



RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE

Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025

APPROVED BY RIVERFRONT RECAPTURE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 10/28/21



Introduction

As Riverfront Recapture celebrates 40 years of connecting people with the Connecticut River, the organization has the opportunity to chart a path for the next 40 years. This strategic plan looks at the next four years addressing challenges that have emerged over the last few years and embracing new perspectives as we look towards the future.

During the strategic planning process, four strategic priorities have emerged. They create the framework that will guide the organization as we grow and work to achieve financial stability.

A note about the plan itself: the plan is a “strategic” plan in that it articulates a broad vision and provides overall direction for moving the organization forward. It is not an operating plan or a to-do list of activities. Those will be developed as the next step in implementing each of this plan’s recommendations over the next four years.

A Strategic Planning Subcommittee managed the strategic planning process: Dave Jenkins, Gretchen Gregg, Mike Puckly, Julia Miller, Joe Stanford, Kathy Cassidy, Chris Montross, Debbie Baker, Peter Morse, and Michael Zaleski. Input from the board and Riverfront staff and donors, volunteers, and other stakeholders is reflected in the plan.

Riverfront Recapture is a nonprofit (501c3) organization that manages, maintains, operates, and activates four connected parks along 3.5 miles of the Connecticut River. Riverfront Recapture has been fulfilling its mission to connect people with the Connecticut River for 40 years. How do we achieve our mission?

We support our work:

We strive to attain long-term financial stability by building our contributed and earned income with our generous donors, sponsors, foundations, corporations, government agencies, and corporations. We work with our supporters in many different ways to involve and support them and provide opportunities at all levels. As a recipient of several large grants in 2021, we are closer to financial stability and long-term funding goals than ever before. This support allows us to connect people with the Connecticut River.

We provide safe, clean, and accessible parks:

Daily maintenance provides our park users with clean, public parks, which have never been more important. Our parks are well lit and patrolled by well-informed, well-trained Riverfront Rangers, giving park users an additional level of security. Public safety is a priority because safe, accessible parks allow us to connect people with the Connecticut River.

We engage:

Riverfront Recapture builds relationships through partnerships and community engagement. We communicate with our stakeholders and supporters on various platforms. We partner with individuals and groups, rowers and park users, corporations, schools, and government agencies to expand our reach, increase accessibility and awareness of our parks, allowing us to connect people from throughout the region with the Connecticut River.

We grow:

Riverfront Recapture was created to reconnect the river and the region, and that's what we do. As we look to the future, we will expand those connections by creating even more access to the river along the Joe Marfuggi Riverwalk, in our new park on the Hartford/Windsor line, and through the activities on Garmany Cove. In addition to our new plans, we will continue to take care of our riverbanks, improve upon our existing infrastructure, complete deferred maintenance projects, and improve upon an already beautiful riverfront park system.

Vision

A beautiful riverfront park system that is highly recognized and widely utilized as a unique regional asset

Mission

Connect people with the Connecticut River

Path to the Future

2021:

- RRI responsibility for maintenance has expanded, park maintenance has improved, greater efficiency are in place.
- Rebuild menu of revenue-generating RRI-operated commercial enterprises/programs, supported by appropriate infrastructure.
- Reevaluate public events to ensure clear value to the community and financial value to RRI.
- Individual giving/major gifts comprise 20% of revenue, ten new legacy gift commitments.
- Build a greater public understanding of RRI's role in managing, maintaining and activating four parks.
- Multiple park development projects underway.
- Annual budget balanced, endowment growing.

BY 2025:

- RRI will be responsible for expanded park acreage, including the Joe Marfuggi Riverwalk and new park. Maintenance projects will increase, and staff hired to meet the demand.
- Work to broaden RRI offerings to be more inclusive and deepen community relationships.
- Further expand menu of revenue-generating RRI-operated commercial enterprises/programs, supported by appropriate infrastructure.
- Continue to reevaluate roster of public events.
- Grow individual donor base with an added focus on younger donors.
- Sufficient surplus to invest in new programs and infrastructure, reduce dependence on city/state funding, continue to ensure a reserve fund is in place.

BY 2035:

- Be widely respected as a destination for Connecticut outdoor adventure seekers.
- Create greater and expanded access for the region to the Connecticut River.
- Facilitate successful revenue-generating ventures along the riverfront, including RRI and non-RRI operated ventures.
- Deepen the lineup of events that offer value to community and financial value to RRI.
- Increase donor membership in Mainstay and Legacy Society.
- Strong RRI brand enhances perceptions of RRI, deepens understanding of RRI role in enhancing quality of life and economic development in Greater Hartford, and drives RRI development.
- Achieve long-term financial stability.

A large, mature tree with green and yellowing leaves dominates the foreground on the right side. Its trunk is thick and textured. In the background, a city skyline is visible across a body of water. The skyline includes several tall buildings, with a prominent reddish-brown one in the center. The water reflects the buildings and the sky. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is a mix of nature and urban landscape.

Strategy I **Park Operations and Development**

I. Park Operations and Development

1. Maintain high-quality public spaces, parks, docks, and boat launches to provide year-round, daily access (as seasonally appropriate).
 - a. Improve signage near/within the parks to help people understand how to access the river and other park assets; evaluate highly-visible signage opportunities to promote Riverfront branding of public spaces.
2. Develop and implement a deferred maintenance project plan with a tiered/prioritized approach. Utilize capital planning resources to maintain/replace/improve infrastructure.
3. Develop and implement a comprehensive tree, garden and plantings plan for the parks to continuously improve the spaces.
4. Invest in public safety operations to account for increased park usage and landmass seven days per week and 12 months per year.
 - a. Increase visibility and public awareness of park operations staffing and infrastructure to improve perceived and actual safety.
 - b. Ensure adherence to best practices in park operations to mitigate risk and decrease organization liability.
 - c. Be a resource to all Riverfront departments for a review of best practices related to public safety.
5. Capitalize on enhancement opportunities ranging from improvements to existing parks to the development of new parks or public spaces.
 - a. Complete design, secure approvals and construct Joe Marfuggi Riverwalk connecting Riverside Park and Windsor Meadows State Park.
 - b. Undertake phased approach to development (including economic development opportunities) of new Riverfront Land (RLI) on Hartford/Windsor line.
 - c. Ensure that plans for Riverwalk South & Gateway project are incorporated into any dike replacement project.
 - d. Explore feasibility of Riverwalk connection south to Wethersfield and north to downtown Windsor.
 - e. Monitor regional and municipal planning proposals under development and their impact on parks and river. Explore opportunities for trail/Riverwalk/facility maintenance in towns outside the current parks system, including East Hartford, Windsor, Wethersfield, Rocky Hill, and Glastonbury.
6. Coordinate with development staff for annual and capital fundraising needs.

Strategy II Programs, Events, and Commercial Enterprises





II. Programs, Events, and Commercial Enterprises

1. Offer a wide range of land- and water-based outdoor programming that maximizes all the Riverfront parks and public spaces.
 - a. Increase awareness and participation from broad regional areas and among diverse members of many communities. Identify new markets and look for opportunities to open up access to other constituencies that may not participate due to real or perceived barriers. Explore partnerships with local and national organizations to expand program offerings.
 - b. Provide seed money for new initiatives through the Riverfront Innovation Fund.
 - c. Maintain year-round engagement with Riverfront Rowing programming for youth and adult participants.
 - d. Determine and implement an appropriate mix of Adventure, Outdoor and Dragon Boat offerings that can be expanded to maintain year-round engagement.
 - e. Evaluate the potential for fitness and group activity classes in the outdoor public spaces.
 - f. Review the correct mix of fee-based, sponsored, and free offerings to balance financial commitment with accessible and inclusive programming.
2. Identify signature Riverfront public events.
 - a. Plan across the organization for the assets and resources needed to maximize public participation, cost-effectiveness, branding (and co-branding) visibility.
3. Attract unique public or ticketed events that showcase the parks and draw people from beyond Greater Hartford and bring energy to the Riverfront (e.g., 2017 USA Cycling's Cyclocross National Championships).
4. Seek out traveling exhibits that would work well in our parks and on the river (e.g., Nina and Pinta).
5. Establish an inventory of Riverfront spaces available for private events, and promote to appropriate markets. Annually evaluate fee structure and other requirements to ensure viability.

Strategy III Contributed Support





III. Contributed Support

1. Support ongoing operations, programming, and signature Riverfront events by solidifying consistent funding and in-kind services.
 - a. Increase endowment and planned giving contributions.
 - b. Broaden and maximize all aspects of donor relations.
 - c. Work to identify and engage new funders and partners.
 - d. Maintain a robust, up-to-date, detailed database of individual, organizational, corporate, and foundation donors to support goals ranging from grant solicitation to event participation and targeted fundraising opportunities.
 - e. Support the organization goal of establishing a broad range of federal, state, regional, private, and non-profit funding resources (and other assets and equipment) to ensure successful realization of Riverfront strategies.
 - f. Annually coordinate with each department to determine in-kind services or assets needed and assist in acquiring goods and services.
2. Manage and implement capital project funding from individuals, corporations, and foundations, including fundraising subcommittees as appropriate, related but not limited to:
 - a. Joe Marfuggi Riverwalk entry areas
 - b. Viewsheds/pocket parks along the Joe Marfuggi Riverwalk
 - c. Development of new park



Strategy IV
**Communications,
Outreach, and
Community Engagement**

IV. Communications, Outreach, and Community Engagement

1. Increase awareness of all Riverfront Recapture initiatives through a year-round multi-channel communications plan.
 - a. Strengthen channels of outreach to existing markets & constituencies.
 - b. Work to identify & engage new markets & advocates.
 - c. Cultivate community partnerships and ensure consistent recognition of partners and sponsors per their branding guidelines and Riverfront expectations.
 - d. Review and revise all communications to emphasize, where appropriate, the regional nature of Riverfront's mission.
 - e. Collaborate with relevant regional committees, peer organizations, and promotional partnerships to ensure Riverfront is engaged in mutually beneficial efforts.
2. Support the efforts of all Riverfront departments, programs, and initiatives through communications materials, as well as assistance in market research and analysis of new and established opportunities.
 - a. Strengthen (or build) brand consistency in all Riverfront communications.
 - b. Develop a resource library of images, content, and supporting data for incorporation in outreach, development/fundraising, and marketing initiatives.
3. Use the marketing of Riverfront's assets and programming to highlight the essential health and wellness benefits of clean, safe, outdoor spaces and community access to public spaces.
4. Create and sustain new avenues for community engagement.
 - a. Foster the dual role of a robust volunteer program to both gather skilled and unskilled assistance in supporting Riverfront's mission; as well as the resulting continued engagement of the volunteer community in Riverfront activities and programs (including financial contributions).
 - b. Help build the community and corporate relationships that will amplify the Riverfront message and mission through public relations, advocacy, and channels to gather feedback.
 - c. Actively promote programming to welcome and broaden diversity, accessibility, and inclusiveness for park visitors, event participants, and residents of the communities and region visiting the Riverfront.