

Permanent Protection for the James River Park System

By Kathy Graziano, Richmond City Council President

“That’s the James River...there’s nothing like it in any other city in the United States. That’s Belle Isle, part of the James River Park system, and after today, there will be nothing like it in the United States. It will be the only urban park in the United States protected from development forever by a conservation easement. Nothing like it, anywhere in the United States.”



Good Morning. I'm Kathy Graziano, and I want to thank all of you here today, and many others who could not join us, for making those statements true.

Those of us on the stage today will sign our names to the document that make this easement permanent...but it is you who made this event happen.

It is you who gave your time, your talents and your commitment to this park and this city, and the generations ahead will thank you for it.

Men can make a ball field or a tennis court; men can build an office tower or industrial complex or residential units. Men can never make a river like this. It is the river that gave birth to our Commonwealth and our nation.

Men can also never make a park like this. This park celebrates this river, its history, and its gift to our city.

It takes a greater power than man to create such a river and such a park.

But men and women do have the power to protect this priceless gift, and I thank all of you who have worked so hard to make sure they are protected.

I cannot acknowledge all who have contributed, but there are a few people who deserve special recognition.

First, of course, is **Doctor Charles Price**, who has been working on this project, often alone and unappreciated, for more than a decade. Dr. Price approached me almost five years ago with the proposal. It seemed like such a no-brainer. I never doubted that we would get here: I never dreamed it would take four years. You are truly the godfather of this easement. Doctor Price, please stand and accept our thanks for all you have done in making this a reality.

I want to thank all the city employees who worked on this for the past four years. At one time or another, virtually every department of city government was involved, but special recognition goes to **Jan Reid and Lisa Ochenhirt** of the City Attorney's Office, who actually wrote the drafts and the final version; **Larry Miller and Mary Lois Mitchum** of the Parks Department who were unwavering in their commitment to this process, **Bob Steidel and Rosemary Green** of the Department of Public Utilities, who worked very hard to make sure that the document we created protects the city interest for the future as well.

A special thanks to you all. For all the groups represented here today, and all the citizens who have supported this process, please accept our most profound and heartfelt appreciation.

Finally, if I might, a brief personal observation. Three of my children and their families live in this area. My grandchildren and their children likely will grow up in this area, and will enjoy the park as I have. To them and to all the other children of our future. We leave this park system, better than we found it, forever. All Photos by Diana Parker , Editor-FOJG



Left: Kathy Graziano shares a moment with Dr. Charles Price

Right: Ralph Hambrick James River Advisory Council; John Zeugner, RRPf - Project Dir/Baseline Doc.; Ralph White, Manager of the James River Parks System, John Pope, Dir Richmond Pks and Recreation.



Uniquely, as a train crossed behind, Co—Signatories to the *historic* Virginia State Conservation Easement for the James River Park System gathered on the Brown’s Island vehicle access bridge in front of Tredegar Park were Governor Timothy Kaine; Richmond City Mayor Dwight C. Jones; Richmond City Council President Kathy Graziano, Richmond Acting CAO, Chris Beschler; Director, VA Department of Conservation and Recreation Joe Maroon; Capital Region Land Conservancy Dan Jones and Bill Conkle, President, Richmond Recreation and Parks Foundation which developed the Base Line Document/and DCR Env Planner. all photos by Diana Parker 29 May 2009

View the RRPf Baseline Document at: <http://www.rrpfoundation.org/james/index.html>