is important the riverfront park enhances experiences, embraces the riverfront and creates a destination for all to enjoy.

There are many opportunities for the public to be involved. There will be public engagement sessions as the Master Plan process proceeds forward in the first quarter of 2026. In addition, there will likely be funding needs for different park components that include individual giving options as well as corporate sponsorships. Those opportunities will be identified and shared with the public during the Master Plan process.



What is the purpose of the Riverfront Park Project?

The purpose of the Riverfront Project is to create a premier multi-purpose public park that enhances community engagement, promotes environmental sustainability, provides recreational, educational, and entertainment opportunities and supports economic development. It is also the intent that the Riverfront Project will enhance community well-being and quality of life, promote environmental education and conservation, provide passive and active recreational spaces for various activities (walking trails, sports fields, picnic areas, canoe and kayak put in/take out, and natural gardens and greenways), and inspire partnerships between private investors and public entities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the park located? The site is part of approximately 80 acres bounded by the Congaree River to the west, Senate and Gervais Streets to the north, Huger Street to the east and Blossom Street to the south and an additional approximately 16-acre parcel south of Blossom between Williams Street, the Congaree River, and the USC baseball stadium. The terrain, which includes both wooded and open areas, features significant topography, including a steep-sided creek and a pond, with views of the river and the opposite bank.

Will the park be a public park? Yes, the park will be a public park to be enjoyed by all. There may be elements within the park that allow for private rentals and/or events. The funds from those opportunities will be used to support operation and maintenance of the park.

Is the City paying for the land being used for the riverfront park? No, the land needed for the project is being donated to the City by the property owner(s).

Who will operate and maintain the park? The City of Columbia will remain instrumental in the operation of the park but the final structure for the O&M of the park is yet to be determined by the partner agencies.

What is the intended boundary of the park? The boundary of the park is yet to be determined. As the Master Plan for the park is created and the opportunities associated with private development are further understood, the boundary of the park will be defined.

When will the park be completed? The City and its project partners have selected a design team. The Master Plan will be completed prior to any construction activities proceeding. It is also anticipated park elements will be designed and constructed in phases over multiple years as plans are finalized and funding is made available.

What features will be included in the park? It is important to allow the design consultant to create a park design that works with and takes advantage of the existing topography, view sheds, floodplain and floodway delineation, and wetlands delineation and accounts for existing site utilities and easements while providing for formal and informal public spaces that may include public art, kayak/canoe access to the river, a possible amphitheater, water quality and environmental education components, accessibility, multi-functional spaces, shoreline improvements, erosion control and other park amenities identified by the ownership team and through public engagement opportunities. There have been numerous studies, plans and lists from interest groups developed for this park in the past. While those materials will be used as reference materials for the Consultant, there are no pre-determined park elements being programmed at this time. There will be public engagement opportunities as the plan is being developed to help guide decisions regarding features to be included in the park.

Will the riverfront park connect to other parks? The intention is to connect the new Riverfront Park to Granby Park to the south and the existing Riverfront Park to the north.

Who is working on the park project? The City is one of multiple partners working to move this project forward, with the property owners also being primary partners. The City has been selected to lead the design and construction of the park project but will do so in close coordination with the other project partners which include Guignard Associates LLC, the Boyd Foundation, USC and the USC Development Foundation as primary partners. The City is also coordinating with Richland County regarding opportunities for collaboration between the City and County since the park is intended to be a regional destination for all.

Will the public be provided an opportunity to provide input regarding the park project? Absolutely. One of the tasks of the consultant will be to lead a process that includes public input opportunities to expand upon past studies and public input sessions geared at better understanding elements and features the public would like to have included in the Riverfront Park Project.

What private development is programmed around the park? The planning process will include identifying developable sites that are complementary to the public park. The Master Plan process will help influence the boundary of the park and identify opportunities for limited private opportunities within the park to help monetize park features as appropriate as well as private development opportunities on property adjacent to the park.

Will there be a roadway built along the river? While there is a recognition of a need for connectivity along the river area, it has not yet been determined how that will be facilitated and where it will be located. Any such connectivity will adhere to regulations that guide how improvements can be made within this area and will be intended to support ingress and egresses to the park, and not a primary travelway.

Will there be river access in the park? Access to the river is an element that will be factored into the Master Plan process, but it is not yet confirmed in what form and location access will be available. The regulatory parameters that guide the plan will influence those decisions.

What is going to happen to the rock stockpiled on the property? The stockpiles of material currently stored on the site will be used to support various projects planned, to include the Williams St Extension Project. Other uses to be considered include stabilization of Kinsler Creek.

Is there sufficient funding to support the park construction? Effort is underway to identify funding mechanisms for upfront costs of the various park elements. Once a Master Plan is completed, more will be known about the estimate for a phased-in approach to the park construction, as well as naming rights opportunities for park elements. While there are some funds available to support the park project, additional funding is needed. In addition to seeking grant funds, the project stakeholders will be seeking philanthropic organizations interested in supporting the project, as well as organizations interested in pursuing naming rights opportunities.

Is there sufficient funding to support the park maintenance? Effort is underway to identify funding mechanisms for maintenance costs. The park will be designed and constructed in phases to ensure funds needed for maintenance are available to support project elements as they are brought online.

Will the existing utilities remain in place? There have already been discussions regarding undergrounding utilities to the extent feasible, however, the current plan is that the overhead utilities will remain in place along the riverfront due to the prohibitive cost to underground transmission lines.

How will the park be activated? The Master Plan will be developed and the park constructed in consideration of activation needs to ensure a plan exists for full use of park elements and features as they are completed.

How can I get involved? Look for public engagement opportunities as the process proceeds forward and share ideas regarding park features you would like to see in Columbia via the following email address: ColaRiverfrontExperience@columbiasc.gov. There will also be a project webpage created as the process proceeds forward.