



RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES REGULAR MEETING

May 27, 2026

Main Library
101 E. Franklin Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219
Phone: 804-646-2547

11:45 a.m.



Richmond Public Library
 101 E. Franklin Street
 Richmond, VA 23219
 (804) 646-4256 / fax: (804) 646-7685



Library Board of Trustees Meeting
Wednesday, May 27, 2026
11:45 a.m.

AGENDA

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Call to order: | 11:45 a.m. | Ms. Peterson |
| Agenda | | Ms. Peterson |
| Consent Agenda: | | Ms. Peterson |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Minutes-April 22, 2026, Regular Meeting • Approval of Statistical Reports • Approval of Pending Deposited Gifts Report | | |
| Public Comment Period: | | |
| Reports: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Friends • Library Foundation • Library Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Richmond Room by Senior Librarian and Community Memory Fellow • Advocacy Taskforce • Policy Taskforce | | <p>Ms. DeBoer/Mr. Dishon</p> <p>Ms. Revere/Mr. Firestine</p> <p>Mr. Firestine</p> <p>Ms. Chloe McCormick/
Mr. Marvin Hicks</p> <p>Ms. Carter-Gunter/Mr. Green</p> <p>Ms. Altman</p> |
| Board Committee Reports: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair Report • Finance Committee • Facilities Committee • Governance Committee | | <p>Ms. Peterson</p> <p>Mr. Yates/Mr. Firestine</p> <p>Ms. Woody/Mr. Firestine</p> <p>Ms. Peterson</p> |
| Unfinished Business | | Ms. Peterson |
| New Business | | Ms. Peterson |
| Adjourn | | Ms. Peterson |
| Next Meeting: | | |
| Date: | June 24, 2026 | |
| Time: | 11:45 a.m. | |
| Location: | West End Branch Library
5420 Patterson Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23222
Phone: 804.646.1877 | |

Library Board Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
April 22, 2026

PRESENT: Chair Christine Peterson, Vice Chair Sheron Carter-Gunter, Cynthia Hinds, Janet Woody, William Yates

ABSENT: Emily Altman, Brent Graves, Antione Green, Garrett Sawyer, Friends of the Library Chair Ruth DeBoer

STAFF: Scott Firestine, Clay Dishon, Attorney Shannan Fitzgerald, Gianna Pack, Cheryl Clarke, Susan Revere, Phil Shephard, Craig Gill-Walker

The Richmond Public Library (RPL) Library Board of Trustees (LBOT) meeting was called to order by Chair Christine Peterson at 11:48 a.m. at the North Avenue Branch Library located at 2901 North Avenue, Richmond, Virginia 23222. The meeting was posted, and the public could attend in person or by viewing the Richmond Public Library YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/2VfKL9U>, where it was live streamed. A quorum was established.

Agenda	<p>Approve the April 22, 2026, Agenda as submitted.</p> <p><i>Motion: <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u>, Second by <u>Cynthia Hinds</u></i></p> <p><i>AYES: <u>5</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p>
Consent Agenda	<p>Approve the March 25, 2026, Meeting Minutes, the Current Financial Reports, Statistical Reports, and Donations Report as Submitted:</p> <p><i>Motion: <u>William Yates</u>, Second by <u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u></i></p> <p><i>AYES: <u>5</u> NOES: <u>0</u> ABSTAIN: <u>0</u> Approved Unanimously.</i></p>
Public Comment Period	<p>None present.</p>
Guest	<p>DCAO for Human Services Amy Popovich attended the LBOT meeting to introduce herself and share an overview of her role within the City of Richmond. She provided a summary of her professional background, highlighting her experience in public service and her commitment to supporting community-focused initiatives. DCAO Popovich explained her responsibilities overseeing human services, including efforts to enhance access to resources, strengthen partnerships, and improve quality of life for residents.</p> <p>She expressed interest in collaborating with the Library Board to ensure that library programs, services, and budget align with broader City goals, and she emphasized the importance of libraries as vital community hubs.</p> <p>DCAO Popovich concluded by thanking the Board of Trustees for their work and inviting ongoing communication and cooperation.</p>

Reports	
<p>Friends of the Library (FOL)</p> <p><u>Ruth DeBoer</u> <u>Clay Dishon</u></p>	<p>No Formal Report.</p> <p>Mr. Dishon reminded members of the following upcoming events in May:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Book Sale: May 1–3 at the Main Library. • Next Full Friends Board Meeting: May 6, 2026, at the Main Library.
<p>Library Foundation</p> <p><u>Susan Revere</u></p>	<p>No Formal Report.</p>
<p>Administration</p> <p><u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Mr. Firestine had no additional updates beyond what was included in his Director’s Report.</p>
<p>North Avenue Branch Library Update</p> <p><u>Craig Gill-Walker</u></p>	<p>Library/Community Services Manager Craig Gill-Walker provided an update on recent events, programs, and partnerships at the North Avenue Branch Library since the last report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door count has increased significantly from January through April, with hundreds more patrons utilizing library resources. • There has been a notable rise in one-on-one technology assistance, with patrons seeking help to improve computer literacy skills. • Storytime programs have frequently reached full capacity in recent months. Youth Services Librarian Richard Wissmiller has, at times, had to turn families away due to space limitations in the meeting room. • The branch has partnered with Smokey Mug to offer outdoor storytimes near the library. Additionally, Mr. Wissmiller is organizing a summer outdoor Storytime series at Battery Park. • In addition to the senior book club, the branch now offers the “North Avenue Readers” book club for adult patrons and a “Books to Screen” discussion group for teens and young adults. • Teen volunteers continue to support weekly branch operations, coordinated by Library Associate Kelli Young-Kravitz. • The branch will soon receive a new projector, which will enhance its ability to host family movie events. <p>Overall, North Avenue staff remain engaged and enthusiastic, continuing to provide strong service to the surrounding community.</p>
<p>Advocacy Task Force</p> <p><u>Sheron Carter-Gunter</u> <u>Antonie Green</u></p>	<p>No Formal Report.</p> <p>On behalf of the Library Board of Trustees, Chair Peterson expressed appreciation to Library/Community Services Manager Jennifer Deuell for coordinating the Library/Summer Reading presentation at Councilmembers District Town Hall meetings. The events were well attended, and the Library was represented throughout.</p>

Reports (Continued)	
<p>Policy Taskforce</p> <p><u>Emily Altman</u></p>	<p>Mr. Firestine presented two policies on behalf of the Policy Taskforce in Ms. Altman's absence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 05.01 Library Card Registration 2. 05.01.01 Computer Guest Pass <p>He reviewed the proposed changes and responded to questions from the Trustees. Following discussion, Chair Peterson brought the policies forward under New Business for motion.</p> <p>Mr. Firestine also reviewed how the Trustees were going to approach updating the Strategic Plan to encompass the Facilities Improvement and Expansion push.</p>
<p>Chair Report and Governance Report</p> <p><u>Christine Peterson, Chair</u></p>	<p>Chair Peterson combined her Chair Report and Governance Report. She announced that Mr. Garrett Sawyer is resigning from the Library Board of Trustees due to increasing work-related travel that will limit his ability to attend meetings.</p> <p>Chair Peterson noted Mr. Sawyer's significant contributions to the Board since 2020, highlighting his effectiveness as an advocate and a valuable resource. She emphasized that his knowledge and insight helped strengthen relationships with Councilmembers and elevate support for the Library. Among his accomplishments, Mr. Sawyer successfully persuaded then-Councilmember Michael Jones to allocate \$100,000 to the library budget, enabling the restoration of Sunday hours for the first time in several years.</p> <p>On behalf of the Board, Chair Peterson expressed sincere gratitude for Mr. Sawyer's service and contributions and extended best wishes for his future endeavors. She also encouraged Trustees to reach out to him personally.</p> <p>Chair Peterson invited Trustees interested in serving as Chair of the Governance Committee to contact her directly by April 29. She also asked if any Trustee who has spoken with Mr. Sawyer regarding interest in the upcoming Chair and Vice Chair positions share that information with her on the same date. Based on the input received, Mr. Firestine will send an email to all Trustees during the week of May 4 outlining next steps.</p>
<p>Finance</p> <p><u>Bill Yates, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Mr. Yates reported that the budget process is progressing smoothly and is not expected to have any impact on the library. He reviewed both the Operating Budget and the General Fund Budget line items. Following discussion and additional clarification from Mr. Firestine, Mr. Yates confirmed that the financials remain on track.</p>
<p>Facilities</p> <p><u>Janet Woody, Chair</u> <u>Scott Firestine</u></p>	<p>Mr. Firestine reported on two key topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Final Dewberry Report will be complete on May 1, 2026. At that time, Mr. Firestine will schedule a virtual meeting where Dewberry will present the report to the Trustees. 2. The EV Bookmobile is on order.
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	
<p>No Unfinished Business was discussed.</p>	

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Peterson called for a vote on the two policies brought forth by the Policy Taskforce:

Approve Policy 05.01 Library Card Registration as submitted.

Motion: William Yates, Second by Janet Woody

AYES: 5 NOES: 0 ABSTAIN: 0 Approved Unanimously.

Approve Policy 05.01.01 Computer Guest Pass as submitted.

Motion: William Yates, Second by Cynthia Hinds

AYES: 4 NOES: 0 ABSTAIN: 1

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 p.m. by unanimous consent from the members who were present.

The LBOT's next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at the Main Library located at 101 E. Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia, 23219, starting at 11:45 a.m.

Approved: _____
Christine Peterson, Chair

*Recorder: Gianna Pack, CAP
Senior Executive Assistant*

Director's Report May 2026

Director Activities:

- May 6 RPL/Friends of the Library Monthly Board Meeting – Main Library
- May 8 CALD/Central Rap Meeting – Fredericksburg, Virginia
- May 11 Informal and City Council Meetings – City Hall
- May 12 Press Conference – City Hall
- May 20 Foundation Executive Committee Meeting – Virtual
- May 21 *Inside Richmond's Growth – A Fireside Chat with Angie Rodgers* – Copper Hall
- May 25 Memorial Day Holiday – Libraries Closed
- May 26 Informal and City Council Meetings – City Hall

Hiring:

- **May 2026 Hiring Update:**
 - 0018 – PT Library Technician, West End Branch Library – Posting Phase
 - 0075 – PT YS/Library Associate, Main Library – Interviewing Phase
 - 0185 – PT YS/Library Associate, Main Library – Interviewing Phase
 - 0008 – PT Library Technician, Main Library – Selection Phase
 - 0026 – FT Library Technician, East End Branch Library – Selection Phase
 - 0059 – FT Library Technician, Hull Street Branch Library – Selection Phase

Outreach and Engagement Update: April was a busy month with Easter, Poetry Month, National Library Week, and celebrations. Staff attended several school events including First Wednesday Food Trucks at Holton Elementary, a visit to Frances W. McClenney Elementary, Broad Rock Elementary Career Day, Miles Jones Elementary Career Day, Franklin Military SOL night, Southampton Elementary Literacy and STEM Night, Henry L. Marsh Elementary Lunch visits/Encore, and the Good Shepherd Episcopal School PTO Meeting.

Staff also took part in Preschool Enrollment events at Mary Scott Preschool, Southside Plaza, and Maymont Preschool. Several staff attended Dominion Family Easter at Maymont where Ripple made an appearance and saw over 750 people. The Library was also invited to table at VisArts Poetry Fest and Stony Point Fashion Park's Earth Day.

Some new outreach events included Skipwith Roper Cottage Open House (part of the JXN Project), the Neighborhood and Civic Association Summit (a COR event), and a Book Talk at the Hathaway Towers Book Group. Lastly, RPL staff attended several established outreach events including Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens Friday Storytime, Cabell Library, and the Southampton Civic Association. In all the Team reached over 1,750 community members in April.

Broad Rock Branch Library Update: Día de los Niños was held at the Broad Rock Branch Library on April 25, 2026. This annual event celebrates Spanish language and culture, connects families with Richmond Public Library resources, and strengthens community connections. Branch staff welcomed over 389 visitors and 13 community partners, including 8 focused on the needs of the area's Spanish speaking community. There were enjoyed bilingual story time sessions, interactive games, and cultural performances – and 160 bilingual books and 200 ice cream pops were distributed to families throughout the day. This year's event was supported through an anonymous grant to the Richmond Public Library Foundation.



Director's Report (Continued)

May 2026

Something Amazing Happened at the Library!

- **Broad Rock Branch Library** – One of the students from Library/Community Services Manager Heather Montgomery's afternoon Spanish class wrote this note: "I can't thank you enough for such a strong curriculum and great class over the last six weeks. I need to practice a lot more but am so excited to continue with Spanish. I am so impressed with the way that you navigated the different learning styles of everyone in our class and just can't believe that this is a free class offered by our local library! It was such a great experience, you are providing a tremendous service to the community, and I hope it doesn't go unnoticed."
- **North Avenue Branch Library** – A family regularly visits the branch to check out books and spend recreational time at the library. During one of their visits, one of the children shared an interest in becoming a librarian and asked questions about the steps needed to pursue the profession. In a later conversation with the parent, staff learned that the child had completed a school project about librarianship and shared that their inspiration to become a librarian came from the staff and experiences at the North Avenue Library.
- **Westover Hills Branch Library** – A patron was pleasantly surprised to learn how easy it is to scan and email documents. She was stressed about sending tax documents to an accountant to make corrections for her taxes and did not think she would be able to get them done on her own. After staff showed her how, walking her through the steps, the patron was able to get all her papers sent.

CIRCULATION FY2026														
LOCATION	FY	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Total
Belmont	FY23	8,400	9,297	8,586	8,967	7,642	6,982	8,312	8,167	9,161	8,345	8,716	9,056	101,631
	FY24	9,417	9,967	9,066	9,340	8,224	7,515	9,085	8,454	8,780	9,182	9,140	9,329	107,499
	FY25	9,655	8,891	9,159	9,439	8,600	9,685	9,164	9,328	9,468	9,614	9,043	9,811	111,857
	FY26	10,213	9,752	11,015	10,166	9,544	9,351	9,291	8,605	9,104	8,976			96,017
Broad Rock	FY23	1,886	2,413	2,106	1,977	1,721	1,531	1,758	1,807	2,330	2,290	2,080	1,884	23,783
	FY24	1,897	1,953	1,950	2,106	1,836	1,828	2,008	2,135	2,556	2,417	2,229	2,415	25,330
	FY25	2,543	2,564	2,515	2,701	2,433	2,490	2,515	2,241	2,307	2,148	2,138	2,589	29,184
	FY26	2,507	2,094	2,325	2,122	1,921	1,545	1,630	1,577	1,875	1,932			19,528
East End	FY23	2,898	3,313	2,951	2,837	2,246	1,990	2,671	2,600	2,487	2,526	2,519	2,451	31,489
	FY24	2,952	3,044	2,307	2,215	2,041	1,988	2,534	2,742	2,961	2,967	3,003	3,038	31,792
	FY25	3,418	2,890	2,989	3,180	2,661	2,606	2,709	2,690	2,782	2,556	2,571	3,160	34,212
	FY26	3,166	2,922	3,254	3,298	3,043	2,831	2,591	2,868	3,003	2,800			29,776
Ginter Park	FY23	4,607	4,802	4,463	4,174	3,610	3,612	4,283	3,728	4,660	4,232	3,889	4,525	50,585
	FY24	4,819	4,795	4,104	3,878	3,733	3,391	4,214	3,947	4,242	3,943	4,241	4,733	50,040
	FY25	5,575	5,005	4,430	4,460	4,045	4,169	4,550	4,683	5,323	5,033	5,169	5,806	58,248
	FY26	6,204	5,920	5,939	5,723	5,385	4,928	5,641	5,616	5,653	5,474			56,483
Hull Street	FY23	1,987	2,359	2,346	2,331	1,895	1,822	2,069	2,073	2,049	2,272	2,233	1,930	25,366
	FY24	2,386	2,461	2,030	2,359	2,470	2,137	2,281	2,059	1,870	1,849	1,777	2,036	25,715
	FY25	2,123	2,120	2,146	2,295	1,785	1,847	1,500	1,517	1,709	1,516	1,445	1,503	21,506
	FY26	1,706	1,778	1,827	1,928	1,522	1,540	1,545	1,512	1,709	1,348			16,415
Main	FY23	7,932	9,457	8,777	8,957	7,149	6,313	8,304	8,189	9,523	8,891	9,053	8,341	100,886
	FY24	9,347	9,863	9,016	9,344	7,839	7,022	7,933	8,265	9,416	9,041	8,665	8,386	104,137
	FY25	8,724	9,236	8,857	8,888	7,880	7,467	8,022	8,039	9,212	8,823	8,639	9,568	103,355
	FY26	10,102	9,751	10,612	9,629	8,928	8,682	9,108	9,186	9,588	8,252			93,838

CIRCULATION FY2026 (CONTINUED)														
LOCATION	FY	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Total
North Avenue	FY23	2,139	2,118	2,085	2,378	2,367	1,743	949	77	-	-	226	1,005	15,087
	FY24	1,638	2,294	2,259	2,390	1,998	1,943	2,392	2,108	2,011	2,119	2,358	2,748	26,258
	FY25	2,943	2,899	2,907	2,965	2,321	2,375	2,468	2,478	2,843	2,441	2,702	3,318	32,660
	FY26	3,217	3,201	3,530	3,389	3,107	3,326	3,441	3,455	3,514	3,353			33,533
West End	FY23	13,150	13,412	10,950	11,072	10,121	8,552	10,395	9,966	10,771	10,338	10,968	11,745	131,440
	FY24	12,573	12,176	10,311	10,507	9,828	8,881	10,400	10,328	10,789	11,027	11,457	12,216	130,493
	FY25	13,977	12,956	11,756	11,346	9,624	9,890	11,234	10,498	10,948	10,547	10,591	12,538	135,905
	FY26	13,404	12,202	12,155	11,749	10,858	10,000	11,533	11,785	11,764	10,387			115,837
Westover Hills	FY23	8,424	8,612	8,155	8,407	7,765	6,496	7,540	7,706	8,344	7,423	7,463	8,703	95,038
	FY24	10,057	9,438	8,550	8,313	7,733	7,198	7,721	8,131	8,432	8,196	8,131	9,168	101,068
	FY25	10,085	9,495	8,938	8,821	7,746	7,906	8,363	8,067	8,351	8,209	8,659	9,636	104,276
	FY26	10,556	9,937	9,759	9,611	8,136	8,663	9,191	9,210	10,073	9,330			94,466
E-Content	FY23	16,079	16,510	14,806	14,910	15,126	16,515	19,182	17,810	23,496	24,317	24,593	24,071	227,415
	FY24	25,640	27,387	26,401	27,051	26,710	27,809	34,405	35,378	37,274	36,890	37,078	39,698	381,721
	FY25	41,178	40,652	40,124	39,955	42,109	44,466	50,662	46,551	51,789	50,778	52,187	46,592	547,043
	FY26	54,175	54,617	52,066	52,375	50,586	53,204	59,296	52,363	57,669	56,079			542,430
Totals	FY23	67,502	72,293	65,225	66,010	59,642	55,556	65,463	62,123	72,821	70,634	71,740	73,711	802,720
	FY24	80,964	82,302	76,087	77,602	72,788	71,882	83,052	84,421	89,019	88,063	87,982	94,249	988,411
	FY25	100,221	96,708	93,821	94,050	89,204	92,901	101,187	96,092	104,732	101,665	103,144	104,521	1,178,246
	FY26	115,250	112,174	112,482	109,990	103,030	104,070	113,267	106,177	113,952	107,931			1,098,323

PROGRAMS FY2026	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	TOTAL FY26	TOTAL FY25
Belmont														
Adult Programs	9	11	9	10	5	11	10	8	14	15				96
Adult Attend	57	60	75	73	32	51	43	35	58	63				837
Young Adult Programs	3	0	2	2	2	2	0	3	1	2				21
Young Adult Attend	3	0	2	4	4	4	0	9	2	8				35
Juvenile Programs	20	6	17	17	11	11	13	14	15	17				184
Juvenile Attend	460	132	323	323	208	220	220	222	261	333				3,710
Total Attend	520	192	400	400	244	275	263	266	321	404	0	0	3,285	4,582
Total Programs	32	17	28	29	18	24	23	25	30	34	0	0	260	301
Broad Rock														
Adult Programs	3	0	6	8	5	4	5	10	13	12				104
Adult Attend	6	0	18	43	60	17	46	193	100	81				1,698
Young Adult Programs	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3				36
Young Adult Attend	16	9	11	22	1	4	5	7	25	30				236
Juvenile Programs	44	24	33	35	24	30	23	28	31	18				318
Juvenile Attend	242	77	98	131	37	27	36	66	152	459				2,153
Total Attend	264	86	127	196	98	48	87	266	277	570	0	0	2,019	4,087
Total Programs	50	27	42	46	31	37	31	41	47	33	0	0	385	458
East End														
Adult Programs	24	17	14	5	3	3	3	3	6	2			80	75
Adult Attend	136	198	159	28	22	22	18	18	65	14			680	712
Young Adult Programs	12	7	9	9	6	8	6	8	8	8			81	110
Young Adult Attend	54	30	35	32	11	7	12	21	7	20			229	456
Juvenile Programs	22	7	17	19	11	16	12	20	20	20			164	242
Juvenile Attend	191	79	118	143	69	141	46	165	136	168			1,256	2,793
Total Attend	381	307	312	203	102	170	76	204	208	202	0	0	2,165	3,961
Total Programs	58	31	40	33	20	27	21	31	34	30	0	0	325	427

PROGRAMS FY2026 (CONTINUED)	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	TOTAL FY26	TOTAL FY25
Ginter Park														
Adult Programs	12	10	13	9	11	11	11	12	18	13			120	118
Adult Attend	51	40	43	28	27	38	36	38	57	46			404	433
Young Adult Programs	10	6	3	5	4	2	3	5	5	4			47	93
Young Adult Attend	44	10	5	0	2	1	1	17	21	7			108	234
Juvenile Programs	29	18	28	31	23	28	23	28	26	26			260	275
Juvenile Attend	351	132	195	150	159	148	129	212	175	208			1,859	1,798
Total Attend	446	182	243	178	188	187	166	267	253	261	0	0	2,371	2,465
Total Programs	51	34	44	45	38	41	37	45	49	43	0	0	427	486
Hull Street														
Adult Programs	7	7	15	14	6	9	10	13	11	8			100	65
Adult Attend	26	34	71	53	23	74	45	65	56	29			476	362
Young Adult Programs	4	1	3	1	5	1	3	2	3	2			25	28
Young Adult Attend	25	2	0	1	25	0	0	0	2	0			55	83
Juvenile Programs	12	10	19	7	5	9	9	10	14	14			109	80
Juvenile Attend	174	96	162	48	60	15	36	15	72	54			732	1,352
Total Attend	225	132	233	102	108	89	81	80	130	83	0	0	1,263	1,797
Total Programs	23	18	37	22	16	19	22	25	28	24	0	0	234	173
Main														
Adult Programs	16	14	25	32	23	14	20	24	19	17			204	279
Adult Attend	188	278	423	374	332	209	224	525	328	378			3,259	7,116
Young Adult Programs	20	17	15	15	12	18	14	17	16	14			158	171
Young Adult Attend	211	115	90	105	91	91	68	100	98	117			1,086	1,052
Juvenile Programs	27	19	44	39	32	25	21	49	41	40			337	344
Juvenile Attend	863	394	389	422	486	285	404	796	625	569			5,233	6,886
Total Attend	1,262	787	902	901	909	585	696	1,421	1,051	1,064	0	0	9,578	6,102
Total Programs	63	50	84	86	67	57	55	90	76	71	0	0	699	336

PROGRAMS FY2026 (CONTINUED)	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	TOTAL FY26	TOTAL FY25
North Avenue														
Adult Programs	9	7	11	10	9	3	6	8	6	7			76	74
Adult Attend	45	36	84	140	70	58	28	38	42	53			594	594
Young Adult Programs	2	2	5	5	5	18	5	5	3	5			55	20
Young Adult Attend	59	40	19	34	15	167	17	19	12	17			399	208
Juvenile Programs	25	17	22	26	11	2	14	22	24	24			187	240
Juvenile Attend	342	312	378	402	197	12	180	296	275	285			2,679	3,396
Total Attend	446	388	481	576	282	237	225	353	329	355	0	0	3,672	4,198
Total Programs	36	26	38	41	25	23	25	35	33	36	0	0	318	334
West End														
Adult Programs	12	10	17	19	18	18	10	15	20	17			156	154
Adult Attend	48	53	106	142	146	68	55	62	111	105			896	736
Young Adult Programs	4	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2			22	18
Young Adult Attend	25	17	5	7	6	1	4	2	3	0			70	40
Juvenile Programs	29	16	21	27	12	19	14	18	21	26			203	235
Juvenile Attend	504	194	231	349	140	203	142	233	232	383			2,611	3,337
Total Attend	577	264	342	498	292	272	201	297	346	488	0	0	3,577	4,113
Total Programs	45	28	40	48	32	38	26	35	44	45	0	0	381	407
Westover Hills														
Adult Programs	6	6	10	7	7	6	8	7	10	10			77	128
Adult Attend	35	27	35	37	43	48	50	69	107	154			605	971
Young Adult Programs	3	4	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	4			27	32
Young Adult Attend	21	38	0	6	0	1	8	6	4	29			113	98
Juvenile Programs	33	17	32	34	20	23	26	25	29	32			271	286
Juvenile Attend	739	550	1,618	716	379	605	429	488	610	802			6,936	5,468
Total Attend	795	615	1,653	759	422	654	487	563	721	985	0	0	7,654	6,537
Total Programs	42	27	44	43	29	32	36	35	41	46	0	0	375	446
Grand Total Attend	4,916	2,953	4,693	3,813	2,645	2,517	2,282	3,717	3,636	4,412	0	0	35,584	46,794
Grand Total Programs	400	258	397	393	276	298	276	362	382	362	0	0	3,404	3,826

DOOR COUNT FY2026	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	TOTAL
Belmont	5,000	5,000	5,587	6,420	4,894	4,789	5,281	4,437	5,832	6,065			53,305
Broad Rock	5,285	5,381	4,888	5,002	3,569	3,271	3,673	4,189	4,345	5,029			44,632
East End	5,175	5,658	5,538	5,783	3,889	3,846	4,096	4,680	4,857	5,118			48,640
Ginter Park	4,921	4,820	4,234	4,283	3,563	3,225	3,330	4,734	4,696	4,602			42,408
Hull Street	2,646	2,654	3,358	3,759	2,314	2,684	2,658	3,246	3,523	4,193			31,035
Main	16,091	18,303	15,550	17,242	13,809	11,051	12,109	15,244	15,538	15,034			149,971
North Avenue	3,256	3,380	3,256	3,645	3,141	3,154	3,126	3,543	3,910	4,125			34,536
West End	4,638	4,358	4,280	3,720	3,588	2,986	3,504	3,512	4,081	3,762			38,429
Westover Hills	6,673	5,865	7,133	6,029	4,628	4,913	5,090	5,059	5,684	6,090			57,164
TOTALS FY26:	53,685	55,419	53,824	55,883	43,395	39,919	42,867	48,644	52,466	54,018	-	-	500,120
TOTALS FY25:	51,117	54,769	46,019	50,443	37,015	41,276	43,168	39,985	48,783	45,396	46,593	51,924	556,488
TOTALS FY24:	39,382	46,969	32,640	45,796	32,816	35,874	42,622	46,082	46,907	56,662	54,040	52,146	531,936

NOTE: July-August 2025: The Belmont door counter was currently out of service and scheduled for replacement.

NEW PATRON CARDS													
FY2026	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	Total
Belmont	163	147	145	131	91	101	112	90	112	107			1,199
Broad Rock	84	101	86	82	35	36	69	59	77	42			671
East End	60	75	60	57	44	29	56	64	45	53			543
Ginter Park	83	79	53	49	111	50	59	50	42	57			633
Hull Street	64	51	49	38	28	23	47	33	33	58			424
Main	284	392	448	584	425	443	431	329	283	320			3,939
North Avenue	42	47	55	58	27	32	40	33	18	29			381
West End	105	87	82	72	56	60	75	62	55	59			713
Westover Hills	125	79	110	97	47	46	68	62	78	76			788
Online Reg E-Card	1,061	1,068	1,116	835	813	837	1,275	678	835	861			9,379
Total FY26:	2,071	2,126	2,204	2,003	1,677	1,657	2,232	1,460	1,578	1,662	-	-	18,670
Total FY25:	1,545	1,715	2,165	1,743	1,598	1,375	2,020	1,844	1,868	1,745	1,745	1,978	21,341
Total FY24:	1,526	1,689	1,492	1,768	1,668	1,200	1,924	1,581	1,655	1,595	1,510	1,534	19,142

COMPUTER USE FY2026	Jul-25	Aug- 25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May- 26	Jun-26	TOTAL
Belmont Workstation	611	575	468	619	479	513	515	396	639	688			5,503
WIFI	763	885	901	893	718	490	263	598	640	851			7,002
Broad Rock Workstation	695	675	734	732	502	514	560	725	745	649			6,531
WIFI	1,662	1,167	1,107	1,156	511	532	298	1,371	810	948			9,562
East End Workstation	210	547	530	429	234	-	-	582	612	526			3,670
WIFI	1,375	1,586	1,319	1,254	664	657	268	1,286	818	1,215			10,442
Ginter Park Workstation	719	700	577	571	492	526	549	611	794	822			6,361
WIFI	895	1,506	1,532	1,087	647	516	260	666	965	1,048			9,122
Hull Street Workstation	457	599	662	700	479	511	499	632	550	528			5,617
WIFI	1,295	1,379	995	911	494	409	270	790	605	714			7,862
Main Workstation	2,175	2,241	2,244	2,040	1,736	1,745	1,885	1,920	2,202	2,031			20,219
WIFI	7,388	8,683	6,996	7,205	4,440	3,285	2,229	5,202	7,295	8,811			61,534
North Avenue Workstation	588	617	493	522	322	338	381	413	528	487			4,689
WIFI	1,411	959	766	621	386	373	173	583	437	573			6,282
West End Workstation	357	372	331	323	246	267	309	323	318	418			3,264
WIFI	1,874	1,367	1,681	1,228	849	983	454	1,029	991	1,211			11,667
Westover Hills Workstation	587	531	528	510	400	348	452	450	475	520			4,801
WIFI	744	726	745	671	308	229	155	523	391	568			5,060
TOTALS FY26:	23,806	25,115	22,609	21,472	13,907	12,236	9,520	18,100	19,815	22,608			189,188
TOTALS FY25:	21,187	21,829	20,636	23,149	17,841	19,621	17,496	18,232	21,343	21,448	21,953	23,306	248,041
TOTALS FY24:	16,191	18,566	17,176	18,563	13,735	14,255	16,296	17,267	17,903	18,723	19,691	19,587	207,953
TOTALS FY23:	13,430	14,930	14,136	14,657	11,832	11,834	13,204	13,045	13,988	13,375	15,025	15,034	164,490

Note: Effective December 2025, East End Branch Library's Computer Tracking Workstation was out of service and is scheduled for replacement. January and February 2026 – Server Issues. Missing data.

TECHNICAL SERVICES - FLOATING ITEMS ADDED / DISCARDED				
FY2026	Printed Materials Added (All Branches)	Overdrive Added	Monthly Total Added	Monthly Total Discarded
Jul-25	2,424	787	3,211	785
Aug-25	1,806	335	2,141	420
Sep-25	1,602	427	2,029	709
Oct-25	1,109	339	1,448	635
Nov-25	735	329	1,064	1,223
Dec-25	1,266	373	1,639	7,469
Jan-26	1,086	500	1,586	5,932
Feb-26	1,261	385	1,646	516
Mar-26	1,467	562	2,029	716
Apr-26	1,625	402	2,027	893
May-26				
Jun-26				
FY26 Totals:	14,381	4,439	18,820	19,298
FY25 Totals:	16,705	4,573	21,278	23,358
FY24 Totals:	14,096	5,041	19,137	43,251

LAPTOP CHECKOUTS FY2026	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	May-26	Jun-26	TOTAL
Belmont	2	3	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	1			14
Broad Rock	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0			2
East End	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	5	1			10
Ginter Park	1	4	1	3	2	0	1	1	4	0			17
Hull Street	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1			7
Main Library	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0			3
North Avenue	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			1
West End	2	8	5	2	7	8	2	6	2	1			43
Westover Hills	4	6	4	6	7	2	2	2	3	2			38
TOTALS FY26:	12	25	11	14	20	11	8	11	17	6	0	0	135
TOTALS FY25:	35	20	26	26	22	23	15	14	30	18	13	21	263

External Room Requests FY2026	Jul-25		Aug-25		Sep-25		Oct-25		Nov-25		Dec-25		Jan-26		Feb-26		Mar-26		Apr-26		May-26		Jun-26		Total Requests	Total Attended
	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended	Requests	Attended		
Belmont																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 15)	13	71	17	80	16	41	26	63	15	71	5	34	11	54	18	110	17	84	15	62					153	670
Broad Rock																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 35)	20	79	3	137	21	283	32	176	23	282	27	498	19	128	28	410	29	280	35	245					237	2,518
East End																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 35)	27	98	42	184	34	137	40	129	28	105	28	62	33	76	18	158	30	152	34	140					314	1,241
Ginter Park																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 40)	23	116	15	55	16	114	11	77	14	111	8	53	15	38	11	164	21	231	19	179					153	1,138
Hull Street																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 47)	9	107	13	309	13	254	21	363	16	306	10	155	10	160	7	132	17	256	10	160					126	2,202
Main																										
Auditorium (Capacity 250)	27	1,776	26	1,637	25	1,406	32	2,807	26	790	19	889	27	1,995	33	770	25	1,346	30	2,235					270	15,651
Annex (Capacity 45)	21	467	14	713	18	452	20	635	16	225	14	207	19	170	26	905	28	985	22	735					198	5,494
Activity Room (Capacity 48)	11	364	15	853	17	668	16	744	24	790	10	330	17	430	21	390	20	555	13	270					164	5,394
Gellman Room (Capacity 80)	19	843	22	1,145	28	763	29	1,150	19	526	20	435	34	995	29	345	27	1,075	22	675					249	7,952
Memory Lab (Capacity 4)	76	76	62	62	83	83	78	78	52	52	84	84	69	69	54	54	81	81	75	75					714	714
Innovation Lab (Capacity 12)	12	12	18	18	10	10	5	5	3	3	14	14	9	9	15	15	14	14	19	19					119	119
Study Room B (Capacity 6)	109	219	90	222	97	205	99	202	72	147	74	153	96	224	96	172	105	235	95	184					933	1,963
Study Room C (Capacity 12)	100	354	81	343	84	321	87	341	66	286	71	254	82	323	101	321	98	409	84	411					854	3,363
Study Room D (Capacity 12)	86	326	79	387	78	302	89	359	65	293	66	305	85	370	91	411	73	402	87	474					799	3,629
North Avenue																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 47)	15	121	17	85	13	72	11	59	15	45	12	30	8	22	10	31	9	41	13	45					123	551
West End																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 44)	7	73	13	146	14	170	8	96	12	211	6	72	6	98	12	140	14	201	14	165					106	1,372
Study Room (Capacity 8)	79	145	81	174	75	117	71	129	53	90	47	86	44	107	60	119	65	118	70	121					645	1,206
Westover Hills																										
Meeting Room (Capacity 35)	5	15	3	24	10	48	14	120	10	126	6	42	10	215	11	68	11	107	11	102					91	867
Total: FY26:	659	5,262	611	6,574	652	5,446	689	7,533	529	4,459	521	3,703	594	5,483	641	4,715	684	6,572	668	6,297	-	-	-	-	6,248	56,044
Total: FY25:	550	3,309	523	4,111	562	4,327	635	5,412	537	3,673	521	4,189	447	4,117	578	5,930	634	6,401	680	6,647	653	6,034	647	6,707	6,967	60,857

Richmond Public Library
 FY26 Operating Budget
 April 30, 2026

ACCOUNT	DESCRIPTION	Budget	Actual and Encumbered 30-Apr-26	% Spent	Balance Available 30-Apr-26
60000	SALARIES - FULL TIME	\$ 4,733,156	\$ 3,756,057	79.4%	\$ 977,099
60001	OVERTIME PERMAN	\$ 19,176	\$ 2,630	13.7%	\$ 16,546
61000	SALARIES - PART TIME	\$ 426,914	\$ 522,180	122.3%	\$ (95,266)
62000	SALARIES - TEMPORARY	\$ 10,000	\$ 47,790	477.9%	\$ (37,790)
63000	FICA	\$ 314,974	\$ 259,060	82.2%	\$ 55,914
63001	RET CON RSRs	\$ 291,626	\$ 246,150	84.4%	\$ 45,476
63002	MEDCARE FICA	\$ 73,674	\$ 60,767	82.5%	\$ 12,907
63003	GROUP LIFE	\$ 28,766	\$ 20,423	71.0%	\$ 8,343
63004	CONSTITUTIONAL	\$ 69,193	\$ 56,037	0.0%	\$ 13,156
63006	H/C ACT TEMP	\$ 958,691	\$ 806,280	84.1%	\$ 152,411
63008	STATE UNEMPLOYMENT	\$ -	\$ 6,426	0.0%	\$ (6,426)
63011	HEALTH SAVINGS	\$ -	\$ 14,375	0.0%	\$ (14,375)
63100	VRS HYBRID DB	\$ 439,381	\$ 297,716	67.8%	\$ 141,665
63105	VRS HYBRID DC	\$ -	\$ 20,519	0.0%	\$ (20,519)
63110	VRS HYBRID VLDP	\$ -	\$ 15,183	0.0%	\$ (15,183)
63115	VRS Hybrid 401a	\$ -	\$ 22,440	0.0%	\$ (22,440)
64103	Educnctv #81	\$ -	\$ 18,054	0.0%	\$ (18,054)
	Personnel Expenses	\$ 7,365,551	\$ 6,172,088	83.8%	\$ 1,193,463
71141	BOOKS	\$ 952,359	\$ 865,510	90.9%	\$ 86,849
71141	DATABASES	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
71142	MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS	\$ 2,456	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 2,456
72122	MAGS & NEWSPAPER	\$ 29,277	\$ 5,818	19.9%	\$ 23,459
	Collection Development	\$ 984,092	\$ 871,329	88.5%	\$ 112,763
70131	ADVERTISING	\$ 2,297	\$ 7,496	326.4%	\$ (5,199)
70161	PLANNING MGMT SERVICES	\$ 483,050	\$ 414,117	85.7%	\$ 68,933
70215	EQUIPMENT REPAIR	\$ 81,200	\$ 32,363	39.9%	\$ 48,837
70218	VEHICLE REPAIR	\$ 2,402	\$ 2,351	97.9%	\$ 51
70412	TRANSPORTATION	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
70416	EMPLOYEE PARKING	\$ 21,600	\$ 23,360	108.1%	\$ (1,760)
70311	PRINTED SUPPLIES	\$ 3,000	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 3,000
70413	MILEAGE ALLOWANCE	\$ 2,263	\$ 808	35.7%	\$ 1,455
70551	SECURITY	\$ 294,543	\$ 135,922	46.1%	\$ 158,621
70552	CONTRACT AND TEMP PERSONNEL	\$ 22,000	\$ 67,350	306.1%	\$ (45,350)
71012	OFFICE STATIONARY SUPPLIES	\$ 3,047	\$ 6	0.2%	\$ 3,041
71016	ADVERTISING	\$ -	\$ 10,000	0.0%	\$ (10,000)
71143	LIBRARY OPERATING SUPPLIES	\$ 19,220	\$ (6,229)	-32.4%	\$ 25,449
72113	POSTAGE	\$ 4,456	\$ 414	9.3%	\$ 4,042
72121	CONFERENCES & CON	\$ 1,904	\$ 580	30.5%	\$ 1,324
72123	MEMBERSHIP DUES	\$ 677	\$ 2,745	405.5%	\$ (2,068)
72124	TRAINING	\$ 1,055	\$ -	0.0%	\$ 1,055
72131	COMPUTER SUPPLIES	\$ 25,662	\$ (15,436)	-60.2%	\$ 41,098
72153	EQUIPMENT	\$ 138,341	\$ 74,332	53.7%	\$ 64,009
73104	BANK FEES	\$ -	\$ 10,170	0.0%	\$ (10,170)
76119	PAGERS	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
76652	PAPER PRODUCTS	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
77103	FUEL-D/O VEHICLE	\$ 1,686	\$ 1,589	94.2%	\$ 97
77104	VEHICLE MONTHLY STANDING	\$ 493	\$ 411	83.4%	\$ 82
77107	AUTO EXPENSES C	\$ -	\$ 8,203	0.0%	\$ (8,203)
77201	INTERNAL PRINTING	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
77401	CLAIMS & SETTLEMENTS	\$ -	\$ 995	0.0%	\$ (995)
77501	DIT CHARGES	\$ -	\$ 8,886	0.0%	\$ (8,886)
80001	DEPRECIATION	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
80004	BUILDINGS & STR	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
80006	EQUIPMENT & OFFICE MAINTENANCE	\$ 31,160	\$ 19,345	62.1%	\$ 11,815
80007	VEHICLE EXPENSES	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
95002	OPERATING TRANS	\$ -	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -
	Other Expenses	\$ 1,140,056	\$ 799,779	70.2%	\$ 340,277
	TOTAL GENERAL FUND	\$ 9,489,699	\$ 7,843,196	82.6%	\$ 1,646,503

Richmond Public Library
 Foundation, Friends, Groups and Individuals
 FY2026

Consent Agenda: Deposited Gifts over \$100 Shown as of
 May 27, 2026

Date of Check	Donor Name	Current Month Amount	Purpose/Location	YTD Account Balance		
				Gift	Foundation	Friends
	<i>No Donations</i>	\$ -				
	Monthly Total	\$ -				
	YTD Total	\$ -	Year To Date Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -



Richmond Free Press donates 34-year archive to city library ahead of building sale

[Ned Oliver](#)

May 07, 2026 | 6:45PM EDT 5 min

[Richmond Free Press donates 34-year archive to city library ahead of building sale](#)



Regina Boone stands amid moving materials in the former lobby of the Richmond Free Press. (Photos by Ned Oliver/The Richmonder)

The Richmond Free Press donated its 34-year archive to the Richmond Public Library, transferring hundreds of boxes of files, photographs and back issues ahead of the sale of its downtown building this week.

The collection, which documents decades of life in Richmond from the perspective of the city’s Black community, will be preserved and made accessible to the public.

Richmond Public Library staff called it one of the most important collections documenting African American history in the city.

“We want kids who have to do a paper on a significant figure from Richmond’s history to come here and look through the newspaper’s personality files,” said Ben Himmelfarb, the manager of library and community services at the library’s main branch. “Or someone whose parents owned a business and, maybe they advertised with the Free Press, can find the graphics and other materials they used over the years.”

The Free Press closed earlier this year, [publishing its last issue in February](#). Jean Boone, the paper’s former publisher, said she is thrilled to pass the materials on to the library, calling it an opportunity to continue the paper’s legacy of making information open and accessible to the community. “It’s very much in keeping with our mission,” she said.

The donation includes bound back issues, a complete photo archive and production notes for each issue, which range from drafts of future front pages covered in handwritten editing notes to the plates and transparencies used to commit each week’s edition to print.

Boone also donated the personal files and library of her late husband, Raymond Boone, who founded the Free Press. The files are extensive and include meticulously organized folders on subjects and people of local interest — a mix of newspaper clippings, reports, documents, letters and personal notes.



Ben Himmelfarb, the manager of library and community services at the library's main branch, pulls a box of archived material recently donated by the Free Press.

Raymond Boone founded the Free Press in 1992 with the mission of covering stories important to the Black community that the white-owned press ignored. He was a crusading journalist who openly challenged the political and business establishment when he felt it was in the interest of his readers, including, famously, [inviting Occupy Richmond protesters](#) to camp in his yard in 2011 when his neighbor, then-Mayor Dwight Jones, evicted the group from Kanawha Plaza.

Library staff called his papers a treasure trove for historians and researchers. They said they are still developing plans to catalog and eventually begin digitizing the materials, which now sit in long rows of white bankers boxes in the basement storage facility of the library's main branch downtown. Himmelfarb said that, until then, the library will attempt to accommodate requests for access to the materials.

A bittersweet farewell

With the archives squared away, Boone spent the last week alongside her daughter, Regina, and a handful of longtime newspaper staffers, triaging the rest of the newspaper's belongings ahead of a planned building sale, which Boone said she expected to close Friday.

The newspaper [had listed](#) the three-story Imperial Building at the corner of Franklin and Fifth streets [for \\$2.8 million](#). Because the sale is not final, she declined to name the potential buyer or discuss other details of the transaction.

To help clear the building's contents, Regina Boone put out an open call for people and organizations to come by the building and see if there was anything they could use. Raymond Boone's former desk went to one-time City Council member Parker Agelasto, whom Regina Boone said her father was fond of. A room's worth of desks went to Richmond Public Schools. And, in a nod to the practical, a huge cache of back issues was delivered to the SPCA to line kennels.

Boone said the steady flow of people, many former readers, friends and acquaintances, gave the week the feeling of an extended wake. "For me personally, this has been like going through my dad's death again," she said as she sat among boxes of documents, many of which bore Raymond Boone's long, looped cursive.

But Regina, a longtime newspaper photographer, emphasized that she did not view it as a sad moment and was leaving the building with her head held high – a sentiment her mom said she wholeheartedly shared. "Be happy we documented what we did, pushed for change, wrote, showed up every week," she said. "It's OK to rest. It's OK to stop. It's OK to tie a bow around this."

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∞ END ∞



Libraries are hotspots in an effort to cool down Richmond

Communities and waterways share the benefits of new trees and green space

By [Will Parson](#) | March 12, 2026

<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/news/blog/libraries-are-hotspots-in-an-effort-to-cool-down-richmond>

Anyone who has “leafed” through the pages of a book understands that there’s a connection between trees and libraries. Indeed, “library” comes from the Latin word “liber” for the inner bark of a tree, from which books were made. Today trees are still helping sustain libraries—and not just by being chopped down.

The James River Association (JRA), like many watershed organizations, plants trees for their ability to soak up stormwater pollution and protect waterways from agricultural runoff. In Richmond, the nonprofit plants trees as part of its [green infrastructure](#) efforts, a practice that uses nature-based methods to capture and filter runoff. Since 2019, JRA has partnered with the [Richmond Public Library](#) and [RVAH20](#) to install green infrastructure on library campuses across Richmond, aligning watershed goals with communities’ interests. In 2024, the nonprofit received a nearly \$750,000-dollar grant from the [Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grant Program](#), funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, to continue the work at additional library branches.

“We approach these projects with the health of the James River in mind,” said JRA’s Director of Community Conservation, Justin Doyle,. “But we’re also able to achieve other benefits through these projects, and increasing tree canopy has emerged as a top priority among residents and library users.”



A crew from the James River Association's contractor, SOAR365, plants several larger trees while volunteers assist with shrubs at the Ginter Park Branch of the Richmond Public Library in 2024. JRA added rain gardens and other green infrastructure elements to the one-acre campus in 2025 and early 2026. (Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program)

Public interest in trees stems largely from the shade they provide. During a heat wave in 2017, for example, [a citywide temperature survey](#) found a 16-degree difference between the coolest and warmest parts of Richmond. The [Richmond Master Plan](#), adopted in 2020, calls for increasing urban tree canopy from 42% to 60% as part of a goal to “positively adapt to the effects of a changing

climate” and to “ensure that all residents have equitable access to nature and a healthy community.”

JRA’s program, called [Greening Richmond Public Libraries](#), recently completed installation of one such green infrastructure project at the **Ginter Park Branch**. Surrounded by neighborhoods, Ginter Park’s one-acre campus is one of the larger in the Richmond Public Library system. The project began in early 2024, with a community engagement meeting at the library and an online questionnaire for community members. That fall, volunteers helped plant 20 trees and shrubs, including [sweetbay magnolias](#), [black gums](#) and [arrowwood viburnums](#). For the planting, JRA chose species that are native to the region and more capable of withstanding both wet and dry weather extremes. “They’re resilient in that way,” Doyle said.

In early 2025, the project continued, with the construction of three new [bioretention](#) basins—otherwise known as rain gardens—as well as conservation landscaping around three sides of the building and an accessible walkway across the library campus. Late 2025 saw the addition of an outdoor reading area and a [permeable paver system](#) at one of the library’s two entrances. Last month, the project wrapped up with the addition of new benches and a blue shade canopy in front of the library.

The library “has completely undergone a transformation,” Doyle said. The campus now captures stormwater flowing off of the library building and parking lot, reducing nitrogen pollution by five pounds a year and phosphorus by a third of a pound.

Including the work at Ginter Park, the program has installed green infrastructure projects at six library branches since 2019. Doyle said the bioretention structures alone have reduced nitrogen by almost 15.97 pounds and phosphorus by 1.66 pounds annually. Additionally, the permeable pavement and planted trees have taken an additional bite out of stormwater pollution.

The project also included an irrigation system to keep the many young plants alive. JRA’s focus has now turned to keeping the landscaping alive and doing its job.

“Maintenance has become a big focus of ours,” Doyle said. “And helping the libraries to maintain the new practices that have been installed on the grounds has been a top priority of the team.”

Branching out

JRA is finalizing plans for green infrastructure projects at two more library branches in 2026. And it is also ramping up its tree planting work in the residential areas surrounding Richmond libraries. Overall, JRA’s priority has been watersheds identified in the city’s [RVA Clean Water Plan](#), such as the [Cannon’s Branch/Shockoe Creek watershed](#), which includes some of the library branches where the nonprofit has worked.

“I think we’ll continue to consider organizing community tree planting events in the neighborhoods around those libraries just to help create that ripple effect that the library projects are intended to have in the communities around them,” Doyle said.

For example, last year JRA partnered with a community-based organization, Church Hill Trees, to plant approximately 90 trees near the smaller campus of East End Branch, a region of the city where urban heat and stormwater management are high priorities. In a previous partnership, JRA helped establish a [0.4-mile green street](#) in Richmond’s Bellemeade community.

JRA’s green infrastructure work complement similar efforts by Richmond organizations such as [Southside Releaf](#). That nonprofit has developed five new parks and organized hundreds of volunteers while planting and maintaining thousands of trees in the Southside area of Richmond, south of the James River, including at several public school campuses and a community center.

The upside of all the new living greenery is that the benefits will accrue as the tree and plants mature.

“As the trees continue to grow, you know, there’s additional stormwater runoff reductions,” Doyle said. “And then you also get more evapotranspiration, you get more shade...hopefully a cooler environment in the long run.”

∞ End ∞