



AIA RICHMOND CHAPTER 2007 DESIGN AWARDS HONOR AWARD WINNER

The Village of Rocketts Landing City of Richmond and Henrico County, Virginia CMSS Architects; Virginia Beach and Richmond, Virginia

Project Narrative:

Divided across the adjacent municipalities of the City of Richmond and Henrico County, Virginia, this \$400 million waterfront revitalization will have a significant environmental and historic impact on the Richmond riverfront and the greater metropolitan area. Through a groundbreaking remediation and urban plan, the 54-acre site, an abandoned, industrial brownfield adjacent to downtown, will be transformed into a thriving riverfront community. The new mixed-use village will simultaneously reintroduce a residential and riverfront element to downtown while resurrecting one of the City's oldest and most historically significant districts.

Process, Design and Implementation

Environmental Issues – Rocketts Landing is confronted with certain environmental considerations, such as stormwater management, typical of waterfront developments. Development is further complicated by the site's status as an industrial brownfield. Inherent obstacles such as restrictive remediation and approval processes, liability issues, and consequent prohibitive costs made the site unattractive to most developers. It was, nevertheless, clear to the developers and the design team that Rocketts could be recovered and re-established as a thriving urban community. In November 2002, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) pre-approved remediation plans for the project, the first plan of its kind in the state. Prior to this agreement, brownfield remediation was approved only on a parcel by parcel basis, causing multi-parcel projects to incur excessive liability and prohibitive costs. The plan's acceptance marks the first time the Virginia DEQ has granted advanced approval of a remediation plan for all of a large-scale, multi-parcel, multi-phase, mixed-use project, declaring that this decision would set the standard for future projects throughout the state.

Zoning Regulations and the Creation of New Ordinances - The planning area is divided between the municipalities of the City of Richmond and Henrico County. Richmond's zoning codes, while urban in nature, still did not allow for the plan's density and mix of uses. Henrico County's zoning codes followed a suburban development paradigm which did not allow for any mixed-use development at all. Implementation of the project has required both municipalities to amend or create new zoning categories to accommodate the density and variety of uses indicated in the plan. As the DEQ approval process progressed, planners solicited the endorsement of the governments of both the City of Richmond and Henrico County. Through numerous meetings and presentations, planners assisted the City and County in crafting and adopting new land-use ordinances that re-zoned the area for urban, mixed-use development.

The Master Plan - The design converts the twenty-five block site into a mixed-use community with a full complement of uses. The site is interwoven with open spaces that connect the village with the James River. The plan provides natural gathering and socializing points while allowing maximum flexibility for the development to take full advantage of current and emerging trends in retail, housing and business. Rocketts Landing incorporates four unique segments. Festival Plaza forms a public gateway from the western edge of downtown Richmond to the project site. The Square, the civic epicenter of the project, will reflect the metropolitan atmosphere of Downtown Richmond, and will be a primarily commercial, mixed-use venue interspersed with retail, mid-rise office buildings, hotels, condominiums, and restaurants. Village Commons is envisioned as the focal point for outdoor activity and a neighborhood gathering place. Offering dramatic views of the river, the open public plazas are surrounded by restaurants, and shops, with residential and business spaces above. Existing historic warehouses in this area will be converted into residences and office space. Responding to the rising market demands for urban residential units, the project team created East Village, a residential district, which will be located

near the eastern boundaries of the site. Condominiums, townhomes, and apartments will be organized around tree-lined streets leading to the riverfront.



Riverfront Strategy - The plan creates provisions for preserving existing natural sections of the riverfront. Preservation areas - treed slopes, vegetated riparian edges, and landscape character features - are to be protected from significant intrusion by man to assure their continuing role in the ecosystem of the James and the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Conservation areas - existing pathways, trails, open areas, and groves - are suited for limited development and will be reserved for passive and active recreation as well as greenways for paths and buffers. The project's landscape design will also allow the community to reconnect with the river. This project will be the first community in the region to offer an urban waterfront, with marinas, boat slips, launch sites, as well as a mile-long, natural riverfront park with views of the Richmond skyline.

The Village of Rocketts Landing will be developed in phases to allow the income from the development to fund remediation efforts for future phases. Construction for Phase One began in 2005.



The jury had the following comments regarding the project:

“The submittal did an excellent job of telling the story of the river and depicting the history of the site as a manufacturing center. The planning solution was very orderly and had strong connectivity to the water, creating a series of views that continually brought the river into the composition. The use of courtyards as a place-making device, the reuse of existing mill structures, and the level of density all lead to the establishment of a successful urban place. The project has great strength as an urban plan.”

Architectural Firm of Record: CMSS Architects, PC
 4505 Columbus Street, Suite 100
 Virginia Beach, VA 23462
 757-222-2010

Design Team: Burrell F. Saunders, AIA – Principal-in-Charge, Architect
 Brett Lafving, AIA – Project Manager, Architect
 John Bernard, AIA – Project Manager, Architect
 Paul Gareau – Landscape Architect, Lead
 Stephanie McMorris – Landscape Architect

Owner/Developer: WVS Companies
 5000 Old Osborne Turnpike, Suite 300
 Richmond, VA 23231
 (804) 222-6771

General Contractor: (Historic Structures)
 KBS, Inc.
 8050 Kimway Drive
 Richmond, VA 23228

(New Structures)
 JD Lewis Construction Management Inc.
 740 Stand Craft Way
 Richmond, VA 23231

Project Consultants:

CIVIL ENGINEER:

Wiley & Wilson
4909 West Marshall Street
Richmond, VA 23230

Timmons Group
1001 Boulders Parkway, Suite 300
Richmond, VA 23225

TRAFFIC ENGINEER:

The Cox Company
220 East High Street
Charlottesville, VA 22902

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:

(Historic Structures)
Draper Aden Associates
2206 S Main St
Blacksburg, VA 24060

(New Structures)
3D Structural Engineers, Inc.
211 Bristol Downs Drive
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

GEOTECHNICAL:

Virginia Geotechnical Services, P.C.
8211 Hermitage Road
Richmond, VA 23228

LAND SURVEYER:

Shadrach and Neil, Inc.
430 Southlake Blvd., 10-B
Richmond, VA 23236